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*to those Iranians who struggled against
authoritarian rule, even at the cost of their
lives; may their efforts inspire others to
fight against the forces of authoritarianism
in all forms*



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INTRODUCTION

An attempt has been made in this book to analyze the concept of security in its broader framework. It encompasses the linkage not only between regime, systemic, national and regional security, but also of the domestic, foreign and defence policies of Iran. The book also seeks to co-relate the threat perception of the ruling elite *vis-a-vis* each of the different variables affecting its threat perception, as also its responses to meet what it considered as threats to its security. Also, an attempt has been made to analyze the constraints under which the ruling elite had to meet those threats and its efforts to overcome those constraints.

Work on the book was started long before the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the book, except for the last chapters, was written before the final exit of Reza Shah. Despite the revolution in Iran, neither the framework of the book was disturbed nor were basic changes made in the chapters that were already written. The last two chapters which deal not only with the downfall of the Pahlavi dynasty but also with the initial phase of the new regime were written within a broad framework that was applied to Iran's quest for security under the Pahlavi dynasty. The book was completed in May 1979. The postscript discusses the developments in Iran since then.

The major threat posed to the Pahlavi dynasty was to the security of the regime, and to some extent, to the political, economic and social systems that had evolved around the monarchy. Thus, republicanism under Dr Mossadeq, resurgent Islam under the ulema leadership, or even pan-Arabism under Nasser and Qaddafi were a threat not to the Iranian nation *per se*

but to the regime's security under the Pahlavi dynasty.

Today, despite the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty, there is no basic change in the character of the threat to the Iranian political system. Absolute monarchy has been replaced by another kind of absolutism in the garb of Islamic fundamentalism. Democracy, for which a large section of the Iranians fought, is still a distant object. Hence, looking from the angle of the ruling elite in Iran, whether of the earlier monarchical period or the present Islamic fundamentalist period, secular and democratic forces that challenged the Shah's regime would also continue to pose a challenge to the new regime under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini.

The national integrity and security of Iran was and is threatened partly by several centrifugal forces operating in Iran, especially the sub-nationalities like the Kurds, Turcomans and Arabs. That threat too was magnified beyond proportion because of two reasons. Firstly, it was treated as a question of secession rather than of regional autonomy. Secondly, it got intermingled with Iran's rivalries with its neighbouring states. Since regional autonomy, as a concept, is based upon norms of liberalism and democracy, and since these norms were suppressed in Iran, the demand for regional autonomy, which was based upon the demand for popular participation in the decision-making process as well as the concept of the sharing of power, posed a fundamental challenge to the absolute powers of the ruling elite during the days of the Pahlavi dynasty. There is no reason to believe that the situation has changed now despite the overthrow of the monarchical system. According to reports, the present regime too is attempting to suppress, by force, the demand for regional autonomy in areas like Kurdistan and Khuzistan.

The question of regime, systemic and national security was also linked with the question of threat from the neighbouring countries, viz, the Soviet Union, Iraq, India, Afghanistan and at one time even Egypt. Often these threats were magnified beyond proportion so as to use them as a justification not only for a more dictatorial policy at home but also to develop linkages to enable the ruling elite to seek the political umbrella of a super power not only for national security but also for regime and systemic security. This was especially true about Iran during the reign of Reza Shah. He did benefit from it. One wonders if he could have

survived the opposition's pressure even in 1953 without the overall western political umbrella. That umbrella continued to shield the Pahlavi dynasty till its last days.

The military policy of Iran also formed a part of its overall response to the threat posed to regime, systemic and national security of Iran. That policy not only included Iran's membership of the military alliance and transfer of large quantities of military equipment (and experts) but also the training of para-military forces like the gendarmerie and of the secret service like the SAVAK. The Iranian regime, in turn, offered to acquire large quantities of very sophisticated weapons under the overall supervision of foreign experts, so as to help in rectifying the balance of payment, reduce the unit price of these equipments and help in the research and development of those weapon systems in the west. It also proposed to fulfil the role of a surrogate by agreeing to take on certain responsibilities like guaranteeing the security of oil and of oil lanes in the region.

Thus, the Iranian regime sought to create a regional and international environment so that the foreign powers would have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo in Iran in favour of the monarchy. This was true not only of the west but also of China and the USSR. Despite all the propaganda to the contrary, relations between Iran and the USSR were not only normal but even cordial. Very important long-term economic, technical and even military agreements were reached between the two countries during the last decade. These linkages have, however, been destabilized now.

The new regime in Iran is also faced primarily with the threat to regime and systemic security. It has succeeded, to some extent, in isolating from political participation and the decision-making process, those liberal, democratic and secular elements that could challenge or threaten its absolute power. But unlike the Shah, who sought to protect himself through the institution of absolute monarchy sugarcoated with modern reforms, the new regime is trying to use Islamic fundamentalism as a bulwark to sustain its absolute power. Also, unlike the Shah, who depended primarily upon the support of the foreign powers and upon the military and para-military forces for his security, the new regime is seeking to mobilize a section of the Iranian masses to buttress the regime and systemic security. This policy does have its

greatly deplored by the Shah; certainly it did remove the single most influential military leader. The danger of a coup remained. In January 1958 General Valiollah Qarani was arrested and jailed on the charge that he sought to overthrow the regime.⁹ Indeed Qarani regarded himself as an Iranian Nasser.¹⁰

Not only were the military leaders suspect, suspicion also fell on politicians, some of whom were apparently loyal to the political system of Iran at that time. Cases of Ghavam, Mossadeq and Amini have been highlighted by several scholars. Ahmad Ghavam was the Iranian premier during the Azerbaijan crisis of 1946 and was responsible for getting the Russian troops out of Iran in return for an oil agreement (which was subsequently rejected by the Iranian *Majlis*). The Shah thought that Ghavam was "flirting with the Russians in order to come to power." He also criticized Ghavam's assurances of autonomy to Azerbaijan and said, "No, it was treason—high treason—even if it was not meant so."¹¹ He felt that Ghavam was giving too many concessions to Azerbaijanis which might finally help them to change the Iranian political system.

Mohammad Mossadeq was another controversial figure in Iranian politics. He was an old politician who had even opposed Reza Khan when he ascended the throne in 1925. For his troubles Mossadeq was banished from Tehran for some time. Subsequently, Mossadeq acquired a status as an independent nationalist who not only successfully got an anti-Soviet oil bill passed in the *Majlis* but also defied British power and nationalized the powerful Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The National Front organized by him attracted assorted groups ranging from religious leaders to students and intellectuals, as well as members of the *Tudeh* Party, which had been officially banned in 1949 following the abortive attempt on the life of the Shah. Many consider Mossadeq an honest nationalist albeit a bit too radical for his times. But according to the Shah he relied upon the communists and was "a ladder for their rise."¹² The Shah

⁹Cottam, R.W., *Nationalism in Iran*, University of Pittsburg Press, 1964, 314.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 315.

¹¹Bayne, E.A., *Persian Kingship in Transition*, American Universities Field Staff Inc., New York.

¹²Reza Shah, n. 4, 83.

also charged him with trying to destroy his dynasty.¹³

The case of Ali Amini was altogether different. He was a blue-blooded aristocrat, big landlord, direct descendant of the Qajjar dynasty and a person with a progressive, if not radical, image. Amini was also responsible for negotiating the 1954 oil agreement. He was Iran's ambassador to the USA and it is reported that American officials made little secret of their endorsement of him. Even the American newspapers began to call the reforms that were going to be launched as Amini's reforms and not the Shah's reforms, thereby helping to build up Amini's image at the cost of the Shah. No wonder Amini had to go. He had become a competitor. The American support to Amini disturbed the Shah and he singled out 1961-62 as the worst period of American interference, when the USA, according to him, tried to impose the "US type of regime on other people."¹⁴

Besides direct threat to the Shah and to monarchy under him, there also existed indirect threats that undermined the systemic security under the monarchy. These threats were represented by the opposition launched by the religious groups, by tribal dissidents, and by the overt and covert "subversive" activities of the groups that were broadly defined as "radicals."

Religion, because of its emotional and socio-cultural appeal and mass base, posed a significant threat to the Iranian political system under the monarchy. Iranian religious leaders were always politically influential and often they were open to influences from outside. Jamaluddin Afghani and his Iranian followers like Mohammad Tabatabai and Sayyed Abdollah Behbehani played a significant role in consolidating the opposition against the Iranian monarchy and the British in the second half of the nineteenth century. The father of the present Shah too had to suffer a setback at the hands of the *ulema* and had to visit holy places like Najf and Karbala to demonstrate his faith in religion.¹⁵

Ultimately he was able to control for some time religious leaders like Sayyed Abolqasim Qashani.

The *ulema* power in Iran, especially in the cities, is concentrated in the *bazaar* or the huge central market area that is the

¹³Ibid., 97.

¹⁴Shah's interview, *US News and World Report*, 27 January 1963, quoted in Bayne, n. 11, 103.

¹⁵Cottam, n. 9, 139.

socio-economic and often the political hub of the city. It provides the equivalent of a proletariat within a social ranking, from porters, artisans, and small shopkeepers or retailers, to wealthy merchants and wholesalers and an important section of the religious class.¹⁶ Islam knits these groups. "The formal religion, Islam, is the ideology of the *bazaar* community in an extreme way. With its high preponderance of individual 'subsistence' operators, the *bazaar* community constitutes a proletariat under the leadership of the religious class, and provides a core of moral support for its more reactionary elements."¹⁷ The *bazaar* is reinforced by the religiously inclined population, especially in the holy cities like Qom and Meshed.

The Iranian clergy draws its right to pass judgment on governmental action by certain constitutional rights that were given to them under the Constitution of 1906. The constitution gave predominant place to the *Shii* religion.¹⁸ Article I of that constitution proclaims "Islam of the true sect of Ja'fariah Ithna Ashariah." The Shah must protect and profess that faith.¹⁹ Article 2 puts certain constraints on the legislative powers of the *Majlis*. It could at no time pass laws that were contradictory to the sacred laws of Islam. The article goes on to specify: "It is self-evident that it is the responsibility of the *ulema* to determine and judge such contradictions. Therefore it is officially decreed that in each legislative session a board of no less than five men, comprised of mujtahids and devout *fuqaha*, who are also aware of the needs and exigencies of the time. . . be nominated full members." The board could reject laws that it thought were contradictory to Islam.²⁰ This provision was binding till the appearance of the twelfth Imam. The *ulema* had been agitating for this right which was granted to them under the Constitution of 1906. They were not getting it because once such a board was constituted it could curtail the Shah's absolute powers.

¹⁶Spooner, Brian, "Religion and society today", in Ehsan Yar-Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies*, New York, 1971, 170.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 171. Peter Avery, *Modern Iran*, London, 1965, 410-11.

¹⁸Wilber, Donald N., *Iran: Past and Present*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1958, 113.

¹⁹Banani, Amin, *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1961, 17.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

Besides manifesting its say as an amorphous political force, religion also provided a channel for positive political action for the religious groups. Several Islamic groups like the *Fedayan Islam* (crusaders of Islam) and *Hezb-e Melal-e Islami* (The Islamic Nation's Party) came into limelight not only because of their extreme religious radicalism but also because of their involvement in assassination attempts in Iran. Khalil Tahmasabi, a follower of the *Fedayan Islam*, was held responsible for shooting dead Premier Ali Razamara on 7 March 1951. The newspapers of this group "promptly, openly and with impunity, boasted of their responsibility for the crime."²¹ Khalil Tahmasabi became a popular hero and was released under popular pressure during the Mossadeq regime.²² Another Premier, Hasan Ali Mansur, a rising young politician, and also the leader of the newly created *Iran-e Novin* party was also shot dead in January 1965 by Mohammad Bokharai who belonged to the *Hezb-e Melal-e Islami*.²³

The Islamic groups played a political role out of proportion to their numerical strength, which was limited to a few thousand. That was possible because of their popular appeal, if not a mass base. These groups were often accused of maintaining links with foreign powers, especially Egypt under President Nasser. The leader of the *Hezb-e Melal-e Islami*, twenty-four-year-old man called Mohammad Kazem Musavi, was accused of being in conspiratorial contact with an unfriendly foreign (perhaps the Egyptian) government.²⁴ These groups were also accused of following an opportunistic policy. In 1952 a *Fedayan Islam* gunman wounded Dr Hossein Fatemi, a leading Mossadeqist. The gunman proclaimed that Mossadeq was his first target.²⁵

The Islamic groups often aligned themselves with other political groups in their opposition to the Shah. For example, they supported Mossadeq during 1951-53. But sometimes these groups would initiate action on their own. The religious riots of 1963 and the riots of 1978 are illustrations of independent political action of the Iranian religious groups.

²¹Marlowe, John, *Iran*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1963, 92.

²²Cottam, n. 9, 210.

²³Jabri, Marwan, "Dilemma in Iran", *Current History*, 48 (285) May 1965, 306.

²⁴Farmayan, n. 5, 121.

²⁵Cottam, n. 9, 151.

The religious riots of 1963 deserve to be analyzed in some detail because they represent the popular reaction to a series of socio-economic and political variables. The economic condition of Iran was very shaky at that time. The country was passing through the third year of its economic depression, which was hurting the middle and lower classes. Certain tribal areas, especially the Qashiqai and Boir Ahmadi tribal areas in the Fars region were in a state of ferment. The intelligentsia was suffering from a sense of political oppression, especially after the strengthening of the secret service following the downfall of the National Front Government in 1953. It was also alleged that Nasser had instigated and supported the riots,²⁶ possibly because of Iran's pro-Israeli policy.

The clergy acted as the main force that initiated the riots. There were two main reasons for their opposition to the Shah's process of modernization like land reform and franchise to women, both of which were opposed on religious bases. Land reforms were primarily opposed on the ground that they violated the inviolability of private property. But there were some other reasons also that added fuel to the controversy. The Shah, despite the opposition of the clergy, personally went to Qom to distribute the estates of the Qom "diocese" and personally handed over the land deeds to the peasants. Qom is the heart of *Shii* Islam and the stronghold of the *ulema* group in Iran. The Shah, standing in a quadrangle before the sacred shrine of Maasumeh—the Immaculate—addressed the crowds of peasants and said, "We are done with social and political parasites. I abhor the 'black reaction' even more than the 'red destruction.'"²⁷ The government also arrested and exiled the respected *mujathid*, Ayatollah Khomeini, from Qom. Khomeini's picture was widely displayed as a symbol of protest against illegitimate authority.²⁸

Serious rioting broke out in Iran on 5 June 1963. "Early in the summer on the commemorative day of the martyrdom of Hosein, most beloved of the *Shii* saints, the clergy cried havoc. Riots broke out first in the southern section of Tehran and then

²⁶Rose, L. Greaves, "1942-1976: The reign of Mohammad Riza Shah", in Hossein Amirsadeghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, New York, 1977, 86.

²⁷Farmayan, n. 5, 107.

²⁸Rose, n. 26, 85.

spread northwards towards the centre of the city. Riots spread to other cities like Shiraz, Qom etc. Thousands were involved and the *bazaars* became virtual battlegrounds.

Riots were put down firmly and ruthlessly. The number of persons killed and wounded ranged from the official figures of 86 killed and 100-200 wounded²⁹ to several hundreds killed and over 1500 injured, as claimed by nationalists. These riots did not achieve any worthwhile purpose because despite mass participation in response to the *ulema* appeal and involvement, they were not the culmination of a mass movement. There was not even sufficient coordination between the *ulema* and the secular nationalist forces in Iran. "Both the religious and the nationalist leaders recognized the possibility that the June rioting might have been successful had there been prior collaboration of the two groups. The result has been a religio-nationalist alliance that bears a close resemblance to that of Mossadeq and Qashani in 1951."³⁰ Maybe the Islamic-Marxist alliance of the 1970s can be traced back to the lessons drawn from the abortive June 1963 riots in Iran.

Large-scale rioting once again broke out in the first half of 1978 which finally culminated in what amounted to mass uprising in several major cities of Iran. Many people died in the firing by the police and the army—estimates range from a few hundred to several thousands. The government imposed martial law on 6 September 1978 and began large-scale arrests of the Iranian opposition leaders. The Iranian opposition had crystallized in 1977-78, following some liberalization. Several groups, old and new, had consolidated their position. The old National Front became active under Mr Bakhtiar. The *ulema* got organized under the leadership of Ayatollah Sayed Kazem Shariat madari of Qom, who was working from within the sanctuary of the renowned Qom mosque. The extremist *ulema* leader, Ayatollah Rihollah Khomeini, continued to operate from his exile in Iraq and then Paris. A new group called the Iranian Society (or Committee) for the Defence of Liberty and Human Rights was formed under the presidentship of Mehdi Bazargan and supported by others like Lahidji and Sayed Djavadi. Thus the 1978 riots denoted not purely a religious movement but a mass movement supported by

²⁹Cottam, n. 9, 308.

³⁰Ibid., 309.

a cross-section of the Iranian population ranging from conservative-religious groups led by *ulema* and supported by the *bazaari* population, moderates like the Iranian Society for the Defence of Liberty and Human Rights, old groups like the National Front and the student leaders, and extreme radicals like the Islamic Marxists, though there is a marked tendency to minimise the role played by the communist elements. Yet despite the active support of these several political groups, the movement was basically a mass movement and not a party movement. That was one of the causes of its dramatic success and, if the situation is not properly handled by the politicians, can also become a cause of its failure. Any split in the top political groups would negate the achievement of the mass movement and once again breed mass discontent not only against the regime but also against the politicians, who for their own narrow interests might betray the mass movement.

As things stand the September uprising dealt a serious blow to the so-called policy of liberalization initiated by the Shah's regime. According to Bakhtiar of the National Front a point of no return had been reached and reconciliation with the regime was no longer possible after the blood bath. He was reported to have said, "We are faced with an army of occupation which fires indiscriminately and kills the innocent."³¹ The *ulema* leaders under the guidance of Ayatollah Sayed Kazem Shariatmadari demanded that the Shah should put in force the Iranian Constitution of 1966 which provided for a committee of five *ulema* to supervise legislation and ensure its compatibility with Islam. This group operating from Qom was at that time reluctant to support fully the demands of Ayatollah Rihollah Khomeini, who was demanding the Shah's violent overthrow. According to Ayatollah Shariatmadari, "History and the Iranian nation alone, not I, will decide whether the monarchy should continue."³² But neither the radicals nor the extremists were prepared to have a dialogue with the Shah or with the old Premier Sharif Emami, who was brought because of his image as a conservative man who might be

³¹Gueyras, Jean, "Iran, le massacre des manifestants de Teherane", *Le Monde, Selection Hebdomadaire*, 13 September 1978, 3.

³²Cooley, John K., "Shia Muslim foes reject sitting down with the Shah", *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 September 1978.

acceptable to the *ulema*.³³ In the absence of a dialogue the country was governed through the instrument of guns under martial law. But the question that was posed was: "How many times would the soldiers continue to fire upon their brothers?"³⁴ Ultimately the guns fell silent and the Shah had to leave, probably never to return.

Besides religion, tribalism too had posed a threat to Iranian systemic security. The threat was posed by the centrifugal forces inherent in the tribal socio-economic hierarchy and its relationship with the central authority. Or in some cases it was the result of demographic composition and geographical location of the non-Persian minorities in Iran. The problems arose because these non-Persian minorities occupy areas on the periphery of Iran, and secondly, these minorities are part of similar groups in the neighbouring states: Azerbaijanis in the USSR, Kurds in Iraq, Syria and Turkey, Arabs in Iraq, and Baluchis in Pakistan. Very often, therefore, problems of tribalism in Iran assume transnational proportions.

Tribal autonomy has always played a crucial role in Iranian politics. In the past, "All the tribes recognized the suzerainty of the Shah and his prerogative to name the tribal leadership. But actual interference in tribal affairs was rare, and most tribes remained indifferent to the central government as long as they were left alone."³⁵ But several tribes did occasionally rebel against the central government. These rebellions were either purely tribal affairs or were partly inspired by foreign powers interfering in the internal affairs of Iran. In 1907 the Turcomans rebelled. The tribal chief was allegedly against the new constitution. "Whether this wish was motivated by his personal loyalty to the Shah, to his ideological disapproval of democracy, or to pressure from the Russians, is not known. But this revolt demonstrated that the political attitude of a tribal chief could have a great bearing on political developments in the capital."³⁶

The Russians were not the only foreign power to use the tribes as pressure groups. The British too adopted the same policy, especially around the oil fields and the refinery sites. They

³³Ibid.

³⁴Gueyras, n. 31, 3.

³⁵Cottam, no. 9, 52.

³⁶Ibid., 53.

befriended the Bakhtiari tribe³⁷ and the Arab tribe in Khuzistan. When oil was discovered at the turn of the century, the hold of the central authority was very weak in that area. Thus the British oil interests began to cultivate the Bakhtiari tribal leaders by offering them protection money. A Bakhtiari Oil Company, designed to give to that tribe a cut from the oil revenue, was also floated in April 1909. It was also supposed to strengthen the hands of the British against the central government in Tehran.³⁸ Britain also approached the Sheikh of Muhammara to permit it to build an oil refinery at Abadan. The Sheikh nominally owed allegiance to the Persian government. But in effect he possessed within Iranian borders an independent kingdom which he personally ruled without effective hindrance from the Government of Tehran. British government made a treaty with the Sheikh "which in effect recognized him as the ruler of a separate sovereign state!"³⁹ Under that treaty he agreed to make available a one-square-mile area in a virtually uninhabitable mud flat known as Abadan island. On their part, the British government guaranteed to maintain the Sheikh's sovereign position. He also helped the British to capture Basra during World War I.⁴⁰ The British, however, ditched Sheikh Khazal of Muhammara when Reza Shah established his firm control over that area in 1924-25.

The power of the tribal leaders to pose a challenge to the central authority was broken by Reza Khan after he came to power. Though a few tribal leaders did try to raise their head after his deposition in 1941, tribalism did not pose a serious threat to Reza Shah. Tribes, as sub-national groups, however, continued to pose a challenge to the systemic security of Iran. But that threat came more in the nature of "radical" movements rather than tribalism *per se*, like movements in the Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Khuzistan and Baluchistan regions of Iran. The

³⁷Garthwates, Gene R. "The Bakhtiyar Khan, the Government of Iran and the British, 1846-1915", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3(1), January 1972, 24-44.

³⁸Reza Shah, n. 4, 270.

³⁹Ibid., 270, and Cottam, n. 9, 111.

⁴⁰Burrell, R.M., "Iran and the Persian Gulf: some aspects of the situation in 1920s and 1930s", in Derek Hopwood, ed., *The Arabian Peninsula, Society and Politics*, Totowa, New Jersey, 1972, 1963.

question was further complicated by the fact that these movements also developed an anti-Shah bias and were often encouraged by outside powers inimical to the Shah of Iran.

The question of Azerbaijan dominated the Iranian political scene during and after the Second World War. During the Second World War, when northern Iran was occupied by the Soviet troops, left-oriented republics were created in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, allegedly with active Soviet cooperation. The Soviet troops prevented the central government from imposing its authority and from crushing the newly formed governments. The issue was complicated because it was also linked up with the question of withdrawal of foreign troops from Iran and the Soviet demand for an agreement giving it a monopoly over the exploitation of oil resources in northern Iran. The question was not resolved at the United Nations. It was finally settled after a great deal of diplomatic negotiations and a dash of Iranian diplomatic tact.

The Shah was greatly disturbed by these events. He also felt that Premier Ghavam was offering concessions to the communists which would eventually undermine the political security of Iran. Bayne, quoting the Shah, says, "If [Ghavam] had not been stopped, the country would have been finished. In a year or two years, they would have attacked the central government with stronger forces. They had already sent people—students—to tank-training schools and airforce schools and once back, equipped with tanks and airplanes, they would have finished everything."⁴¹ This extreme view is not shared by other scholars. Cottam feels that the politically aware population of Azerbaijan resented the Soviet-imposed regime and hated the police state that went with it.⁴² Thus the 1945-46 period, in fact, indicated a trend not of tribal nationalism but of radicalism. It was feared that Azerbaijanis, who had even in the past played an important progressive role in the Iranian nationalist movement, might once again become a vanguard of an anti-Shah movement. Thus, the Azerbaijan case differs to some extent from tribal nationalisms in Kurdistan, Khuzistan and Baluchistan.

Unlike the Azerbaijanis, Kurdish nationalism had been a

⁴¹Bayne, n. 11, 138.

⁴²Cottam, n. 9, 129.

strong motive force that has influenced the politics of that area for decades. There was a Kurdish revolt against the Ottoman authority in 1877. Iraq and Syria were parts of the Ottoman Empire at that time. In 1880 an abortive attempt was made to unite the Kurds of Iran and Turkey. Definite moves were made after the First World War to create a Kurdish state. The treaty of Sevres did incorporate provision for Kurdish autonomy. The treaty was rejected by the Turkish nationalists for reasons other than the Kurdish question and the treaty of Lausanne of 1923 submerged the Kurdish question and, instead, the Ottoman Empire was divided into mandates that further split the Kurdish population.

At the moment large Kurdish minorities occupy a triangle in the Middle East that fits into four different states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. There is some controversy about the total Kurdish population. According to Cottam, Kurds number about three million, and 700,000 of them live in Iran.⁴³ Catudal puts the total Kurdish population at more than nine million and about three and a half million are supposed to live in Iran.⁴⁴ The Kurdish nationalists, however, reject these figures and claim twenty million as the total Kurdish population.

The Kurds have revolted against the central authorities in Turkey, Iran and Iraq in the inter-war period. These revolts were harshly suppressed. The Turkish government refused to accept the Kurdish personality and called them mountain Turks. In Iran, Reza Khan had to suppress the Kurds who, under the leadership of Aga Ismail Smitqu, were demanding independence. The revolt was finally put down in 1930. In Iraq too the Kurds maintained their separate identity and continued to revolt against the central authority. In 1930 the Kurdish leadership in Iraq passed on to Mullah Mustafa al-Barazani, who remains one of the top leaders of this movement. According to Cottam the Iraqi Kurdish movement did affect the Kurds in Iran "whose receptivity for Kurdish nationalism is considerable."⁴⁵

This community of Kurdish interests across the borders manifested itself during the Second World War. Mullah Mustafa al-

⁴³Ibid., 65-66.

⁴⁴Catudal Jr., Honore M., "The war in Kurdistan: end of a national struggle?" *International Relations*, 5(3), May 1976, 1025.

⁴⁵Cottam, n. 9, 74.

Barazani, an Iraqi Kurd, led a movement which, with the help of the Soviet presence in northern Iran, led to the creation of a Kurdish republic, the Republic of Mehabad⁴⁶ or the *Sauj Bulaq*, in January 1946 which occupied a narrow strip of land east of the Iraqi and Turkish frontiers. The Kurdish republic ended in 1946 following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops. Some of its leaders were arrested and hanged by the Iranian government. Others like Mullah Mustafa Barazani escaped to the USSR where they were given a high rank and allowed to broadcast from Erivan, the capital of Armenia.⁴⁷ In the post-war period the Kurds of Iran were sharply brought to heel but not in Iraq where the Kurdish movement continued to pose a challenge to the central government and thus directly affected Iranian politics.

The Iranian government was afraid of Kurdish nationalism and its impact on regional politics. Taimur Bakhtiar, Director of Internal Security of Iran, in an interview immediately after the Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958, said that the Kurds of Syria and Iraq had requested union with Iran.⁴⁸ This can be connected with the clash between Arab nationalism and Kurdish nationalism and the fact that Nasser's influence was strong in Syria (UAR) and also in Iraq. It is possible that the Kurds might have hoped to counter Arab national pressure by using the Iranian umbrella. But Taimur Bakhtiar had another angle to the question. According to him President Nasser might also attempt to create a Kurdish satellite state to provide a land link between the USSR and the UAR (Syria). More fuel was added to the fear by an article by S.C. Sulzberger, which said that there were indications of a Soviet plan to upset the Shah's regime by "direct proxies." According to him the powerful Barazani Kurds of Iraq and the Qashiqai tribe in Iran were to be used for that purpose. He even said that the leaders of these two tribes had met in Munich to work out an alliance and to declare war against the Shah.⁴⁹

As discussed earlier, the tribalism of Azerbaijan (as opposed to radicalism of some Azerbaijanis) was not a movement challenging Iranian nationalism. The Kurdish nationalism did pose that

⁴⁶Roosevelt, A., "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 1, July 1947, 247-69.

⁴⁷Catudal, n. 44, 1028.

⁴⁸*New York Times*, 26 July 1958, quoted in Ramazani, n. 7, 400.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 27 April 1959, quoted in Ramazani, n. 7, 401.

challenge, not primarily because of strong Kurdish national identity in Iran proper, but because of the Kurdish nationalism radiating from Iraq. This would continue as long as the Kurdish identity remained a political challenge to Iraqi nationalism. The question of Khuzistan, however, falls into an altogether separate category. It began with a phase of tribal separatism encouraged by the British because of their oil interests in the *Shatt al-Arab* region but finally it got its biggest boost as a result of the development of Arab nationalism, and the Arab-Iran rivalry during the last two decades.

In the past, the remoteness of the area from the central authority in Tehran, a predominantly Arabic-speaking population, and tribal loyalties, isolated the area from the mainstream of Iranian nationalism. Following the growing British interests in the Gulf, and especially after the prospects of oil discovery in or around the area, the Sheikh of Muhammara acquired added leverage *vis-a-vis* the British. He was ranked as a great chieftain whose power compared with that of his counterparts in Kuwait and other Persian Gulf sheikhdoms. Following the emergence of a strong central authority in Tehran which could secure British oil interests in the area, the Arab Sheikh was denied the support.

The question cropped up again during the Second World War. In 1946 several Arab tribesmen called for Khuzistan's incorporation into Iraq. It could have been the result of the British design to ensure the oil-bearing region around the *Shatt al-Arab* to themselves if the Soviets were going to have permanent linkages in northern Iran. The move was dropped after the Soviet withdrawal from there.

The growth of Arab nationalism in the Gulf in the post-war period also seeped into Khuzistan, despite efforts by the Iranian government to submerge the Arab identity of the area into a larger Iranian identity by cultural assimilation and through changes in its demographic composition. The question became more important in the middle of the sixties following the intensification of the Arab-Iranian rivalry. As early as December 1964, the conference of Arab jurists supported the Arab claims over Khuzistan.⁵⁰ Egypt under Nasser made it an important issue in its anti-

⁵⁰Ramazani, n. 2, 41.

Iranian propaganda. Iraq too made it a part of its confrontation with Iran.

The Iranians looked at the Khuzistan question mainly from three angles. Diplomatically, it represented the Arab-Iranian rivalry. Economically, it posed a challenge to Iran's oil industry and to its trade in the vital *Shatt al-Arab* region. Security-wise the movement posed a dual threat: a threat to the oil and other installations by the guerrillas operating under the umbrella of the movement and the possible links between the Arab guerrilla organization and the anti-Shah guerrillas in Iran. There were reports of guerrilla raids from the Iraqi side in which some were killed and others arrested. Arms like the Kalachnikov guns, rocket launchers and hand grenades were recovered from them.⁵¹ Despite the loud propaganda the movement did not pose a systemic threat to Iran. The Arab population was already reduced to a minority status. Cultural assimilation of two decades was also showing results. Moreover, the area was too vital for Iran to be relinquished without fighting. In fact, the question should be seen in the perspective of the Arab-Iranian confrontation, and, like the controversy over the name Persian/Arab Gulf, would act as a barometer to judge the level of this confrontation. The question is dormant following the Iraq-Iran detente of 1975, but is liable to be resuscitated if and when Arab-Iranian rivalry flares up again.

The Baluchi problem, though tied up with Iran's eastern frontier, did not originate with the Baluchis in Iran, but was affected by it because of the consequences of the Baluchi movement in a neighbouring state, Pakistan, and the long-term effect it might have had upon the so-called grand strategy to encircle Iran. The Baluchi movement had existed in Pakistan even prior to 1971 but the disintegration of Pakistan following the Bangladesh crisis of 1971 gave a new impetus to similar movements in Baluchistan, Pakhtoonistan and Sindh, which eventually posed a serious threat to the integrity even of West Pakistan. These movements, which were primarily manifestations of maladjustments in the Pakistani political system, were projected beyond all proportions as international conspiracies designed not only to disintegrate Pakistan but also to pose a serious threat to the territorial integrity and

⁵¹ *Kayhan International*, 3 July 1972. See also *ibid.*, 1 August 1972.

sovereign independence of Iran itself.

It was claimed that Iraq and the Soviet Union were seeking to influence the Baluchi movement. Pamphlets demanding independence for greater Baluchistan (including areas from Iran) were allegedly printed in the Soviet Union and distributed in Pakistani Baluchistan. That was claimed to be the manifesto of the Baluchistan Liberation Front which was supposed to operate from Iraq. The Soviet officials in Islamabad categorically denied their involvement in it.⁵² There were, however, reports of attempts to smuggle arms through diplomatic channels by the Iraqi embassy in Pakistan which caused a great deal of tension between Pakistan and Iraq.

As far as Iran was concerned the Baluchi movement in Pakistan posed a four-fold danger to its security. Firstly, the development of a separate Baluchi nationalist independence movement would attract the Baluchi population in Iran also. Secondly, the destabilization in West Pakistan might alter the balance of power in South Asia and thus make the eastern flank of Iran more vulnerable. Thirdly, Iranians seemed to link the Baluchi and the Pakhtoon movements with a wider plan designed to encircle Iran with hostile forces. Lastly, the Shah perceived the changes of 1971 in Pakistan as the beginning of a chain reaction. The Shah of Iran even compared it to a potential Vietnam. He is reported to have told the *New York Times* that if Pakistan did fall apart, "the least we could do in our own interest is to take some kind of preventive reaction." The columnist interpreted it as Iran might be compelled to occupy Baluchistan.⁵³ The Shah reiterated the point in his interview to *Le Monde* on 24 June 1974.

The Iranian regime was caught in the web of its own propaganda and was exploited by the Pakistani government at that time. Iranians, in their bid to strengthen Mr Bhutto's hands, provided Pakistan with economic, military and diplomatic support which was used by Mr Bhutto to impose his personal rule over Pakistan. The popular unrest, of which the Baluchi movement was one part, and the widespread riots which finally led to the downfall of Mr Bhutto substantially proves the point that by linking the issue of stability of West Pakistan with the stability

⁵²*The Statesman* (New Delhi), 25 January 1973.

⁵³*The Hindu* (Madras), 23 April 1973.

of Mr Bhutto's regime, the Iranian government had limited, for the time being, its options in South Asia. Finally it was proved that the Baluchi problem was primarily a domestic issue in Pakistan's internal politics. The Iranian reaction, however, illustrated the maximum threat perception of the Iranian regime.

Besides the threat to systemic security posed by tribal loyalty and sub-nationalism and also due to the threat posed by religious conservatism, the Iranian monarchy also faced a growing threat from political opposition that gradually took the shape of dissidence and finally of a guerrilla movement. Over the years one witnessed the gradual transformation of the organized opposition from a constitutional to an extra-constitutional form. The main reason for this change was the policy of repression unleashed in Iran, especially after 1953, and the lack of political environment that would permit a legitimate opposition to function effectively. The opposition was treated as opponent and therefore, under the prevailing circumstances, had to go underground. Government's efforts to create political parties and to organize elections failed because of the virtual rejection of the authentic opposition to play the game according to the rules laid down by the monarchy. Thus Iranian politics gradually developed into a two-tier system: an open one and the other clandestine. The open system maintained a facade of establishment-sponsored constitutionalism while the clandestine system was nothing more than a running battle between the opposition and the secret police, the SAVAK. Over a number of years, despite the propaganda to the contrary, the forces of the opposition acquired not only a mass base but also a more radical programme. The issue was presented by both sides in black and white and both sides ignored the crucial intermediate "grey area" that is so vital for a constitutional and orderly transformation of any society. In the absence of this political cushion Iranian politics acquired a proportionately heavy dose of radicalism as signified by fundamentalist Islam, Islamic Marxism and the guerrilla movements that became active in the seventies.

The gradual radicalization of Iranian opposition politics can be traced back to the first decade of the present century when the Iranian nationalists fought for the constitutional revolution. The strong arm of Reza Khan did not permit organized opposition to emerge. The result was that it crystallized as an anti-monarchy

force through the *Tudeh* Party. The post-war period witnessed the radicalization of politics under the leadership of Dr Mossadeq, especially during the crucial days of the National Front Government from 1951 to 1953. The organized opposition was hounded in Iran since the anti-Mossadeq *coup d'état* and has had no chance to pose a constitutional challenge to the Shah. The *Tudeh* Party had already been officially banned in 1949 following an abortive attempt on the life of the Shah. Others were also suppressed. Thus in the absence of constitutional opportunities these relatively moderate forces acquired a back seat and gave way to more extreme and radical groups like the Islamic Marxists and urban guerrillas and the *ulema*. It, however, should not be forgotten that these less radical groups have not lost their mass appeal. The role of the National Front and the Iranian Society for the Defence of Liberty and Human Rights, though less radical than other groups, did influence the masses during the 1978-79 uprising in Iran.

The "radicals" represent shades from Maoist to Islamic fundamentalists. According to a leading scholar on Iranian affairs, "there is little evidence of either coordinated or a planned campaign of terrorism."⁵⁴ But Iranian newspapers seem to think differently. *Kayhan* published some details about linkages between the Islamic-Marxist leader, Abdul Hassan Banisadr, who reportedly lived in France and the exiled religious extremist, Mohammad Khomeini.⁵⁵ The weekly *al-Destour* of Beirut published on 9 September 1974 some details about the clandestine organizations working against the Iranian regime. They were the Iran Liberation Movement, the Popular Strugglers (Islamic), the Popular Commandos (leftists) and People's Hopes (radical nationalists). According to *al-Destour* there was complete unity between the first and the fourth group and a certain degree of coordination with the third. *The Los Angeles Times* of 3 October 1973, quoting its Beirut despatch, also mentioned another name: Committee for Free Iran. This committee was against the arms purchase by the Shah and was allegedly involved in an attempt

⁵⁴Burrell, R.M., "Iran and her neighbouring states: security and subversion", in *Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan: Tensions and Dilemma, Washington Papers*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, Vol. II, n. 20, 1974, 11.

⁵⁵*Kayhan International*, 16 September 1975.

to kidnap the Shah, his family, as well as the American ambassador in Iran—a long list indeed.

These guerrillas have been credited with several assassination attempts. Important amongst them were the death of Lt. General Said Taheri, a police officer responsible for the anti-terrorist activities, who was shot dead outside his house in August 1972. Americans too have been marked as the target of this group. Lt. Colonel Lewis Hawkins, financial comptroller of the US military mission, was shot dead in Tehran in June 1973. Two more US military officers were killed in 1975 and three were killed in an ambush near Tehran in August 1976. The guerrilla movement on its own might not have been able to physically overthrow the government, but it kept the pot boiling. Also, the fact that hundreds of these guerrillas were either executed or imprisoned spoke of the real or potential danger, the Shah's regime felt, they posed for it.

The Iranian regime was searching for the sources of the threat to its systemic security not only from within the country but also from abroad. There were several allegations of direct and indirect foreign support to the Iranian opposition movements, both right-wing and left-wing, not only from some of the communist countries but also from radical Arab states like Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Libya. At one stage even India was indirectly accused of supporting the Baluchi movement which the Iranian government thought threatened its national security. Maybe some of these allegations were valid and the Iranian regime did face a covert threat from some of its neighbouring states. But it is a mute point whether these foreign governments were supporting the Iranian opposition purely for ideological reasons or were trying to use it as a politico-diplomatic lever in their confrontation with Iran.

Iranian fear of covert Soviet support to elements hostile to the Iranian regime can be traced back even to the pre-war period, when Czarist Russia too used this tactic to compete for power in the Persian court. The Soviet government also supported the *Tudeh* Party of Iran. Its role in northern Iran during and after the Second World War needs no elaboration. The Cold War brought new factors that highlighted the Soviet-Iranian confrontation. Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact, its acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957, the Soviet fear that Iran

might permit the USA to establish intermediate-range missiles in Iran and the US-Iran bilateral pact of 1959 created tension between these two neighbouring states that was sharply reflected in the propaganda war between them. Radio Iran Courier (*Radjo-ye Peyk-ye Iran*) began operating in December 1957, probably from Bulgaria. National Voice of Iran (*Seda-ye Milli-ye Iran*) was set up in April 1959 and probably operated from Baku area. Both these radio stations broadcasted anti-Shah programmes and acted as the spokesmen for the *Tudeh* Party. Broadcasts were in Persian, Kurdish and Azerbaijani languages. Radio Iran Courier was shifted to an East Berlin address in 1962 following Iran-USSR detente. National voice of Iran was discontinued in 1972.⁵⁶ Following the detente between Iran and the USSR in 1962 not only did the intensity of these broadcasts decline but the Soviet publications also began praising some of the reforms of the Shah and criticizing his religious opponents. The Soviets not only condemned the religious riots of 1963 but also praised the land reforms.⁵⁷

Though Iran's relations with the Soviet Union, after its detente, did not reach the low ebb of the pre-1962 period, yet they were never totally free from tension. Iran looked with suspicion not only upon the Arab policy of the USSR but also its growing naval and politico-military presence in and around the Indian Ocean region, especially in the Gulf (Iraq) and the Bab al-Mandeb area (Somalia and Yemen). The Soviets were also deeply committed to supporting the radical movement in Dhofar which was resented by the Shah. After 1971 the Iranians developed a thesis that they were being encircled by the Soviet Union. Thus there were enough causes for tension, which was reflected in mild or strong broadcasts and controlled support to the anti-Shah movements.

⁵⁶Summary of World Broadcasts (BBC, London), Part IV, 27 June 1974.

⁵⁷B., Y., "Reactionary plot in Iran", *New Times* (Moscow), (24), 19 June 1963, 17. Contrast the earlier anti-Shah and the subsequent pro-Shah tone of the following articles by V. Medvedev, "Iran's feudal land reform", *New Times* (24) 13 June 1962, 22-3 and "Iran's land reforms", *ibid.*, (7), 20 February 1963, 22-3. Also see the article by K. Ivanovsky, "Iran: below at feudalism", *International Affairs* (Moscow), (3), March 1963, 88.

The Iranians also considered the Chinese as a potential threat to their security. The most active opponents of the Shah were the Maoist guerrillas. Also the Chinese, at one time, were staunch supporters of the Dhofar movement and offered all possible political and military support to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG). The Chinese-trained revolutionary force there was even called the Mao Tse-tung Company. The Chinese experts trained Dhofari guerrillas and occasionally accompanied them into battle.⁵⁸ But the Chinese support was withdrawn following the Sino-Iranian detente in 1972. Subsequently, the Cubans were treated as the most serious external threat to Iran's regional security.⁵⁹ The Shah of Iran expressed fear of the possible threat posed by the Cuban soldiers in South Yemen. He said that they might support the Dhofar rebels just as they had extended their support to one of the factions in Angola.⁶⁰ The Iranian government also broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba on 7 April 1976, following the meeting between Castro and the *Tudeh* Party leaders in Moscow at the 25th CPSU Congress.

Nearer home, the Iranian regime found a threat to its security among the radical forces in the Arab World. This threat can be divided into two parts, direct support by anti-Shah forces in Iran from radical Arab movements and indirect threat to Iranian systemic security posed by Arab radicalism, republicanism, anti-imperialism, non-alignment and even Arab nationalism, as exemplified in the controversy over the name Persian or Arab Gulf and over the question of Khuzistan and the islands in the Gulf.

In the past, Gamal Abdul Nasser was looked upon as a threat to Iran. This image persisted even after the Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958. Nasser symbolized the Arab threat to Iran.⁶¹ One reason why Nasser was feared was his acceptance by the Iranian nationalists as one of their heroes. "Iranian Nationalists who supported and still sympathize with Dr Mossadeq think Nasser is fighting their battle. His enemies, the Western imperialists, are their

⁵⁸ *Kahyan International*, 27 December 1970.

⁵⁹ Wolfgang, Berner, "Cuban intervention in Africa and Arabia", *Aussen Politik*, 27 (3), 1976, 333.

⁶⁰ *The Hindu*, 21 February 1976.

⁶¹ Bayne, n. 11, 209

enemies. Far from being a figure to be feared, Nasser is a hero to large number of Iranian Nationalists . . . Propaganda attempts by the government to stir fear of Nasser have failed."⁶² Nasser's attempt towards Arab unity, his cry for Arab nationalism which reached even the small sheikhdoms in the Gulf, his military support to the republican regime in Yemen and even his alleged support to the Islamic group in Iran in 1963 were also seen as a threat by the Iranian regime.

The Nasserite threat declined by 1964 and Nasser's influence contained after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. By July 1968, following the coup led by the radical wing of the *Baath* Party, Iraq replaced Egypt as the new centre of anti-Iranian activities in the Arab World. It took up the Arab leadership on the question of the "Arab" Gulf and Khuzistan. Iraq also tried to project its quarrel with Iran within the framework of an Arab-Iranian dispute.

Iraq was accused of directly interfering in Iran's internal affairs. Among other things it was reported that anti-Iranian broadcasts were made from within Iraq. Voice of Iranian Kurdistan (*Denge Kurdistanî Erana*) began broadcasting programmes in July 1973. Radio Inspiration (*Radio Sorush*) started in December 1973. It was in Persian and "educated" Iranian masses in revolutionary struggle by citing works of Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara and by giving examples of Algerian and African guerrillas. Radio of the Patriots (*Radjo-ye Mihanparastan*) began operating in April 1974 and the Shah and the Iranian regime were its main targets. It should be noted that these propaganda activities coincided with the Kurdish war and subsided following the March 1975 detente between Iraq and Iran.

Iraqi regime was also accused of instigating a *coup d'etat* in Iran. A spokesman of the Iranian security forces, in a televised conference on 13 December 1970, revealed the details of an abortive *coup d'etat*. According to him, Lt. Col. Teymur Bakhtiar was supposed to organize that coup with the help of the Iraqi Baath regime, the *Tudeh* Party and other banned groups like the Confederation of Iranian Students. Large quantities of small arms, explosives and money were seized. Several persons

⁶²Cottam, n. 9, 116.

were also arrested.⁶³ Iraq was also accused of regularly supporting anti-Shah guerrillas in Iran.⁶⁴ It was also alleged that the Libyan government of President Qadafi had started supporting these guerrillas.⁶⁵ Besides the Arab governments, Palestinian organizations like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was reportedly supporting Iranian guerrillas either directly or through common links with the guerrillas in Dhofar.⁶⁶ It was reported that the Dhofar group had also developed links with the *Tudeh* Party.

The Shah was obsessed with his fear of radicalism. That attitude became very clear when one analyzed his fear of the developments in Dhofar or the potentials of a radical *coup d'état* in any place in the Gulf. He made his point very clear to the well-known Egyptian journalist, Hasnein Heikal, in an interview published in *al-Anwar* (Beirut) on 2 September 1975. Explaining his reasons for intervening militarily in Oman he said that he could not tolerate the emergence of a communist regime in the Gulf. Besides its threat to Iran's political system, such an eventuality, according to the Shah, posed a threat to Iran's life-line in the Gulf. He was even afraid of the potentials of a *coup d'état* in any place in the Gulf. The Shah had always been pessimistic about the future of the traditional regimes in the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia.⁶⁷ What would happen if another Col. Qadafi-type leader took over in Saudi Arabia, he asked Arnaud de Borchgrave of *Newsweek*.⁶⁸

A study of Iran's threat assessment in this context highlights two essential factors. Firstly, it emphasizes the maximum threat perception of the Iranian ruling elite. At best, it might have honestly believed in it or at worst it might have used it as a scapegoat for its domestic and foreign propaganda. Secondly, these threats were more politico-diplomatic rather than ideological.

⁶³*Kayhan International*, 24 December 1970.

⁶⁴Burrell, n. 54, 12.

⁶⁵*Kayhan International*, 23 May 1976.

⁶⁶Weinbaum, Marvin G., "Iran and Israel", *Orbis*, 18 (4), Winter 1975, 1081.

⁶⁷Cottrell, Alvin J., "Concern over Saudi Arabia's viability: an exclusive interview with the Shah of Iran", *New Middle East*, (31), April 1971, 22.

⁶⁸*Newsweek*, 21 May 1973, 44.

Interestingly enough, despite the virulent propaganda about the threat from the communist countries, one notices a gradual decline in their support to anti-Shah forces after Iran's detente with the USSR and China in 1962 and 1972 respectively. Moreover, that detente also strengthened the Shah's hands *vis-a-vis* the *Tudeh* Party and the Maoist guerrillas in Iran. Similarly the detente between Iran and some Arab states also reduced the covert support to anti-Shah forces. Thus, these ebbs and tides of foreign support to anti-Shah movements in Iran go a long way to prove that support for such covert actions was not primarily based on ideological grounds but was *per se* an instrument of inter-state diplomacy.

Iranian responses to these threats were as varied as the threats themselves. Since the Iranian political system was synonymous with the monarchical system, every effort was made to strengthen the roots of the system and to obtain legitimacy for the same. This was sought to be achieved both through a link with divinity and also through the constitutional process. Both were useful in a mixed society like Iran with a population which was not politically modernized and articulate and which was subjected to sustained pro-Shah propaganda conducted by the state.

Attempts to attain legitimacy for the Iranian monarchy were made by linking the Pahlavi dynasty with the glorious tradition of monarchy established by Cyrus the Great more than 2500 years ago. The Shah of Iran, commenting upon it, said, "During the many centuries since Cyrus's days, we have suffered invasions as well as having ourselves invaded other lands and controlled vast territories; but the continuity of our monarchy has remained essentially unbroken . . . Over the great time-span the monarchy has brought unity out of diversity."⁶⁹ No wonder the Iranian government celebrated the 2500 years of Iranian monarchy with great fanfare. Scholars too have added their best to popularize the link of the Pahlavi dynasty with Cyrus the Great:

The assumption by Mohammad Reza Shah of the title of Aryamehr reaffirmed this revival of the primordial spirit of Iran fostered by a monarchy whose aim was to combine the continuity of the ancient principles with modern transforma-

⁶⁹Reza Shah, n. 4, 327.

tions. It was in the same vein that the Majles in March 1976 adopted a new calendar that begins with the accession to the throne of Cyrus II (the Great) 2,535 years earlier. This decision was designed to further strengthen the country's attachment to the national Iranian tradition which has been inseparably inter-woven with the institution of monarchy . . . The notion of sacred kingship still appeared to be consciously cultivated in Iran twenty five centuries after the foundation of the Achaemenian Empire. . . ."⁷⁰

Apart from proving the links of the present monarchy with that of Cyrus the Great, efforts were also made to project an impression that the Shah had the blessings of God, and especially of Ali and Abbas, who are revered specially by the *Shii* population. The Shah claimed that when he was ill as a child he saw the vision of Ali and got well, that Abbas saved him when he fell down from a horse and that he saw the Imam in the royal palace in Shimram.⁷¹ All that prompted the Shah to believe that he was favoured by God. "From the time I was six or seven, I have felt that perhaps there is a supreme being who is guiding me."⁷² The Shah's almost miraculous escape from the bullets of the assassin in 1949 buttressed that feeling further. "Perhaps I may be forgiven for thinking that this incident seemed to fit into the pattern, which had so early taken shape in my mind, of God's support. I know that many will deny that God supports anything or anybody. But now, as in my childhood days, my reliance on God affords me a firm foundation for thought and for action."⁷³ In an interview with E. A. Bayne, the Shah reiterated his belief by saying, "Four times in my reign I have been threatened seriously, and four times my life has been spared. I must confess that I am beginning to have a mystical sense about my job."⁷⁴

Thus, it was argued, that if God had thought fit to save

⁷⁰Pio Fillippani-Ronconi, "The tradition of sacred kingship in Iran", in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Hoover Institute Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1977, 83.

⁷¹Reza Shah, n. 4, 54-5.

⁷²Ibid., 55.

⁷³Ibid., 57.

⁷⁴Bayne, n. 11, 38.

the Shah, He has a vested interest in what he was doing. Such a logic could have been acceptable to the traditional Iranian population, especially in the interior. Keeping in line with that logic posters were displayed in Iran which showed the Shah and the Quran. Besides attempting to neutralize the charges that the Shah was against religion, these posters showing the Shah and the Quran "symbolize the duty of obedience to the pious ruler, and presumably they strengthen the loyalty of the simple, traditional religious-minded masses."⁷⁵ According to Binder, the younger intellectuals either denied religion or criticized it for passive support of the regime. The *ulema* and other religiously sophisticated people in the *bazaar* quietly but firmly denied the very legitimacy of the regime.⁷⁶ The anti-Shah riots in 1963 and also more recently in 1978, however, disprove the fact that the Shah was able to buy legitimacy either by linking the present regime with Cyrus the Great or by claiming links with *Shii* divinity.

There were also attempts of a secular nature to attain legitimacy for the monarchy, and to assure its continuity. Since Iran followed the concept of *dowlat-i-Shahanshahi* "the Shah is identified with the State, and it is apparent that the primary duty of bureaucracy, judiciary and the army is to serve the Shah."⁷⁷ The powers and the position of monarchy had also been legitimized through amendments to the Iranian constitution.

The amendment to Article 36 of the Iranian Constitution of 1906, made in 1925, constitutionally replaced the then deposed Qajjar dynasty with the newly installed Pahlavi dynasty.⁷⁸ The amendment also debarred the members of the Qajjar family from succeeding to the throne (Article 37, as amended). Another amendment to Article 38 also debarred a member of the Qajjar family from becoming a regent.⁷⁹ After the forced abdication of the Shah in 1941, Parliament proclaimed his son as the new king.⁸⁰ Thus both the Pahlavi kings acquired constitutional legi-

⁷⁵Binder, n. 8, 76.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid., 65.

⁷⁸Marlowe, n. 21, 34.

⁷⁹Lenczowski, George, "Political process and institutions in Iran: The second Pahlavi kingship", in *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, n. 70, 434.

⁸⁰Ibid., 436.

timacy since both of them were in fact appointed by the *Majlis*, the highest popularly elected body under the Iranian constitution.

Over a number of years the Shah had also sought, through amendment to the constitution, legitimacy to his direct participation in the decision-making process in Iran at the cost of the *Majlis*. After the abortive attempt on his life in 1949, he got two amendments passed. The first one created a Senate. Half of its members were nominated by the Shah. "The Senate was brought into being to play the role, if necessary, of a check upon the more exuberant *Majlis*."⁸¹ Yet the Senate was not a very powerful body since it could not have a say in financial matters that were the exclusive jurisdiction of the *Majlis*. The Shah also acquired by the same amendment the power to dissolve the parliament, though the new parliament had to be elected within one month of the dissolution of the old one.⁸² Both these amendments increased the powers of the Shah *vis-a-vis* the parliament.

Another important amendment that curtailed the powers of the *Majlis* at the cost of the royal family was enacted in 1967. It amended Article 38 which had earlier been amended in 1925. In the amended form (1925) it was stipulated that if the Crown Prince was below twenty years of age a regent was to be appointed by the *Majlis*.⁸³ But under the 1967 amendment the Shahbanou, mother of the Crown Prince, "will *immediately* take over regency affairs, unless another person has been appointed as regent by the monarch."⁸⁴ Thus the powers of the *Majlis* were handed over to the Shah, who had the right to appoint a regent during his lifetime and if that could not be done then the queen automatically became the regent. The *Majlis* had no hand even in appointing the regency council. That was to consist of the Prime Minister, the heads of the two Houses, the President of the Supreme Court, and four other knowledgeable and enlightened individuals appointed by the regent.⁸⁵ Thus the family of the Shah, the queen as well as the sisters of the Shah, were assigned

⁸¹Wilber, n. 18, 135.

⁸²Marlowe, n. 21, 90.

⁸³Lenczowski, n. 79, 435.

⁸⁴Ibid., 438.

⁸⁵Ibid., 439.

active role in the monarchical system in Iran.

Acquiring mere constitutional legitimacy was not enough. Popular acceptance, if not acclaim, was equally relevant if the monarchical system had to survive in Iran. Previous records had not shown the Iranians to be docile people who would confer legitimacy on all. They had demanded popular participation in return for political legitimacy of the regime. Hence at least a facade of popular participation had to be erected through political processes like elections to the *Majlis* and through political parties. The Shah's effort to create and to manipulate official political parties, while denying the real political parties a chance to participate in the political decision-making process, was a good example of his tactic to deny real political participation while striving to project an image of political freedom in Iran.

The immediate threat to the monarchy was contained following the arrest of the nationalists after 1953. By 1975 the atmosphere was ripe for a controlled democracy. Hence the Shah created a two-party system. Asadollah Alam led the *Hezb-e Mardom* (People's Party) and Manuchehr Eqbal, who was the Prime Minister at that time, was made the leader of the *Hezb-e Melliyun* (National Party). *Melliyun* became the government party and to *Mardom* was assigned the role of the official opposition. *Melliyun*, representing the government, received two-third votes in the *Majlis*. "Party platforms were new phenomena; personal friendship and re-election considerations were the most active factors in determining which party to join. Eqbal and Alam also collaborated in drawing their membership lists and in many cases, deputies were simply told which party they had joined. These lists were submitted to the Shah, who agreed to them readily.⁸⁶ It is an interesting illustration of how the so-called political elites in a traditionally feudal society would not only accept the authoritarian ruler but also go out of their way to play the farce of political freedom and democracy within that system. In due course this experiment failed because being the loyal subjects of the Shah no one even wanted to play the game of being an opponent. In the absence of an active opposition the *Melliyun* too lost its political importance but it was allowed to continue as an official party.

The year 1963 was another landmark in the history of Iran.

⁸⁶Farmayan, n. 5, 92.

It ushered in a new era of so-called “progressive” reforms like the White Revolution. Keeping in view this new progressive image the Shah decided once again to give the country not only a functional two-party system but also wanted the ruling party to be a “progressive” party. Hence the old *Melliyun* was replaced by the newly created party, *Iran-e Novin*. It was kept under the leadership of Ali Mansur, who led a group of progressive and young economists and social scientists. He was made the Prime Minister in 1964. The *Mardom* continued to play the role of the opposition, but under a new leadership. Professor Yahya Adl replaced Asadollah Alam, who was appointed as a minister in the imperial court.

Even this make-believe two-party system could not survive or deliver the goods and the Shah decided to create a single-party system. In a major speech in March 1975⁸⁷ he declared that the system of two parties was no longer tenable and did not correspond to the current needs of national development. Instead he proposed the creation of a single party. He wanted all the politically aware elements to unite to develop the country in the spirit of the White Revolution. It was expected that the party would encourage constructive criticism. The new party, *Rastakhiz-e Iran* (Resurrection of Iran) was created under the leadership of Prime Minister Abbas Hoveyda. It had all the formal structures like polit bureau, committees at various levels and even the cadre system. Soon a right-wing group gravitated around Hushang Ansari, who was the Minister of Economy. A progressive wing also gathered around Jamshid Amuzegar, the then Minister of Interior. The new party was conceived to serve as a mobilizing agency in the modernizing process, as a screening device in the search for talent to fill various high government positions, as a channel for educating in the principles and priorities of the White Revolution, and as a system of communication with the people at large. For some, the new party too appeared as an appendage to the existing power structure. “The Shah clearly preferred to have such an appendage than to do without it. Under the existing royal tutelage the only other alternative would have been to rely on bureaucracy, army and police as props of the system. Such a formalistic solution was

⁸⁷*Kayhan International*, 8 March 1975.

unacceptable to the ruler, who saw in his new party a very useful instrument not only for bolstering the existing system but also for ensuring maximum harmony among and cooperation from the people in the modernizing and nation-building process in which he was engaged."⁸⁸ Maybe the intentions were there, but in the absence of the spirit of democratic participation even the *Rastakhiz*, like other parties before, retained the image of an orchestra conducted by the Shah for the benefit of the monarchical system. Since there was no sharing of power there was no sharing of responsibility. The events of 1978 proved that the people of Iran had rejected the legitimacy of that system.

Efforts were made to create a more favourable climate in Iran through the process of modernization. It had the twin purpose of weakening the traditional sources of opposition to the monarchy, like tribalism and religious conservatism, and also the creation of a secular and modernized socio-economic infrastructure that would support the institutions that had brought these changes. Hence a conscious effort towards this end was made, right from the days of the Reza Khan in the twenties, to curb the powers of the tribes and the *ulema* and also to create the infrastructure of a modern secular society. Threat from tribalism to the absolute powers of the monarchy was contained in the twenties and the thirties. "Reza Shah carefully calculated a plan for the destruction of tribal power. He wanted absolute power in a unified and controlled state, and the autonomy of the tribes had to be destroyed for the achievement of this goal."⁸⁹ Conscription, disarmament and settlement were the three main instruments of his policy,⁹⁰ besides the traditional Iranian methods of intrigues, bribery, imprisonment, and exile or murder of tribal leaders. Conscription took away the young and able-bodied young men from the tribes, thereby not only reducing the capacity of the tribe to pose a military threat but also affecting the tribal economy. The plans, often implemented with

⁸⁸Lenczowski, n. 79, 453.

⁸⁹Cottam, n. 9, 59.

⁹⁰Upton, Joseph M., *The History of Modern Iran. An Interpretation*, Harvard Middle Eastern Monograph series, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960, 79. Also see L.P. Elwell-Sutton, "Reza Shah the great: founder of the Pahlavi dynasty", in George Lenczowski, ed., n. 70, 33.

the use of force, to settle the tribes not only compelled them to live in a well-defined place but weakened their economy by suddenly forcing them to switch over from a migratory life and pastoral economy to a new sedentary socio-economic infrastructure. Attempts were also made to break the tribal monopoly in a given area, as in Khuzistan, by encouraging urbanization and better land utilization so that Persians could move in and balance the local Arabs. Local language and culture was also changed by encouraging Persian language and culture, often at the cost of local language and culture. Better means of communication like railways and roads and also a well-trained and disciplined army and gendarmerie also helped in bringing the tribes under control. "By the time of his coronation in 1925 Reza Khan had broken the back of tribal resistance. He had done so without losing popular support or alarming the tribes into unity."⁹¹ Incidents of tribal revolt did occur from time to time but were no longer a serious challenge, unless supported by outside forces like the Kurdish movement, the Khuzistan question or the Baluchi problem in the post-World War II period. But even these did not pose a real threat to systemic security, i.e., monarchy in Iran.

While tribalism was eliminated as a threat to the Iranian political system, Islam could not, despite efforts by the Pahlavi kings. Reza Khan had suffered a setback soon after he assumed control when he clashed with the *ulema*, and followed a very cautious policy while dealing with them. The monarchy had to project an outward show of strong devotion to the cause of *Shii* Islam. The *ulema* had effectively blocked republican tendencies in Iran in the 1920s. Reza Khan took a solemn oath on 12 December 1925 on ascending the throne in which, among other things, he promised to "strive for the propagation of the *Jafari Ithna'ashari* Faith."⁹² The present Shah too, as seen earlier, tried to maintain the image of a pious ruler. But religious leaders continued to challenge monarchical absolutism. The monarchy in Iran, therefore, tried to neutralize that challenge through indirect means, especially through a state-controlled

⁹¹Salzman, Philip C., "National integration of the tribes in modern Iran", *Middle East Journal*, 25(3), Summer 1971, 325-36.

⁹²Elwell-Sutton, n, 90, 28.

and directed secularization and modernization process.

It took different forms. Attempts were made to create a new enlightened educated class that would compete with the *ulema* and would be used as an instrument to balance it. Since the *ulema* derived its strength from *Shii* Islam, attempts were made to glorify even pre-Islamic Iran so as to loosen the stranglehold of the clergy and to show that Iran had roots that were deeper than Islam. The legal powers of the religious leaders were sought to be curtailed through enactment of civil laws. Educational reforms not only secularized education but also tried to guide religious education. Attempts were made to create state-owned religious schools at provincial centres throughout the country.⁹³ Even the national loyalty of the *ulema* was questioned. The clergy was accused of selling the country to the British.⁹⁴ When all these efforts failed religious leaders were often exiled from Iran.

Despite these efforts the Iranian monarchy was unable to neutralize or even reduce the political influence of the clergy and the threat posed by religious fundamentalism to the prevailing monarchical system in Iran. The main cause responsible for it was the fact that the monarchy was not sincere in creating a strong secular, democratic and progressive force in Iran that would have balanced, if not challenged, the forces of religious conservatism in that country. It even opposed the emergence of such a force because it saw in it a threat to its own security. Thus, while professing to build a modern, secular-democratic force, monarchy in fact undermined its evolution by trying to control it from the top and by trying to use it as an instrument for its systemic continuity. Whenever this force showed signs of independence it was suppressed, thus indirectly strengthening the hands of the religious leaders. The suppression of democratic, secular and progressive forces in the fifties was indirectly responsible for the religious riots of 1963. Their suppression in the sixties and seventies was partly responsible for the religious riots of 1978. Undoubtedly the secular forces were also active in 1978, but the main force was still the religious group and not the secular group. Thus it would not be wrong to say that the

⁹³Bayne, n. 11, 53.

⁹⁴Cottam, n. 9, 148.

monarchy, to preserve its short-term objectives, indirectly helped to encourage and strengthen the conservative forces that ultimately posed the real challenge to the monarchical system in Iran.

The Iranian regime also adopted the tactic of seeking to bring about socio-economic reforms as a means to attain political legitimacy. A part of the oil money was invested in economic development and social uplift in Iran. Iran reportedly achieved an increase in GNP of 12 per cent per annum. Its per capita income increased from \$150 per year by the end of the 1950s to \$500 per year in 1973. It had, at least on paper, increased greatly following the increase in the oil price after October 1973. Industrialization was one of the main targets of the fourth and the fifth five-year plan. Other reforms in the field of health, education, female emancipation and land reforms were undertaken by the regime. The White Revolution symbolized the sum total of the efforts from above at the socio-economic transformation of the society. The rapid modernization resulted in imbalances and created potential problems for the then existing socio-economic structure in Iran. The 1970s "witnessed considerable evidence of social and political malaise, such as violence and plots against the regime . . ."⁹⁵

The theory that imbalances due to rapid modernization alone were responsible for the tension, offers only a partial explanation to the Iranian situation today. The problem must be seen in its totality. The Iranian experiment poses an interesting hypothesis in the context of the Third World: can socio-economic modernization alone guarantee systemic security? Can people accept the principle of sharing of responsibility without a commensurate sharing of power? Recent events in Iran have proved that socio-economic modernization alone can be no substitute for political freedom even in a Third World country. By denying the right to participate in the decision-making processes the Iranian monarchy weakened its own position, so much so that neither the intelligentsia nor the *ulema* were prepared to negotiate with it. Iranian monarchy had reached a position when even the attempt to negotiate with the regime amounted to conferring legitimacy on it. The nationalists rejected

⁹⁵*The Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf States*, n. 1, 26.

the Bakhtiar government because he had negotiated with the Shah. Therefore, the Iranian opposition was in no mood even to negotiate with him lest it give legitimacy to the monarchical system.

Repression, therefore, replaced political dialogue. The mechanism of repression has to be seen from different angles: helping outside forces to fight against real or potential sources of danger to the Iranian political system, seeking help from outside forces in the fight against forces hostile to the regime, seeking a detente with forces that were helping the opposition, and finally building up forces of overt and covert operation in Iran to fight against the "enemies" at home and abroad.

In keeping with the policy of containing the threat at all possible points, the Iranian regime had gone out of its way to support governments that had been trying to suppress hostile guerrilla movements inside their own countries. The Iranians extended full support to the regime in Oman to contain the Dhofar movement. In 1972 the Iranian armed forces joined the forces of Oman in anti-insurgency operations in Dhofar. Though the Iranian forces were limited to about 1200-2000 only, their mobility, thanks to the use of helicopters and C-130 transport planes, permitted a more effective development. The reason for the Iranian involvement in Oman was not only the links between the insurgents there and the guerrillas in Iran but also the fact that Oman also controlled the vital entrance to the Gulf. Oman's sovereignty extends to the Musandam peninsula adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz. Hence, "Iran believed that the strategic location of that region made unavoidable a positive response to Oman Sultan's request for military intervention."⁹⁶ Iran's political and military help to Pakistan after 1971 can be partly explained in the light of the potential danger from the Baluchi movement in Pakistan. Also, Iran's help to the Kurds fighting against the Iraqi regime was a good example of using insurgency tactics against the regimes hostile to Iran.

Iran also followed a policy of seeking shelter under the umbrella of a super power to seek its support for the continuity of the regime even against internal hostile forces. Thus the Shah

⁹⁶Zabih, Sepehr, "Iran's policy towards the Persian Gulf", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 7, 1976, 357.

sought American support for his political survival after the Second World War. "As in 1941-44 Iran's interest in seeking American aid in 1946-51 was not only to counterbalance adverse relations with the Russians and the British but also to bolster the shaky position of the ruling elite in the face of surging explosive forces of nationalism from the left and the right."⁹⁷ The same reason prompted Iran not only to join the Baghdad Pact but also to obtain concessions in return for its membership. "The main thrust of these efforts, which did not terminate with the conclusion of the Baghdad Pact, was to seek reassurance that the United State's overriding concern in the region also extended to the survival of the Iranian regime."⁹⁸ It is important to note in this context that though the USA was not a full member of the CENTO, both Iran and the USA were members of the anti-subversion committee of the CENTO.

The American help was also crucial in strengthening police, gendarmerie and military elements so as to enable the regime to use them to protect the system. Undoubtedly the first Pahlavi king had developed the gendarmerie for internal security, specially in tribal areas, but the use of these military and para-military forces for political support to the regime was encouraged by Reza Shah with the help of the USA. By 1960-61 the strength of the gendarmerie increased to 1000 officers and 30,000 men.⁹⁹ It was dispersed over 2000 locations. Its jurisdiction extended over about eighty per cent of the Iranian territory and included almost three-fourths of the population. It had good radio communication, small arms, and other equipments including light aircraft, helicopters and fast patrol boats.

The US aid for the Iranian gendarmerie began in 1942, when the US Military Mission in Iran appointed advisers for the police and the gendarmerie.¹⁰⁰ The agreement finalizing this arrangement was reached in 1943. Prior to 1948 this mission had substantial control over the operations of this force, but after 1948 it lapsed into an advisory role.¹⁰¹ Some of the equipment sent to

⁹⁷Ramazani, n. 7, 164.

⁹⁸Chubin and Zabih, n. 3, 5.

⁹⁹Reza Shah, n. 4 310.

¹⁰⁰Ramazani, n. 2, 31.

¹⁰¹Hovey, Harold A., *United States Military Assistance: A Study in Politics and Practices*, Praeger, New York, 1965, 8.

Iran under MDAP (Mutual Defence Aid Programme) overflowed to the gendarmerie. Some of these major items included heavy weapons like mortars, medium tanks, trucks, ammunition, rocket launchers, recoilless rifles, signal equipment etc.¹⁰² According to Marvin Zonis the USA supplied the Iranian gendarmerie, upto 1962, with 2000 tear-gas shells, 1602 quarter-ton trucks, 1040 jeep and other motor vehicles, 29,960 weapons and 15 aircraft.¹⁰³

Beside the US financial, military and technical support for the strengthening of the gendarmerie the US military aid *per se* was also used to buttress Iran's internal security. "The military assistance supply programme for Iran is in the form of items which will increase the strength and efficiency of the Iranian army and gendarmerie so that the country can guard itself against internal subversion or external aggression."¹⁰⁴ This principle continued to guide the US military aid programme to Iran as late as 1964, when Secretary of Defence, McNamara, testifying before the House Committee on Armed Services, said that the prime purpose of present assistance to Iran was "to help to build up its military forces to the point where they can insure internal security and provide at least an initial defence against Soviet attack."¹⁰⁵ In fact the heavy military equipments supplied under MDAP were used by the Iranian government for its internal security purposes. "Tanks provided under MDAP, weapons supplied in past under MDAP, and officers and soldiers, many of whom had benefited from MDAP and other American training, helped the Iranian forces to gain control during the period of mob violence at the time of the oil crisis and to maintain the internal order of the country and preserve its internal security."¹⁰⁶ General Steward,

¹⁰²*The Mutual Security Programme. For a Strong and Free World*, First Report to the Congress, December 31, 1951, GPO, Washington, 1952, 25.

¹⁰³Newberry, Daniel, *GENMISH United States Army Military Mission with the Imperial Iranian Gendarmerie*, Tehran, Mimeographed, n.d., Table D, Enclosure 5, quoted in Marvin Zonis, *Political Elite of Iran*, Princeton, New York, 1971, 111.

¹⁰⁴*Report to Congress on Mutual Security Programme* for the six months ended December 31, 1953, US, GPO, Washington, 1954, 27.

¹⁰⁵*Hearings on Military Posture and HRG 637* (No. 36). House Committee on Armed Services, 88 Congress, 2 Session, 1964, 6908, quoted in Hovey, n. 101, 98.

testifying before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives, accepted that the US help to the Iranian armed forces had contributed to the success of the military-backed coup against Premier Mossadeq.¹⁰⁷

The USA was also involved in covert activities in Iran in support of the regime of the Shah. The most glaring example of US support to the Shah was the anti-Mossadeq operations in 1953, when the CIA's participation and General Zahedi's money and influence tilted the balance against Mossadeq.¹⁰⁸ According to Hurewitz, the Shah was obliged after 1953 to the USA, "whose discreet intervention helped to put an end to the Mossadeq regime."¹⁰⁹ The story was subsequently splashed in the *New York Times* of 9 April 1955 and the *Saturday Evening Post* of 6 November 1954, which carried an article, "America's Secret Agents: the Mysterious Designs of CIA" by two authors, Richard and Clayde Hardness.¹¹⁰

Secret services have always been a part of state apparatus for covert operations. The degree of state reliance on these agencies charged with covert operations, however, becomes one of the important indicators of the regime's popularity and legitimacy. It is widely known that the Iranian regime relied largely on the secret police—the SAVAK—which has been privately denounced by former ministers and elder statesmen¹¹¹ for repression of Iranian dissidents in Iran or even abroad.

SAVAK is the acronym for *Sazemane Atlat Va Amniyate Keshvar* (National Organization for Information and Security). For penetrating civilian "subversive" organizations, the Shah created, with American advice, a permanent counter espionage agency attached to the Prime Minister's office, and trained in the

¹⁰⁶*The Mutual Security Programme*, n. 102, 25.

¹⁰⁷*The Mutual Security Act of 1954*, Hearings, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 83 Congress, 2 Session, GPO, Washington, 1954, 503.

¹⁰⁸Cottam, n. 9, 227.

¹⁰⁹Hurewitz, J.C., "Iran in world and regional affairs", in Ehsan Yar-Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies*, n. 5, 132.

¹¹⁰Excerpts in Cottam, n. 9, 227-29. Also see *The United States in World Affairs, 1953*, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 308.

¹¹¹Young, T. Cuyler, "Iran in continuing crisis", *Foreign Affairs*, 40(2), January 1962, 286, 87.

use of FBI techniques. The United States helped to organize SAVAK, as the new agency was called, primarily to uncover communists; but the Shah used it to hold all political opponents in check. The interests of the United States and the Shah thus did not coincide; they merely overlapped. There is no doubt that roots of the present-day SAVAK can be traced back to the Second World War, if not earlier,¹¹² but the SAVAK proper was reportedly created after the aftermath of Reza Shah's brief exile in 1953. It was created with considerable assistance from the CIA and Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad.¹¹³ Direct and indirect links between SAVAK and CIA were maintained through personal contacts. Allen Dulles and Richard Helms, both high-ranking CIA officials, were the US ambassadors in Iran.

Not only the functioning of the SAVAK but also its large strength had become a matter of controversy. According to the *Newsweek* report¹¹⁴ between 30,000 to 60,000 people worked for the SAVAK full time but "they are only the skeleton of a much larger creature." According to *Newsweek*, some diplomats in Iran believed that no fewer than three million Iranians (one out of every eight adult citizens) were occasional SAVAK informers. These figures presented by *Newsweek* do appear sensational and exaggerated. The Shah himself, in an interview to the *US News and World Report*, accepted that Iran had a secret service. According to him its membership was about 3400. "I have seen fantastic figures saying that there were millions of people in our secret police and that we have more than a hundred thousand political prisoners. It is fantastic how things are exaggerated."¹¹⁵ In another interview the Shah even defined the goals of the SAVAK. He said:

Actually SAVAK is engaged in foreign intelligence activities,

¹¹²The person most closely associated with the creation of the Iranian secret service was Col. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, former Director of Rural Police in the State of New Jersey, USA. He was a member of the US Mission in Iran since 1942. The *Majlis* subsequently passed a law authorizing the Iranian government to sign an agreement covering the employment of Col. Schwarzkopf. Ramazani, n. 7, 72.

¹¹³*Newsweek*, 14 October 1974.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵*US News and World Report*, 22 March 1976, 58.

although on no widespread scale. It operates in Kuwait, for example, where illegal financial transactions involving Iranians frequently take place, and it has operated in Cairo and Yemen because of Iran's interest in Egypt's potential expansion in the Arabian peninsula. During the height of the *Tudeh* and the National Front activities among Iranian overseas student groups, SAVAK agents were given watching roles in Europe and the United States.¹¹⁶

Sometimes the SAVAK did advertise its presence publically. A SAVAK spokesman was reported to have told the press on 16 January 1972 that it had arrested one hundred and twenty members of three separate subversive groups in the past ten months, and that they would be tried by a military court in Iran. The activities of the SAVAK came under violent attack, both in Iran and outside. The Iranian National Liberation Front was reported to have announced that the Iranian regime in the past two years (1971-72) had executed about three hundred Iranians after staging summary trials for them.¹¹⁷ The Amnesty International, on several occasions, criticized the Iranian regime on the question of denying human rights to its citizens. The *Newsweek* of 14 October 1974 also criticized the Shah for showing little inclination to introduce democracy in Iran.¹¹⁸ The response to the criticism to this charge came from a *Majlis* member, Rahim Zehtab Fard, who in the open session of *Majlis* on 20 October 1974 called the *Newsweek* article "a new face of colonialism becoming apparent."¹¹⁹ Who said that there was no freedom of expression in Iran! One could even criticize the USA if it suited the regime.

The Iranian regime also used the tactic of ridicule and contempt to belittle the threat posed by the radical elements. Commenting to the *Jenne Afrique* (weekly) from Tunis, in June 1971, about an attempted guerrilla revolt in north Iran the Shah

¹¹⁶Bayne, n. 11, 181.

¹¹⁷*Baghdad Observer*, 19 May 1973.

¹¹⁸According to that article there were more than 50,000 political prisoners languishing in jails. The Shah, on the other hand, said that there were only 2200 political prisoners in jails in Iran. *Kayhan International*, 19 November 1977.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 21 October 1974.

said, "How can an organization of only 50 members threaten a country of 30 million . . . The assistant cooks of the Imperial Army alone would be able to deal with them."¹²⁰ The Shah was also unable to understand the interaction between the forces of the left and of Islam and the joint threat posed by them to his regime. He dubbed all radicals as Marxists. "They are all Marxists. All Marxists. And something very new that is really amazing but it's one of those things, they call themselves Islamic Marxists. As you might see for yourselves how could you be religious and Marxist at the same time?"¹²¹ At another place he tried to condemn it as an alliance between the red and the black. "Fourteen years ago I denounced those people as an unholy alliance between the red and the black—the black reactionaries and the red revolutionaries."¹²²

It is possible that the Shah, on ascending his throne, might have started with the best of intentions. But during the first decade of his rule he was beset with a series of problems that not only threatened his security but also defied easy solution. By the early 1960s the Shah had failed in his efforts to attract broader political support. There was a steady deterioration in his relations with the previous focii of power: landowners, merchants, religious leaders and intelligentsia. These groups resented the gradual erosion of their power. They either joined the ranks of the opponents or became passive spectators of the unfolding of the new act. Both ways they were a total loss to the Shah's quest for support and legitimacy. Thus, his inability to control the opposition gradually forced him to follow a totalitarian trend and employ the instruments of terror and repression. Over a number of years his dependence on the security forces increased till he had to rely on them exclusively for his political survival.

Due to lack of political participation the opposition either got suppressed or emerged as the movement of dissent which finally got equated with treason. Even a common man in the street was treated as a potential threat to the system because there were no values or instruments to bind his loyalty to the Shah. Moreover, the Shah had refused to create an acceptable

¹²⁰ *News Review, West Asia*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, July 1971, 5.

¹²¹ *New York Times*, 24 September 1975.

¹²² *Kayhan International*, 19 November 1977.

safety-valve so as to permit the excess of steam to blow out. Some degree of popular participation, free of government dominance, would have provided that safety-valve but there was none. Thus gradually economic and social benefits, if any, of the policies of the regime were ignored and reaction against political repression alone became the dominant theme for popular resentment and even hatred for the regime's repressive policies.

Once the Shah decided to follow the policy of repression there was no turning back and the political system was sucked into the inevitable spiral of increasing repression. Politics of repression has its own logic. Other things being equal, the amount of force to be used in suppressing a movement increases in geometrical proportions to the time factor involved. In other words, the greater the time span, the larger is the force required to suppress a given opposition. Thus a regime might start with the lowest level of repressive machinery—ordinary police—and end up with using the national armed forces or even foreign troops to remain in power. Thus it is mathematically possible to evolve a formula to calculate the time when the repressive forces can be expected to reach a point of exhaustion and give up, or overstrain and collapse. The examples of the French policies in Indo-China and Algeria, of the USA in Vietnam and of Portugal in Africa can well illustrate this hypothesis. The Iranian system too had gone through this process—from low-level repression in the 1940s to the use of modern armed forces in 1978. There is no reason to doubt that as things continued, it too reached the logical end. In this context the comments of Zozimos, the adviser to Spartacus,¹²³ becomes equally applicable to the Shah:

He means well, you say? Of course he means well, that's the worst of it. There is no more dangerous tyrant than the one who is convinced he is the self-less guardian of the people. For the damage done by the congenitally wicked tyrant is confined to the field of his personal interests and his personal cruelty; but the well-meaning tyrant who has a lofty reason for everything, can do unlimited damage. . . .

¹²³Koestler, Arthur, *The Gladiators*, New York, Macmillan and Co., 1937, quoted in Bayne, n. 11, 68.

Chapter II

THREAT TO SECURITY: EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS

I. THE THREAT FROM THE NORTH

The external dimensions of the threat to Iran arise, among other things, from the geopolitical location of the country. Iran is a classical example of a periphery state caught between the global and regional pressures exerted by a land power and a sea power. Britain was the sea power that influenced Iran's foreign policy till the end of the Second World War, after which it was replaced by the USA. But, despite the change of actors, the framework of international environment, influencing the formulations of Iranian foreign policy, remained basically unchanged. Undoubtedly Iran also felt threatened from small or medium regional powers like the radical Arab states or even India. But that threat was interwoven within the framework of international bipolar environment and responses were sought within that framework. The threat from Arab radicalism was projected as a part of the over all Soviet pressure and hence efforts were made to contain that threat either by coming closer to the USA in 1959 or by seeking a limited detente with the USSR in 1962.

The Iranian ruling elite reacted to these external challenges to Iranian security within the framework of a foreign policy that can be broadly divided into four categories: policy of balancing the two rival forces, using the one as an umbrella against the other, searching for a third force to neutralize the two main powers, and of late, a tendency to rely more on national power, which is nearer to a policy of *de facto* non-alignment rather than the

classical Iranian policy of balancing the rival powers. The ruling elite decided upon which policy to opt for, and often there was a clash between the ruling elite and other political groups on the question of selecting a suitable foreign policy for Iran. In the post-war period this war clearly reflected in the clash between the Shah and the nationalists led by Dr Mossadeq. Mossadeq wanted to follow a policy of "negative equilibrium" under which he sought to deny both the power blocs opportunities for entrenching themselves in Iran and exploiting Iran for their own benefits. The Shah on the other hand sought, at least in the initial stages, to seek an American (if not western) umbrella against the threat from the north. Thus, there was a basic difference at that time in the approaches to Iran's foreign policy between the Shah on one hand and the Iranian nationalists, as represented by Mossadeq, on the other.

Iran had a long history of conflict with its northern neighbours. It had lost a large part of its Central Asian empire to the Russian expansionist drive towards the south, till the expanding Czarist presence was checked by the growing British power in the Gulf and South Asia. The 1907 convention marked a sort of Anglo-Russian condominium over Iran. North-western Iran was occupied by the Russians during the First World War and it is possible that the Russian troops might have joined with the British troops advancing along the Tigris valley. But the October Revolution put a halt to it. The north-western part of Iran became a hotbed of international diplomacy when it was made a launching pad for anti-Soviet activities. In turn, the new Soviet government reoccupied parts of that territory. Despite the fact that north-western Iran had become an arena of international rivalry the Soviet government's attitude towards the Iranian government was very clear. Soon after the October Revolution, the Soviet government, in a note to the Persian government in January 1918, renounced all Czarist privileges in Iran. It also denounced the 1907 convention.

In June 1919, an unofficial representation of the Bolshevik government delivered a more detailed note. According to that note, all Persian debts to Russia were declared null and void. The new regime ended all the privileges enjoyed by Czarist Russia relating to customs, posts and telegraphs etc. All public and private concessions enjoyed under the previous regime were

given up. Also, all the property in Persia belonging to the Russian state was handed over to the Persian government. Diplomatic relations were established between the two states in November 1920 and the way was paved for negotiations leading to the 1921 treaty. This was not an easy process because there were groups in Iran that were opposed to normalization of relations with the northern neighbour. It was only after Mushir al-Dawlah replaced Vusuq al-Dawlah as Prime Minister of Iran in July 1920, that the path was paved for smooth negotiations. Mushir al-Dawlah, however, did not go out of his way to compromise his country's national interest and followed a policy that is so aptly called "conciliation without appeasement."¹ The policy formulated by Mushir al-Dawlah was followed by Reza Khan also because, though negotiations had been going on for some time past, the final treaty was signed on 26 February 1921, five days after the *coup d'état* led by Reza Khan.

The 1921 treaty between the USSR and Persia² confirmed all the renunciations of June 1919. But that treaty also included articles, especially Articles 4, 5 and 6, that granted the Soviet Union rights to intervene in Iran, including the right to dispatch troops there. This has to be seen in the light of the activities of British diplomats who had used Iran as a base of operations against the new Soviet regime. "It must be remembered that while the treaty was being negotiated, the idea of armed intervention against the Bolsheviks had not been entirely abandoned by the Western Allies—one of the objects of the Russian negotiations with Persia—and the contemporaneous negotiations with Kemalist Turkey was to guard against the possibility of such intervention from the south through Persia or Turkey."³ The period also coincided with the British attempt to impose a virtual protectorate over Iran through the abortive treaty of 1919 that the Iranians rightly rejected. In fact it was an interesting illustration of Iranian diplomacy, where the north was used as an umbrella against the threat from the south (British).

¹Ramazani, R.K., *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs: 1500-1941*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1966, 195.

²Text in J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, Princeton, New York, 1956, Vol. 2, 90-4.

³Marlowe, John, *Iran*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1963, 42.

The inter-war period in Iran was marked by the *coup d'état* and the consolidation of power by Reza Khan. In his search for security Reza Khan followed a three-pronged policy: generating sufficient internal strength through national regeneration, developing regional cooperation and regional alliance, and searching for a third force that could be used to neutralize the influence of the two traditional powers dominating Iran. There is no doubt that Reza Khan was able, within a short time, to control the tribes and *ulema*, build a strong gendarmerie and lay the framework of a modern armed force as well as create an infrastructure of a modern state. He also succeeded in developing a regional alliance under the name of Saadabad Pact. It was a treaty of non-aggression signed between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan in 1937. A secretariat was created. The pact had a permanent council that was supposed to meet at least once a year. The adoption of a good-neighbourly policy was a complete reversal of the traditional Iranian policy,⁴ and credit must be given to Reza Khan for the same.

He also tried to create a third force that could be used against Britain and the USSR. Earlier the Iranians had thought of using the USA as a third force but the American isolationist policy prevented that. Reza Khan also clashed with the American economist, Millspaugh. He gradually turned towards Germany with the result that during the thirties Iran-German relations reached a level that alarmed the Allied Powers.⁵ The result was that despite Iran's declared policy of neutrality, following the outbreak of the Second World War, the Allied Powers did not trust Reza Khan. Iran was occupied in August-September 1941 by British and Soviet troops, and he was forced to abdicate on 16 September in favour of his son. He spent his last days in exile. There was no protest in Iran either at the foreign occupation or the forced abdication and exile of the king. Reza Khan, despite his reforms, could not create a popular base for his regime. The possible reason for the apathy

⁴Ramazani, n. 1, 275.

⁵By 1940-41, Germany's share in Iran's trade was about 45 per cent. George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran 1918-1948; A Study of Big Power Rivalry*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1949, 95.

of the Iranian masses at that time was that they were mere spectators rather than active participants in the decision-making processes of their country.

World War II and After: Iran Under a New King

The deposition of Reza Khan in 1941 and the coming into power of his son did not alter the situation immediately. The momentum of the events that had led to that change continued to influence Iranian policy. The country remained under Soviet and British occupation. The American troops joined in 1942. Resources of Iran continued to be exploited for the purposes of the Allied Powers. But the abdication of Reza Khan did bring about one change. The removal of his strong, dominating personality and the pressure generated due to foreign military presence, led to greater political liberalization. The nationalist groups that were either suppressed earlier or were maintaining a low profile once again began to exert themselves. Thus there was a greater impact of "nationalist" forces upon the formulation and implementation of Iranian foreign policy than before. The policy of the Iranian *Majlis* on the question of oil concessions during that period illustrated that mood very vividly. Another factor that had a long-term impact upon Iranian foreign policy was the emergence of the USA initially as a third force, subsequently as a balancer *vis-a-vis* the USSR, and finally as the main supporter of the Shah.

Iran, at the end of the Second World War, was thus subject to several forces, often contradictory, that complicated the foreign policy decision-making process. Iran was under effective occupation not only of the USSR but also UK and USA. The new king was young and unexperienced. By contrast, the nationalists and other politicians were old hands at the game of diplomacy. It was natural, therefore, that there should be basic differences regarding the formulations of Iranian foreign policy. A large section of the Iranian nationalists, especially the group led by Mossadeq, believed in the policy of "negative equilibrium"—no concession to either party—and its corollary, to fight against the exploitation of national resources by foreign powers. It should be noted that this group not only fought against the grant of oil concessions to the USSR but also nationalized subsequently the Anglo-

Iranian Oil Company. Thus this policy of negative equilibrium was in essence a reflection of the policy of positive nationalism. The Shah, on the other hand, wanted to follow a different policy. He believed in seeking help of the USA (and the west in general) against the so-called threat posed from the north, a threat not only to the territorial integrity of Iran but also to the very foundations of the ruling dynasty. Thus there was basic contradiction between the policies advocated by the nationalists and those followed by the Shah, despite the fact that they had common objectives on certain issues like preventing the Soviet Union from consolidating its position in the north.

Scholars who seek to define the threat from the north in the post-war period often quote the draft of the protocol drawn up in Berlin between Hitler and Soviet Foreign Commissar Molotov, on 13 November 1940. It was to be submitted for adoption by Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan. According to para four of Protocol One of that draft, "The Soviet Union declares that its territorial aspirations centre south of the national territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean."⁶ This was further defined in more exact terms by Molotov in his discussions with the German ambassador in Moscow on 26 November 1940. Molotov specified "that the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognised as the centre of the aspirations of the Soviet Union."⁷ Russia's wartime policy in Iran was a logical consequence of these aspirations.

When one seeks to analyse the Soviet policy in this area in its historical perspective the drive towards the warm waters appears to be a long-term objective. There was also a short-term objective. The Soviets wanted oil concessions in the north. When one studies the unfolding of events in Iran between 1944 and 1947 one gets a feeling that the pressures generated by the presence of the Soviet armed forces in the north or by the encouragement to autonomy movements in Azerbaijan or Kurdistan were in fact being used by the Soviet Union to obtain oil concessions in the north. The Soviet sought oil concessions in September 1944 long:

⁶*Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office, Department of State Publications 3023, Washington, 1948, 257, quoted in Lenczowski, n. 5, 193.*

⁷*Ibid.*, 193-94.

before the autonomy movement in Azerbaijan took concrete shape. Sergi Kavtaradze, Soviet Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs, arrived in Tehran in September 1944 and sought oil concessions in the northern provinces of Iran. At the same time, British and American oil companies were also seeking oil concessions in south-eastern Iran. The *Majlis* put a halt to this scramble for oil by passing a bill on 2 December 1944 that prevented the granting of any new oil concession during the war period. The debate was led by Dr Mossadeq. "The first Russian attempt at direct intervention had been rebuffed, and Dr Mossadeq had won his spurs on the field of nationalist struggle."⁸

The failure to get oil concessions in the north was followed by an attempt by the USSR to support the so-called autonomous republics in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. The Azerbaijan republic was created in December 1945. The Iranian police and gendarmerie were effectively prevented from reaching that area and taking measures to curb the movement. This movement posed three types of threats to Iran. It not only threatened territorial integrity and economic resources (oil) of Iran but also encouraged the growth of radicalism and thus challenged the monarchical system in Iran.

The Russian actions were criticized as being contradictory to the pledge given under the Tripartite Treaty of Alliance, 29 January 1942,⁹ and also the Tehran Declaration of 1 December 1943.¹⁰ Under the Tripartite Treaty of 1942 the signatories (UK and USSR) had agreed that the presence of the foreign troops in Iran did not constitute a military occupation and "will disturb as little as possible the administration and the security forces of Iran, the economic life of the country, the normal movements of the population and the application of Iranian laws and regulations" (Article 4). Article 5 stipulated that these forces would be withdrawn from Iranian territory "not later than six months after all hostilities between the Allied Powers and Germany and her associates have been suspended." Article 6 said that the Allied Powers undertook not to adopt an attitude "which is prejudicial to the territorial integrity, sovereignty or

⁸Marlowe, n. 3, 77.

⁹Text in Lenczowski, n. 5, 319-22.

¹⁰Ibid., 322-23.

political independence of Iran . . .” The 1943 Tehran Declaration also committed the USSR, the USA and Great Britain to “the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran.”

The question of the evacuation of the Soviet troops from northern Iran, which was also directly connected with the question of the oil concession and the future of the autonomous republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, dominated the international situation immediately after the war. The USA and Great Britain put diplomatic pressure upon the USSR. The matter was referred to the Security Council of the United Nations. None of these efforts were fruitful because the Allied Powers were not willing to go to war with Russia over the question of northern Iran. The question was finally settled through the tactful diplomacy of the Iranian Prime Minister, Ghavam, and the firm stand taken by the Iranian nationalists in the *Majlis*.

When the Anglo-American efforts failed and after the Security Council too was unable to do anything concrete for Iran, Iranian Premier Ghavam left for Moscow to negotiate a settlement with the Soviet authorities. Despite the allegations that Ghavam was acceptable to the Soviets¹¹ he could not get an agreement that would be acceptable to both the parties. The Soviets still demanded hard terms, like the right to station troops in some parts of Iran for an indefinite period, internal autonomy of Azerbaijan, oil concession in northern Iran with 51 per cent shares for the USSR.¹² But there was a partial trade-off. The Soviets agreed to limit Azerbaijan's power under autonomy formula and sought a joint oil company rather than an oil concession. This trade-off of autonomy for oil became the basis for further diplomatic negotiations and an agreement based on that principle was initiated between Iran and the USSR on 4 April 1946. Thus oil concession in the north emerged as a dominant short-term objective of Soviet policy. Once the USSR was assured on that count, it quickly withdrew its troops by 9 May 1946 and left the Azerbaijanis to their fate. By the middle of June the Iranian police and gendarmerie were able to enforce effective control over northern Iran.

¹¹Marlowe, n. 3, 71.

¹²*New York Times*, 20 March 1947, quoted in Lenczowski, n. 5, 296.

If the Soviets would have been able to obtain 51 per cent share in the proposed oil company, they would have achieved their short-term goal. But they were cheated even there. The agreement granting oil concession to USSR had to be ratified by the *Majlis* before it could come into force. The new *Majlis* was elected by August 1947. On 22 October 1947 the *Majlis* rejected the oil agreement with the Soviet Union by a vote of 102 to 2 despite loud objections from the left wing deputies. Dr Mossadeq had, once again, played a leading role in denying oil concessions to a foreign power. It is also important to note that Ghavam, who had negotiated the agreement and who was accused of being pro-Soviet, not only did not press for an affirmative vote but even went to the extent of supporting a bill that went contrary to that agreement. "It is probable that the Prime Minister, who had negotiated the agreement under duress, was not anxious for its ratification and he certainly made no serious attempt to defend it before the *Majlis*."¹³

The American stand was also of crucial importance in influencing the *Majlis* vote. The then American ambassador, George J. Allen, while speaking before the Irano-American Cultural Relations Society on 11 September 1947, said that Iran's resources belonged to Iran. Iran could give them away free of charge or refuse to dispose of them at any price if it so desired. He also said that the American people would support fully their freedom to make their own choice.¹⁴ Moreover, by that time the USA had formulated the Truman Doctrine (13 April 1947) and had recognized the importance of Iran. A new unit, Division for Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs, was created in the Department of States. Thus Iran was put on par with Greece and Turkey. The Soviet pressure failed thanks to the "intransigence of the *Majlis* supported by the resources of US diplomacy."¹⁵ According to an Iranian author, Iran was able to safeguard its territorial integrity and reaffirm its sovereignty

¹³Marlowe, n. 3, 83.

¹⁴*New York Times*, 12 September 1947, quoted in Lenczowski, n. 5, 310-11. George V. Allen, before his posting as the US ambassador to Iran, held the post of Deputy Director, Near East and African Affairs, in the Department of States, an important post at that crucial time.

¹⁵Marlowe, n. 3, 84.

thanks to a subtle diplomacy.¹⁶

Whether it was due to the suitable diplomacy, intransigence of the *Majlis*, or the resources of the American diplomacy, the Soviet troops were out, Iranian authority was established in northern Iran and the oil agreement was revoked. This was primarily the triumph of the nationalists and not of the Shah or the USA because the Shah still had to find his mooring and the USA, on its own, would have been unable to get the Soviets out. It was this spirit of triumph that subsequently led Mossadeq to nationalize the Anglo-Indian Oil Company in 1951.

While the fight against the Soviet Union could be a joint struggle by the Shah and the nationalists the nationalization of the oil company posed a serious challenge to the Shah and his western supporters. Thus, it led to a direct clash between the Shah and the nationalists. This time the west worked with the Shah against the nationalists. Nationalists were not strong enough to resist that combination. The 1953 coup against Mossadeq saw the end of the role of nationalists in the decision-making process in Iran. Thus, 1953 marks a basic change in Iran's foreign policy. The policy of "negative equilibrium" came to a complete end and the Shah was forced to take shelter under the western umbrella.

Opting for the American Umbrella

The USA had acquired a very favourable image in Iran. Even in the nineteenth century, the Iranian regime was thinking of using the new, rich and distant power as a third force in Iranian foreign policy. The role played by the USA during the First World War, Wilson's Fourteen Points, as well as the role of American experts like Millspaugh, had done a great deal to boost that image. Thus, when the Americans entered Iran to organize the transportation of the lend-lease material to the USSR they were not equated directly with the British presence. The USA managed to retain its third force image. The American

¹⁶Djalili, Mohammed Reza, "L'évolution de la politique étrangère de l'Iran du début de la seconde guerre mondiale à nos jours", *Aspects de la Politique Étrangère de l'Iran et de la France*, Université de Téhéran, Centre de Hautes Etudes Internationales, Téhéran, October 1976, 38.

signature to the Tehran Declaration of 1943 was seen by Iranians as "the outstanding symbol of United States public support for the independence and territorial integrity of Iran. . . . To Iran, the declaration signaled greater American involvement as a counterweight to Soviet and British power."¹⁷ Also, there is no reason to believe that the USA aspired to acquire any other image or to get involved in Iranian policies at that juncture. Yet gradually USA did get involved militarily, politically and economically, especially after the beginning of the Cold War. It led to the American involvement in the internal affairs of Iran that culminated in open support to the Shah against the Iranian nationalists. Thus the American role in Iran turned, within a short span of less than a decade, from that of a third force to an umbrella that the ruling elite of Iran used not only as a shield against the threat from the north but also to protect itself from its local opponents.

The American troops came to Iran in 1942 to assist in the dispatch of lend-lease material to the USSR. By 1944, the number of noncombatant US troops in Iran reached 30,000.¹⁸ The Americans were also employed by the Iranians as advisers in the crucial fields like economy, police, gendarmerie and even in the army. Dr Millspaugh was brought to Iran for the second time and his appointment as Administrative General of Finance, carrying wide executive powers, was confirmed by the *Majlis* by a law passed on 4 May 1943.¹⁹ Millspaugh, however, had to leave in 1944 due to his highhandedness, excessive zeal and inability to adjust to the Iranian environment. But others continued to remain in Iran. One such person was Colonel H. Normah Schwarzkopf, who was responsible for the training of the gendarmerie and the police. Though his mission was active since October 1942 it was legalized by a law passed by the *Majlis* on 21 October 1943.²⁰ The mission was to be allowed for an initial period of two years but its term was extended. Colonel Schwarzkopf left Iran in 1948 when he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General and posted to Germany. During the period

¹⁷Ramazani, R.K., *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1975, 72.

¹⁸Marlowe, n. 3, 76.

¹⁹Lenczowski, n. 5, 263-64.

²⁰Ramazani, n. 17, 72.

of the Second World War Iranians had also requested for and obtained an American Military Mission. The American Military Mission in Iran was established in 1942 under the supervision of Major-General C. S. Ridley who was assisted by Colonel Dumond and ten other officers.²¹

The US interests in Iran became more pronounced after the Second World War and with the beginning of the Cold War. It offered full political and diplomatic support to Iran in its fight against the Soviet policy *vis-a-vis* northern Iran. Iran was grouped along with Turkey and Greece, whose relations with the USA had been defined under the Truman Doctrine of April 1947. The public support of Ambassador Allen to the Iranian nationalists in their stand against granting oil concessions to the USSR was reciprocated by the *Majlis* by passing a bill on 6 October 1947 which authorized the establishment of an American Military Mission in Iran.²² The oil concession to the USSR was rejected when the *Majlis* voted against it on 22 October 1947.

Good relations, thus established, were consolidated further through the development of military ties. In June 1947, i.e., soon after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, the USA agreed to offer a credit of \$25 million for the purchase of surplus military material, but the Iranian Parliament restricted the purchasing authority to \$10 million. The American Congress later authorized an additional \$16 million to cover the handling costs of material purchased, thus bringing the total credit that could actually be used to \$26 million. By August 1979 Iran had purchased \$5.2 million material with an original cost of 26.5 million.²³ Not only the American offer of money but also its willingness to sell military hardware at reduced prices illustrated the growing awareness among the Americans of the strategic location and the oil wealth of Iran.

The forties were interesting years in Iran-American relations

²¹Lenczowski, n. 5, 271.

²²Hovey, Harold A., *United States Military Assistance: A Study in Politics and Practices*, Praeger, New York, 1965, 8.

²³Brown, W.A. and Opie, R., *American Foreign Assistance*, Washington 1955, 445, quoted in Greaves, Rose L., 1942-76: "The reign of Mohammad Reza Shah", in Hossein Amirsadeghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, New York, 1977, 65.

because due to a combination of events the US policy in Iran dovetailed not only with the policy of the Shah but also of the nationalists. During the next few years the US had to decide whether to support the Shah or the nationalists. Moreover, the internal situation of Iran was not stable and the USA, despite the growing strategic importance of Iran, was restraining its economic and military commitments in Iran. The Shah of Iran, commenting upon his American visit of 1949 said, "I met a friendly reception but returned home completely empty-handed."²⁴ His explanation for the American behaviour was, "America had been shocked by the collapse of Nationalist China earlier in the same year, and she was determined to aid only those countries which showed a desire to clean house at home."²⁵ Ramazani, giving identical arguments, goes one step further. According to him, though Iran was important for the USA in its global perspective because of its oil and strategic location, few would place Iran on the same scale of importance to the United States as the countries of Western Europe. In other words, the problem of inadequate economic aid for Iran was not only a manifestation of clashing perceptions but also of completing priorities in American foreign policy.

This does not mean that the USA had written off Iran. Mutual Defence Aid Programme (MDAP) was inaugurated in 1950. Iran was included in it.²⁶ Turkey and Greece were allocated a sum of \$210 mn. Iran, Korea and the Philippines together were to get \$27 mn. Iran adhered to MDAP on 23 May 1950. When the USA began the Point IV programme, Iranian Prime Minister General Ali Razamara negotiated an agreement with the USA under which a modest assistance was given to Iran though Iran's request for long-term aid was refused.²⁷ These modest links permitted the USA to retain its presence in Iran and if necessary to extend full support to the Shah of Iran. A report entitled *The Achievements of United States Foreign Aid Programs*, prepared by the staff of the US International Cooperation Administration, justified the US aid to Iran by saying, "Although United States aid did

²⁴Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mohammed (His Imperial Majesty), *Mission for My Country*, London, 1961, 88.

²⁵Ibid., 88-9.

²⁶Department of State Bulletin, 22 (554), 13 February 1950, 227.

²⁷Reza Shah, n. 24, 89.

not increase the external combat effectiveness of the forces during the first few years because of the Mossadeq regime's indifference toward the development of the arm, it supplied the military equipment that enabled the armed forces loyal to the Shah to overthrow Mossadeq."²⁸ Once the Shah emerged victorious in the internal struggle for power the Americans, assured of a pro-US regime, went ahead full steam and offered Iran large quantities of economic and military aid. Soon after the overthrow of Mossadeq, President Eisenhower announced immediate allocation of \$45 mn. in emergency economic aid to Iran to make up the deficit in budget.²⁹ It should also be noted that this development also coincided with the northern-tier plan of John Foster Dulles that eventually led to the creation of the Baghdad Pact. Iran was one of its founding members.

The Baghdad Pact was a partial fulfilment of the American global and regional strategy in the early days of the Cold War. Undoubtedly the USA was interested in the Middle East because of its oil, geopolitical importance and close proximity to the vulnerable under-belly of Soviet Central Asia. But during the forties the USA was busy in Europe. Even the American policy *vis-a-vis* Turkey and Greece at that time has to be analyzed in the context of the Truman Doctrine, NATO and the defence of the southern flank of Europe, and not from the angle of the defence of the Middle East as such. The US interest in Iran during those years was, therefore, an adjunct to its policy in Greece and Turkey. Moreover, the USA was content to let Britain continue to formulate the Middle Eastern policy for the west and was willing to play a secondary role in defence proposals like the Middle-East Command Proposal of October 1951 and its watered-down version, the Middle-East Defence Organization of August 1952.

Events, however, changed rapidly in the first half of the fifties. The USA was projected as the major western power in the Middle East. The Iranian regime, under the Premiership of Dr Mossadeq, nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951. In 1952 the military *coup d'état* overthrew the Egyptian

²⁸*Mutual Security Act of 1957, Hearings, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 85 Congress, 1 Session, GPO, Washington, 1957, 612.*

²⁹Reza Shah, n. 24, 107.

monarchy. The period also witnessed further intensification of the Cold War at the global level. There were also basic changes in American leadership. The Eisenhower administration took over office in February 1953. All these events continued to produce a new look in the USA towards its Middle East policy. The US policy at that period can best be analyzed under three broad sub-headings—the need for a basic detente between the Arabs and Israel and, therefore, an even-handed American policy *vis-a-vis* the Arab-Israeli dispute; an equitable solution of the Anglo-Egyptian relations and hence American pressure for a settlement of the problems connected with the Suez Canal base, and finally, under pressure from the new policy of massive retaliation and containment, to organize a nucleus of a pro-western regional defence alliance with those Middle Eastern states that were willing to join it. The USA hoped that once the Arab-Israeli relations were normalized and the Anglo-Egyptian dispute settled peacefully, the Arab opposition to such an alliance could be overcome. This policy, therefore, became the basis of the northern-tier plan of John Foster Dulles.

Dulles left for his twenty-day tour of the Middle East and South Asia in May 1953. He visited almost all the countries in that area except Iran, which he avoided because of Mossadeq. On his return, he addressed the American people on radio and television. On the question of defence organization in the Middle East he maintained that it was a “future rather than an immediate possibility” since many Arab countries were opposed to it. According to him there was “more concern where the Soviet Union is near. In general the northern tier of nations shows awareness of the danger.”³⁰ Though the USA was the prime mover of this alliance system it was Turkey that acted as its regional promoter. On 23 May 1953, when Dulles was visiting India, Turkey reportedly sounded Pakistan for an alliance.³¹ Iskander Mirza, Pakistani Minister of Defence, and General Ayub Khan, commander-in-chief of the Pakistani armed forces, visited Turkey in September 1953. Vice-President Nixon visited Pakistan in November 1953. Turkey and Pakistan, the two outer

³⁰*Department of State Bulletin*, 28 (729), 15 June 1953, 835.

³¹El Syed, Raouf Abdel, *The Baghdad Pact in World Politics*, Geneva, 1971, 27.

flanks of the northern tier, were gradually coming closer under the overall patronage of the USA. The end result of these negotiations was the 2 April 1954 agreement between Turkey and Pakistan. Article 4 of this agreement dealt with consultation and cooperation in the field of defence. Any other state could join this pact if the participating states had no objection (Article 6). The Turko-Pak agreement supported by the USA became the nucleus of the Baghdad Pact.

According to John Foster Dulles, "informal friendship and understanding" between Turkey and Pakistan that came about in a "spontaneous way" ended with the formation of the Turko-Pakistani pact. According to Dulles the USA was only furnishing some military help to create "an additional barrier to a possible break through of communist forces in the areas of the Middle and Near East which are of great strategic value because of their location, their oil reserves and their people."³² Iraq, despite heavy opposition from within the Arab World, signed an agreement with Turkey on 24 February 1955. Britain followed suit. Iran took some time but finally joined on 11 October 1955. The Baghdad Pact was complete.

There is no doubt that a change of government in Iran in 1953 basically contributed to the very beginning of the Baghdad Pact. It would have been doubtful if the Turko-Pakistani agreement would have been formalized if Mossadeq had survived the 1953 crisis. Thus Iran was the major link in the northern-tier strategy. Yet, Iran was the last member to join the pact. There were several reasons that delayed Iran's membership. It had signed in 1927 a treaty of non-aggression and neutrality with the USSR. Under that treaty Iran had agreed not to take part in alliances that were directed against the USSR. Also by 1954-55, following the death of Stalin, the new regime in the USSR had thrown feelers of detente towards Iran that could not be ignored by the Shah who needed Soviet acquiescence to his politics at home. Moreover, the Shah had not consolidated his rule fully and the nationalists were basically against Iran joining a western alliance. It went against their basic policy of "negative equilibrium." The

³²Statement of Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles (19 March 1954), Hearings, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 83 Congress, 2 Session, GPO, Washington, 1954, 43-44.

consolidation of power by the Shah in Iran and his US visit of March 1955 finally prepared the path for Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact.

There were several reasons why the Shah of Iran joined the Baghdad Pact. One personal reason was his experience during the Second World War when, despite the declared neutrality, Iran was not only occupied by the Allied Powers but his father was deposed and exiled. Probably this was the background that led him to say, during his speech from the throne on 9 October 1955, "Neutrality not only fails to restrain the powerful from resorting to unreasonableness and to encroachment, but indeed provokes them to violence and aggression."³³ In another speech in 1961 he said, "While studying the history of past fifty years, we have discerned and deduced that Iran has consistently been menaced and subjected to encroachments. Previous experiences and lessons of history have prompted us to conclude agreements and treaties with countries who are capable of combating these dangers and preventing them from recurring."³⁴ Another reason was his experience of the Soviet occupation of northern Iran during and after the war. The Shah, in his interview to Bayne, said, "The lesson of Azerbaijan was a constant reminder to us that we had to have some kind of protection. We thought that by joining the pact we would have it . . ."³⁵

The Iranian membership of the pro-western military alliance evoked a sharp warning from the USSR. The USSR said that such an action would affect the security of Iran's neighbours who "cannot remain indifferent to what is going on their border."³⁶ It also warned that Iran's adherence to any pro-western pact would create "direct danger to Iran's existence as a sovereign and independent state."³⁷ The USSR, in its efforts to woo Iran away from the membership of that pact, offered to normalize economic relations with Iran. It even returned 11 tons

³³El Sayed, n. 31, 75.

³⁴Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Press Department, *Iran's Foreign Policy*, a compendium of the writings and statements of His Imperial Majesty Shahanshah Aryamehr, no date, printed by Iran-chap, 83.

³⁵Bayne, E.A., *Persian Kingship in Transition*, New York, 1968, 209.

³⁶*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 6 (21), 7 July 1954, 27.

³⁷*Ibid*, 6 (32), 22 September 1954, 18.

of gold and undertook to compensate Iran to the tune of £ 3 million for supplies provided during World War II. But that was too little and too late. The Shah had already decided to join the western alliance. The Soviet Union continued to protest even after Iran had joined the Baghdad Pact in October 1955. It sent notes of protest on 12 October,³⁸ 26 November 1955,³⁹ and 5 February 1956.⁴⁰ The Soviet Union invoked Article 3 of the 1927 Soviet-Iranian treaty of neutrality and said that Iran had violated that treaty. Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact worsened relations between the two countries.

There were also other reasons, connected not so much with external threat as with domestic environment, that prompted the Shah to join the Baghdad Pact. According to Marlowe, there were two powerful reasons for Iran's pro-western alliance policy; the first was a realization that in the eyes of the USA, a military commitment to the west was a necessary condition of any generous measure of US financial assistance, and second, a desire, especially on the part of the Shah, to increase the emoluments, the establishment and the prestige of the armed forces.⁴¹ There is no doubt that Iran did benefit both economically and militarily from this alliance. Military assistance from the USA was substantially increased after Iran joined the Baghdad pact.⁴² Figures vary about the total economic and military aid received by Iran following its membership of the pact but all the authors quote large amounts. According to Ramazani Iran received, between 1953 and 1961, economic and technical aid worth \$ 611 million.⁴³ According to Hurewitz Iran, during the seven years, received \$500 million as economic aid and \$400 million as military aid.⁴⁴ According to Young, Iran obtained \$200 million as loan and \$850 million as economic and military

³⁸*Documents on International Affairs*, 1955, (RIIA), Oxford University Press, London, 305.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 309 and *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 7 (48), 11 January 1956, 22.

⁴⁰*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 8 (1), 21 March 1956, 29-30.

⁴¹Marlowe, n. 3, 110-11.

⁴²Hovey, n. 22, 98.

⁴³Ramazani, n. 17, 388.

⁴⁴Hurewitz, J.C., "Iran in world and regional affairs", in Ehsan Yar-Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies*, New York, 1971, 133.

grants.⁴⁵ According to the official US sources, Iran, during the period 1953-61, got a total of \$1031 million in military and economic aid. Of these, \$197 million alone was in the form of loan whereas \$833.1 million was grant. Of this total, Iran got \$548.1 million as economic assistance (\$197 million as loan and \$351.1 million as grant) and \$482 million as military assistance (\$436.1 million MAP grant and \$45.9 million as trans-excess stock).⁴⁶ These substantial amounts helped Iran not only to bolster its sagging economy but also to increase its coercive power.

Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact also offered it some psychological satisfaction by giving it a degree of equality with its neighbouring states, especially Turkey. "No longer, to use a contemporary Iranian comment, would America treat Turkey as a wife, and Iran as a concubine in the volume and technological sophistication of United States military aid."⁴⁷

Lastly, the Shah joined the Baghdad Pact because it assured him the American support for his systemic security in Iran's internal politics. This was also one major reason for the nationalists' opposition to Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact. Their opposition to CENTO was due to their conviction that the Baghdad Pact was not devised to provide a defence against Soviet attack. Few Iranians believed that Iran could gain the ability to ward off a Soviet invasion. They saw the motivation behind the Baghdad Pact as a desire to maintain in power an Anglo-American controlled government in Iran. "Since the present government is not believed by the Nationalists to be genuinely independent, it must be altered or replaced if Nationalist objectives are to be achieved. CENTO by strengthening that government, is thus a hostile target for nationalism."⁴⁸

⁴⁵Young, T. Cuyler, "Iran in continuing crisis", *Foreign Affairs*, 40 (2), January 1962, 280.

⁴⁶*US Overseas Loans and Grants and Assistance from International Obligations and Loan Authorizations*, July 1945-September 30, 1977, Office of Program and Information Analysis Services, Bureau for Program Policy and Coordination Agency for International Development, 1977, 17.

⁴⁷Bayne, n. 35, 207.

⁴⁸Cottam, R.W., *Nationalism in Iran*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964, 310-11.

Strengthening the Umbrella: 1957-59

Baghdad Pact was undoubtedly supported by the USA. It even participated in some of its committees as observer but it had not joined the pact partly because of its involvement in the Arab-Israeli dispute. There was no direct US commitment to defend the area militarily. The Middle East was still considered a British sphere of influence and of responsibility. The consequences of the Suez War of 1956, however, damaged the British image so badly that the USA had to "fill the vacuum." This vacuum theory was made more explicit through the Eisenhower Doctrine. The framework of this doctrine was formally presented by President Eisenhower in his speech to the Congress on 5 January 1957. Among other things the President had sought Congressional authorization for four main points. He wanted authorization to help Middle Eastern countries economically and also to undertake in the same region programmes of military assistance and cooperation with any nation or group of nations which desired such aid. He also sought authorization for "such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism."⁴⁹ Lastly, he sought authorization to employ for economic and defensive military purposes, sums available under Mutual Security Act of 1954. He also asked for a \$200 million surplus fund during the FYs 1958 and 1959 for discretionary use in the area, in addition to other mutual security programmes.⁵⁰ A joint resolution was introduced in the Congress the same day to give effect to the new plan. On 7 January 1957 James P. Richards, former Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, was nominated as Special Assistant to the President with the rank of an ambassador, to advise and assist him on the problems of the Middle East. The Congress, with minor amendments, passed the bill on

⁴⁹*United States Policy in the Middle East, September 1956-June 1957, Documents, US Department of State Publications 6505, Near and Middle Eastern Series 25, GPO, Washington, 1957, 20.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 20-1.

9 March 1957.⁵¹ Ambassador Richards departed on his tour of the Middle East on 12 March, which lasted till 8 May. He did his best to assure the friends of the USA of US sympathy and support. He also disbursed about \$120 million among the countries that he had visited in his efforts to win friends and influence people.

Undoubtedly the Eisenhower Doctrine was one step forward in the path of direct US participation in the defence of the Middle East. Soon after the Suez war the USA officially declared on 29 November 1956 that a threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of Iran, Iraq, Pakistan or Turkey would be viewed by the USA with the utmost gravity.⁵² The USA joined the military committee of the Baghdad Pact in early 1957. The combined military planning staff of the Baghdad Pact was also created soon after. The Eisenhower Doctrine very vividly underlined the US military commitments in the area. But despite these gestures of military solidarity there was no concrete military step taken by the USA to enable it to defend the area militarily. Even the limits of the military commitments under the Eisenhower Doctrine were made very clear by Ambassador Richards during his testimony before the House Foreign Relations Committee in May 1957. According to him, the new doctrine put international communism on notice, thereby constituting a strong deterrent, and gave the countries of the area a sense of security and confidence. But he added, "As long as we make sure that the forces of international communism do not outdistance us in the military field, I do not believe any further action with respect to this aspect of the joint declaration is needed at this time."⁵³ He, however, emphasized the need for more economic and military aid to the pro-US countries in the area. Thus the US commitment was in fact more political and economic than military.

The USA, however, took some very energetic steps under the broad framework of the Eisenhower Doctrine that must have given some satisfaction to Iran that America was actively involved in maintaining *status quo* in the area. The USA put

⁵¹Ibid., 44-6.

⁵²Ibid., 19 and 419-20.

⁵³*Mutual Security Act of 1957, Hearings, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 85 Congress, 1 Session, GPO, Washington, 1957, 560.*

strong pressure on Syria in September 1957 through Turkey so as to halt what it called a dangerous tilt towards the Soviet Bloc. It also supported King Hussein against Premier Nabulsi in 1957 and thus prevented a pro-Nasser tilt in Jordanian policy. In 1958 the USA openly supported the pro-western regime of President Chamoun of Lebanon and even sent the VI Fleet and troops to rescue him from a possible *coup d'etat* in July 1958. But the 14 July 1958 *coup d'etat* in Iraq, where the military overthrew the monarchical regime of a member of the Baghdad Pact, dealt a sharp and sudden blow to the feeling of security in Iran. Hence attempts were made to further strengthen the US umbrella. The politico-military links between Iran and the USA were adequate to protect Iran against the threat from a super power but the events of July 1958 introduced new factors which needed a new policy.

The single most important event in the 1950s that focused Iran's attention on the Persian Gulf was the "Iraqi revolution of 1958."⁵⁴ The Iranian regime had already started feeling the pressure of Arab nationalism, and Arab radicalism (Nasserism) was already treated as a threat to Iran. The threat became all the more potent because of the changes next door. Also Iran feared that the Iraqi coup might have a domino effect in the Gulf. Ramazani suggests that in order to avert the development of a pincer of Soviet pressure from the north and the Iraqi hostility from the south, Iran tried to negotiate a non-aggression pact with the USSR. It did not materialize and Iran signed the 9 March 1959 bilateral agreement with the USA. It is difficult to accept this thesis. The Shah did try to respond to the Soviet offer but finally preferred to have, instead, more binding links with the west. Maybe the time was not ripe for a detente. The western strategy was the same and so also were the decision-makers. It would have been interesting to watch the reactions of a person like John Foster Dulles if the Shah had strayed into the path of neutrality. After all neutrality, according to him, was immoral. Moreover, the Baghdad Pact members were also pressing for a concerted policy aimed at a deeper American involvement in the northern tier.

Following the 1958 coup in Iran the Baghdad Pact members

⁵⁴Ramazani, n. 17, 399.

requested the USA to join the Pact.⁵⁵ The USA declined to do so but showed its willingness to strengthen its politico-military commitments towards the regional members of the Baghdad Pact or the CENTO, as it was subsequently called. The ministerial meeting of the Baghdad Pact, in its London Declaration of 28 July 1958, specifically mentioned:

Article 1 of the Pact of Mutual Cooperation signed at Baghdad on February 24, 1955 provides that the parties will cooperate for their security and defence and that such measures as they agree to take to give effect to this cooperation *may form the subject of special agreements*. Similarly, the United States, in the interest of world peace, and pursuant to existing Congressional authorization agrees to cooperate with the nations making this Declaration for their security and defence, and will *promptly* enter into agreements designed to give effect to this cooperation.⁵⁶

Thus seeds of the 1959 bilateral agreements between the USA on one hand and individual northern-tier countries on the other, were sown at the London Conference of July 1958. The communique issued after that conference also welcomed the "new initiative" of the United States as set out in paragraph 4 of the London Declaration.

The bilateral agreements were finally signed at Ankara on 5 March 1959. The USA signed identical agreements with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. These were executive agreements and not treaties which would have required the Senate's approval. It was emphasized that these agreements were fully consistent with the then existing Congressional authorizations like the Mutual Security Act of 1954 and the Joint Resolution of 9 March 1957 (the Eisenhower Doctrine), and that the new agreement only supplemented and did not replace the earlier agreements. The operative part of the agreement of 5 March 1959 was Article 1, which said:

The Government of Turkey is determined to resist aggression.

⁵⁵Reza Shah, n. 24, 121.

⁵⁶*Department of State Bulletin*, 39 (999), 18 August 1958, 273.

In case of aggression against Turkey, the Government of the United States of America will take such appropriate actions, including the use of armed forces, as may be mutually agreed upon and as is envisaged in the Joint Resolution to Promote Peace and Stability in the Middle East, in order to assist the Government of Turkey at its request.⁵⁷

These bilateral agreements were violently criticized by the USSR. Iran was a special target for these criticisms because the Soviet Union had attempted unsuccessfully not only to prevent Iran from signing this agreement but also to sign a non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and Iran. The USSR had reason to be worried about the new developments in the Middle East in the light of the new missiles that were being developed. There were apprehensions that the newly developed IRBMs (Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile—the *Jupiter*) might be deployed soon. There was resistance in Europe to its deployment there because of the fear of Soviet nuclear attack, though finally Britain and Italy allowed the IRBMs to be installed on their territories. Turkey was another country where they were installed. There was a justifiable fear that the Americans might force the Shah of Iran to permit them to install these missiles in Iran.⁵⁸ Thus, the new bilateral pact between Iran and the USA, and fear of the installation of IRBMs in Iran, led the Soviets to fear that the NATO might be extended up to their vulnerable underbelly in Central Asia, which till then was relatively safe.

At first the Soviet government handed a strong note of protest on 31 October 1958 to the Iranian ambassador in Moscow. The note said that the new military pact concluded by Iran with the USA, which granted the US military forces broad opportunities to subordinate Iran even further to the American mili-

⁵⁷Ibid., 40 (1030), 23 March 1959, 416-17. The agreement with Iran was on identical lines

⁵⁸Chubin, Shahram and Zabih, Sepehr, *The Foreign Relations of Iran, A Developing State in a Zone of Great Power Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974, 53. The authors also quote a Soviet publication, V. Fuzeyer, *In American Harness*, which says that Iran had allowed the USA to build these missile bases in the Zagros mountains. Ibid., footnote 37. For the Soviet view, also see G. Starko, "Iran and global strategy", *New Times* (52), December 1958, 16.

tary plan,⁵⁹ was in direct contradiction to Article 3 of the 1921 treaty of neutrality between Iran and the USSR. The Soviet government also informed in the same note that under the circumstances, it would not be appropriate for President K. Y. Voroshilov to visit Iran. The Soviet government handed a supplement to the 31 October note of protest. It was handed over on 28 December 1958 at Tehran by the Soviet ambassador. The note reiterated the earlier points and said that the new steps taken by Iran were directed against the USSR. It said that the pact would transform Iran into a springboard for military action against the USSR. It even threatened that "The chief loser will be Iran, which because of such a policy would be threatened with annihilation should a military conflict break out."⁶⁰

These threatening gestures were subsequently substituted by more conciliatory moves. The Soviet Union offered to sign a non-aggression pact with Iran. There were precedents like the 1921 and the 1927 treaties. Negotiations between Iran and the USSR were conducted during the first week of February 1959. These negotiations evoked strong criticism from both sides. Both of them also gave their own versions and blamed the other side for failure. According to the Shah, at first the Russians wanted Iran to get out of the Baghdad Pact. Then they dropped that argument and insisted upon Iran not signing the 1959 agreement. "By then it had become clear to us that in return for a treaty of non-aggression the Russians wanted to separate us from our allies. Not only did they insist upon our repudiating the agreement with America, but also the draft non-aggression treaty itself contained clauses that would have weakened our ties with friends."⁶¹ The Shah said that though Iran was not happy with the help that its allies were giving it he chose to remain with his allies.

The Soviet version is different. *Pravda* of 14 February 1959, in a long article entitled "Perfidious Policy of Iranian Govern-

⁵⁹ *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 10 (44), 10 December 1958, 17. Also see Y. Bochkaryov, "Patching up the Baghdad Pact", *New Times*, (47), November 1958, 15-6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 11 (3), 25 February 1959, 25.

⁶¹ Reza Shah, n. 24, 122. The Soviets repudiated the Shah's statement in a lengthy article by A. Irandost, "Restoring the truth", *International Affairs* (Moscow) (1), January 1961, 69-80.

ment," gave a quasi-official version of the negotiations. According to *Pravda*⁶² it was the Iranian government that proposed the draft for a treaty of non-aggression. It was handed over to the Russian ambassador by Foreign Minister Hekmat on 19 January 1959. He was also reported to have told the Soviets that if the Soviets would sign that treaty Iran would not sign the bilateral agreement with the USA. A Soviet delegation arrived in Tehran to negotiate the draft. *Pravda* said that though the Iranian draft wanted the USSR to repudiate the 1921 and 1927 treaties and accept Iran's participation in the Baghdad Pact, the USSR accepted "the full text of the treaty as proposed by the Iranian side, and considering the Shah's statement that Iran's participation in the Baghdad Pact would never be used against the Soviet security interest, communicated that it would not insist at this time on Iran's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact."⁶³ The Soviets, however, insisted that Iran should not join the new pact and not allow its territory to be used by others against the USSR. According to *Pravda*, after the Soviet acceptance of the Iranian draft Hekmat reportedly told the Soviet delegation on 10 February that the Iranian government would be prepared to sign the proposed treaty "only if the treaty was amended so as to sanction Iran's obligations under the aggressive Baghdad Pact."⁶⁴ Hekmat also told the Soviet delegation that Iran would go ahead and sign the new agreement with the USA.

Pravda not only blamed the USA and the members of the Baghdad Pact for pressurizing the Shah into repudiating the pact with the USSR but also accused the Shah. It said that the Iranian proposals were "merely a game designed primarily to mislead Iranian public opinion and to close the deal with the USA—conclude the bilateral military agreement—under cover of talks with the USSR."⁶⁵ It squarely blamed the Iranian regime. "The two-faced perfidious policy of the Iranian ruling circles toward the USSR, cannot but involve serious consequences for Iran itself. Full responsibility for this rests with the Iranian rulers."⁶⁶

⁶²Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 11 (6-7), 18 March 1959, 24-6.

⁶³Ibid., 25.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

According to an Iranian scholar, the Shah had agreed to sign the agreement with the USA but wanted a higher price: an American guarantee for his throne against internal subversion as well. According to him the Shah staged to invite the Russians, negotiate with them till the Americans promised him what he wanted. Eisenhower immediately dispatched Admiral Radford to Tehran. Radford was empowered to promise the Shah an "elastic" fulfilment of his demands. Once he got what he wanted the Russians were sent home.⁶⁷ In the absence of archival sources it is difficult to pinpoint the blame but in view of the Iranian flair for diplomacy, one cannot easily dismiss the Shah's game of using the Russians as a lever to get more concessions from the Americans, more than they were willing to make. He adopted the same tactic in 1967 to get better arms from the USA.

The 1959 agreement and the period that followed it was the lowest watermark in Soviet-Iranian relations. Not only did Soviet publications blame the Iranian regime for it⁶⁸ but the USSR also launched radio propaganda against Iran. The ministerial meeting of the CENTO held in Washington, 7-9 October 1959, took note of the mounting radio attacks on the Iranian regime and on the Shah himself. It was reported that there were seventy-four-hour Persian language broadcasts per week and they were devoted mostly to anti-Iranian propaganda. It was also alleged that a clandestine radio, the National Voice of Iran, was being operated from Soviet Caucasus region, which was openly inciting the Iranians to overthrow the regime of the Shah. The ministerial committee of the CENTO passed a specific declaration against the anti-Iranian propaganda directed from the Soviet Union.⁶⁹

One really wonders if Iran got much from the 1959 agreement. It was not a bilateral military pact in the real sense. If Iran wanted that agreement to provide a US military guarantee against possible military threat posed by the USSR, or more likely from the Arab World, it did not get that. The 1959 agreement was

⁶⁷Nirumand, Bahman, *Iran: the New Imperialism in Action*, New York, 1969, 143.

⁶⁸Lavrentyev, A.K., *Imperialisticheskaia politika i Shai i anglii v Irane*, Moscow, 1960, 91 and V. Fuzeyer, *In American Harness*, quoted in Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 53.

⁶⁹*Department of State Bulletin*, 41 (1061), 26 October 1959, 586.

nothing more than a reaffirmation of the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957. Not only did Article 1 of that agreement specifically refer to the Eisenhower Doctrine but John Foster Dulles, in a news conference on 27 January 1959, set the limit of the US commitment. When asked whether the USA would accept the demand of the regional powers that the pact should also protect them against countries other than the communist countries, Dulles recalled the Eisenhower Doctrine that authorized the USA to use its armed forces in that region. Dulles was very specific and said that the USA could not go beyond that.⁷⁰ But the USA did try to strengthen Iran militarily in view of the Soviet politico-diplomatic pressure. It initiated action to improve Iran's defensive capacity by the accelerated delivery of already programmed military material.⁷¹ Also, joint consultations at the top military level on both sides led to a comprehensive plan for organizing and improving Iranian armed forces. The net result was that the operational capability of the Iranian armed forces improved significantly.⁷²

Holes in the Umbrella

The Baghdad Pact or the CENTO, the Eisenhower Doctrine and the 1959 bilateral agreement, which represented the American umbrella over Iran, were tailored to meet primarily the American global and regional requirements in the initial phase of the Cold War rivalry. In the late forties and in the fifties the American and Iranian interests were dovetailing and thus there could be an active cooperation between the two. The USA did help Iran. The Iranian armed forces developed from an internal security force to a modern armed force. According to some scholars the army which American aid helped to modernize had often been called a satellite force by Iranian officials.⁷³

⁷⁰Ibid., 40 (1025), 16 February 1959, 227.

⁷¹Statement by Rear Admiral E.B. Grantham, Joint Director, Near East, South Asia and Africa Region, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defence, Department of Defence, *Mutual Security Appropriation for 1960*, Hearings, Senate Committee on Appropriations, 86 Congress, 1 Session, H.R. 8385, GPO, Washington, 1959, 344.

⁷²Ibid., 345.

⁷³Bayne, n. 35, 208.

This charge which, according to Bayne, more than one American ambassador admitted to be true, was based upon the fact that the army had been designed to protect Iran from the one potential enemy which the United States shared with Persia: the Soviet Union. But it was apparently not geared for a potential threat from other quarters. The development of Iranian military strength as a satellite force was, therefore, not only the strength but also the weakness of the American umbrella.

The US strategic interests in Iran and the neighbouring areas were conditioned by the then prevailing politico-military environment and the American response to global security problems. The military superiority of the USA, especially in terms of strategic nuclear weapons, and its links with the West European powers who still retained some influence over their old spheres of influence, enabled the American administration to evolve a strategy that could be based on concepts like massive retaliation and assured destruction and containment of communism. But by the beginning of the sixties two major events forced America to have a new look at its global strategy. These two events were the evolution of new weapon systems based upon long-range guided missiles, and the change in the American administration—the Kennedy era.

The weapon systems that were being evolved or were on the point of evolution, like the Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), and the Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) made the earlier dependence on the land mass on the periphery of the USSR practically redundant in the long run. Also the old concept of massive retaliation lost its appeal, because with long-range ballistic missiles, both sides could threaten each other with massive destruction. It was no longer an exclusive prerogative of the USA. Thus it was essential to search for a new strategy, keeping in view the new realities. The new strategy during the Kennedy era was often called "flexible response" under which the American administration wanted to retain multiple options ranging from tactical to strategic response as well as a second strike capability to deter a Soviet nuclear first strike. It also opened a serious dialogue on the question of detente, arms control and disarmament. Diplomatic efforts were directed towards this question after 1960. Naturally it led to some misgivings among the CENTO powers, so much so that Lloyd and

Herter, who were attending the ministerial meeting of the CENTO, 28-30 April 1960, in Tehran, had to offer their assurances that the Big Power talks being planned would be conducted with full regard for the interests of their allies in the CENTO and that these members would be informed of such discussions.

The new developments in the weapon system and, therefore, the change in strategy also coincided with a change in the American administration. There was a new look at America's political and military commitments abroad. There was a great deal of criticism of Iran's priority about military spending at the cost of socio-economic development and political liberalization. The cooling-off of US-Iran relations was evident since the election of the Democratic Party candidate in 1960.⁷⁴ The Kennedy administration sought to engage in social engineering in Iran by tying military assistance and budgetary support to the creation of democratic institutions.⁷⁵ In addition, Washington used its considerable economic leverage to dictate the size of Iran's armed forces. By 1961 Iranian armed forces totalled about 200,000 men. The Kennedy administration pressed the Shah for a reduction in its size. In fact the Iranian government agreed to a reduction up to fifteen per cent.⁷⁶ But there was no evidence that the size of the Iranian armed forces was ever altered except for the purposes of expansion and by 1965 the force was estimated at 2,20,000 men. Thus there was a basic difference in the attitudes of the new American government and the Shah on the question of military guarantee. The Shah also suspected that the USA was building up the image of the independent Iranian politicians as a counterweight to his power. The *Christian Science Monitor* of 15 January 1960 carried an article to the effect that the USA was considering a change in its policy *vis-a-vis* Iran and was encouraging opposition elements rather than the Shah. The Shah naturally was very sensitive to such reports and the state department had to go out of its way to officially contradict the views expressed in the *Christian Science Monitor*.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Zonis, Marvin, *The Political Elite of Iran*, Princeton, New York, 1971, 107.

⁷⁵Chubin, Shahram, "Iran's foreign relations, 1960-1976", in Hossein Amirsadeghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, New York, 1977, 198.

⁷⁶Hovey, n. 22, 106.

⁷⁷*Department of State Bulletin*, 42 (1078), 8 February 1960, 201.

Thus the way the new administration looked at the American interests in this area was different from the way Dulles had looked. The US response towards an improvement of relations between Iran and the USSR after 1962 or between Pakistan and China (and also USSR) after 1962 evoked only marginal response, something which could not be imagined during the Dulles period. The American response towards the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965 was more of neutrality than that of a pro-alliance partner. Moreover, direct transfer of US military weapons to Iran and Pakistan was being drastically reduced after 1961, with the result that both Iran and Pakistan were greatly perturbed. Instead efforts were being made to encourage economic and social cooperation. The Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) which was created in 1964 and which comprised of the regional members of the CENTO, signified the new emphasis. All these developments had their impact upon the Iranian perception of the CENTO, especially after the Indo-Pakistani conflict of 1965.

The Shah had asked for a full US membership of the CENTO, a greater financial support for expanding military and non-military programmes and a truly unified military command representing all the partners.⁷⁸ But he got nothing. He maintained that Iran was the hub of CENTO and the CENTO was the main link between the SEATO and the NATO. "My country is in a way the keystone of the whole structure To render Iran important would be to provide one of the handiest ways of outflanking both NATO and SEATO" ⁷⁹

The Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 had a great impact upon the Shah's perception of the CENTO as a security umbrella. During and after the war Pakistan asked for support from Turkey and Iran. But both gave only moral support. According to the Shah, "We see now what CENTO really is. It is a device to protect the west only. It was interesting that the United States quickly pointed out that it was only an associated member."⁸⁰ The USA also reminded the Shah that military equipment, particularly aircraft, supplied by the United States as aid could not

⁷⁸Reza Shah, n. 24, 315.

⁷⁹Ibid., 313.

⁸⁰Bayne, n. 35, 219.

be used by a third party. The Shah reportedly remarked soon after that war, "Now we know that the United States would not come to aid us if we were attacked. . . It is no longer 1946. Things have changed."⁸¹ Not only Iran but Pakistan also lost faith in the CENTO. Pakistan virtually boycotted it till 1968.⁸² The Shah therefore began to refer to the CENTO as a club where its members assembled to discuss technical and economic problems with each other.⁸³ He also discounted the utility of the March 1959 bilateral agreement between Iran and the USA.⁸⁴

The Shah had blown hot and cold on the question of the relevance of the CENTO. He did not wish to see it dissolved although he seemed to discount its local security value. However torn it might have appeared as an umbrella to him he was most reluctant to see it dissolved. That probably explained the violent manner in which he reacted to an alleged desire on the part of the UK to pull out of the CENTO. He threatened to retaliate by imposing economic sanctions against Britain.⁸⁵ Britain's commitments to CENTO after its withdrawal from East of Suez were based in Cyprus, and it was thinking of withdrawing even from there for economic reasons. It is interesting that while Iran welcomed the British withdrawal from the Gulf it was reluctant to see it go from Eastern Mediterranean, an area of no immediate importance to Iran.

Despite its broken image the CENTO membership did offer the Shah's regime in Iran several advantages. Despite the super-power detente and SALT agreements it provided a tacit British and American commitment to Iran's security against a possible threat from the Soviet Union. It provided a very real link between Iran and the regional CENTO neighbours. Also it provided it with legitimacy as a dedicated pro-western power so as to claim extra privileges in terms of economic, technical and military assistance and arms purchase. The annual CENTO military exercises like the *Shahbaz* and *Midlink* were vital for the training of the Iranian armed forces. Sometimes special joint US-Iranian

⁸¹Ibid., 220.

⁸²El Sayed, n. 31, 141-42.

⁸³*Iran's Foreign Policy*, n. 34, 87-8.

⁸⁴Interview with C.L. Sulzberger of *New York Times*, *Times of India* (New Delhi), 23 April 1973.

⁸⁵*Dawn* (Karachi), 9 May 1974.

exercises like *Delawar* were also held.⁸⁶ Lastly, its close links with the west provided the ruling elite of Iran with valuable support for the systemic continuity in Iran.

Yet, the Iranian regime, feeling that the CENTO had proved a broken reed and that the new American administration might take advantage of total Iranian dependence upon the USA to impose upon it conditions or constraints that would be unacceptable to it, began to search for more options. One of them was a detente with the USSR. It also tried to cultivate France as a Third Force. Relations between Reza Shah and President de Gaulle were very close. Iran also tried to modernize the country, which resulted in the so-called White Revolution. The detente with the Soviet Union was, however, the most crucial of these options and the Iranian regime went ahead single-mindedly to acquire it.

Detente with the Soviet Union

The Soviet-Iranian relations had their ups and downs. The geographical constraints and the changing international environment cannot permit Iran to maintain relations of permanent hostility *vis-a-vis* its powerful northern neighbour, despite the potential threat that it might pose to Iran's security. Often, the ruling elite in Iran had even used the Russian presence in the north to gain certain options in their desire to manoeuvre in the adverse international environment prevailing at a given time. The Iranians did use the new government in Russia after the October Revolution as a counterweight to the British pressure, and to that extent even signed major treaties in 1921 and 1927 that legally offered, as discussed earlier, the USSR an excuse even to intervene in Iran through the use of Soviet armed forces. That detente also enabled Iran to re-establish its control in northern Iran, which had rebelled under Kuchik Khan of Gilan and Sheikh Mohammad Khaiban of Azerbaijan.⁸⁷ The detente, however, did not last because of Reza Khan's desire to create a Third Force (USA and then Germany), Allied Occupation of

⁸⁶"Iran—Exercise Dilawar", *Military Review*, 44 (7), July 1964, 102. It was held in Dizful area near Abadan.

⁸⁷Lenczowski, n. 5, 59 and Ramazani, n. 1, 89.

Iran during World War II, the Azerbaijan crisis, the controversy over the oil agreement in the north, and the question of the evacuation of the Soviet troops after the Second World War.

The USSR once again sought friendly relations with the regime of the Shah of Iran in 1954-55. Maybe the Soviet leaders were prompted by a new look at the Afro-Asian World in the post-Stalin period. But more likely, the USSR was trying to woo Iran into not joining the US-sponsored northern-tier plan that finally led to the formation of the Baghdad Pact.

The USSR had not offered any support to Mossadeq⁸⁸ and less than a fortnight before the downfall of Mossadeq, the Soviet premier, Georgia M. Malenkov, had announced Soviet willingness to settle a number of frontier problems and mutual financial claims with Iran.⁸⁹ According to Hurewitz, the Shah had made a practice of accepting all concrete favours, no matter how small, and particularly of responding to initiatives designed to diminish misunderstanding and restore mutual confidence.⁹⁰ The end result of this new dialogue in the post-Stalin era was that agreements were signed that led to the settlement of outstanding problems like debt claims, return of gold, the frontier question⁹¹ etc. By June 1955 the USSR had returned 11.2 tons of gold and \$8.6 million to Iran. The new honeymoon did not last long. Iran joined the Baghdad Pact. It evoked strong Soviet criticisms and despite the series of notes that were exchanged between Iran and the USSR between October 1955 and February 1956,⁹² tension persisted.

Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact and the Soviet criticism, however, did not prevent the two governments from continuing their efforts at normalization of relations. The Shah's Moscow visit was designed towards that end. *Izvestia* of 24 June 1956, commenting upon the proposed visit, dwelt

⁸⁸Djalili, n. 15, 39.

⁸⁹Hurewitz, n. 44, 133.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹A joint commission, which began work in 1954, mapped and marked the 1250-mile-long border between Iran and the USSR. "Iran-USSR border agreement", *Military Review*, 37 (2), May 1957.

⁹²*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 7 (48), 11 January 1956, 22-3 and *ibid.*, 8 (6), 21 March 1956, 29-30. Also see T. Korotkova, "Against Iran's interest", *New Times* (43), 20 October 1955, 9-11 and (44), 27 October 1955, 18-9.

at length upon the need to promote good-neighbourly relations between the USSR and Iran. It mentioned the various agreements that were signed between them since 1954, as well as the Soviet help to Iran in fishing and in cotton cultivation. Though there was also a mild criticism of Iran's role in the Baghdad Pact the article on the whole was very favourable to a detente.⁹³ Similar efforts were also made soon after the visit.⁹⁴ The Shah did try during that visit to assure his hosts that Iranian membership of the Baghdad Pact was not aimed against the USSR. The Shah in his discussions with Khrushchev told him, "We would never allow either the pact or our territory to be used in furtherance of aggressive designs upon the Soviet Union. I gave Khrushchev my pledge as a soldier that as long as I reign Iran would not in any way countenance or take part in any aggressive schemes against his country."⁹⁵ The Shah was quite happy about the visit. "After the fall of Mossadeq, and especially after my visit to Moscow in 1956, Soviet Russia for a time behaved in an exemplary manner towards my country."⁹⁶ These talks paved the way for new ties and agreements that settled long-standing border disputes and paved the way for joint utilization of two border rivers, Aras and Atrak, a transit agreement and increased trade.

The newly created detente however did not last long. The Soviets had accepted Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact within the framework of western strategy based upon conventional armed forces backed by atomic bombers. But the period following the Iraqi *coup d'état* of July 1958 also witnessed the introduction of *Jupiter* IRBM. The pressure of the Baghdad Pact powers to obtain greater US commitment to them after 1958 could very well have led to the installation of US missiles in the northern tier also.⁹⁷ These missiles were ultimately installed in

⁹³Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 8 (25), 1 August 1956, 15.

⁹⁴"For wide cooperation and good neighbourly relations", *International Affairs* (Moscow), (7), July 1956, 12-6. For a favourable biography, *New Times* (26) 1, 1956, 30.

⁹⁵Reza Shah, n. 24, 120. Collaborated by K.P.S. Menon, *The Flying Troika, Extracts from a Diary of Indian Ambassador to Russia, 1952-61*, Oxford University Press, London, 157-58.

⁹⁶Reza Shah, n. 24, 111.

⁹⁷For the Soviet view on that threat see G. Starko, "Iran and

UK and Turkey.⁹⁸ Thus the Soviet recognition of the new missile age,⁹⁹ possible fear that the missiles might be based in the northern tier, including Iran, and Iran's signing of the bilateral agreement with the USA in March 1959, contrary to the express desire of the USSR—all these factors built up a tension that further heightened the Soviet-Iranian tension.

Many authors point to the growing importance of the northern tier in the western strategy based upon newly developed IRBM and also the newly perfected B-52 bombers. "Since the delicate central strategic balance between 1949 and 1962 depended on the air arms of the US and the USSR, any peripheral bases gained by the other super power gave it an advantage in surprise attack capability and constituted a real danger."¹⁰⁰ The strong protest lodged by the USSR on the eve of the annual CENTO air exercise, *Shahbaz II*, in May 1960, should be seen in this context. The fact that it followed the U-2 incident of 1 May 1960¹⁰¹ made it appear more sinister. The Soviet note on the *Shahbaz II* pointed out the earlier cases of air violation and said that military demonstrations of that

Global strategy", *New Times* (52), December 1958, 16; Y. Bochkaryov, "A shaky throne", *ibid.*, (11), March 1959, 11-3; "Plans for atomic cannibalism: the CENTO documents", *ibid.*, (35), 30 August 1961, 14-9 (with maps and photocopies).

⁹⁸Note by the Soviet ambassador to the Turkish Foreign Minister on the construction of rocket bases in Turkey, *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 13 (6), 8 March 1961, 33. Also see *ibid.*, 13 (39), 25 October 1961, 23. It is possible that these missiles were introduced in Turkey under the agreement signed between the USA and Turkey, relating to the introduction of modern weapons into NATO defence forces, effected by exchange of notes at Ankara, 18 September and 28 October 1959. *Department of State Bulletin*, 41 (0167), 7 December 1959, 850.

⁹⁹Khrushchev, in his major speech on 14 January 1960 at the Supreme Soviet talked at length on the capabilities of the new missiles. He did touch upon the Soviet lead in rocketry but also hinted at the threat from the USA. *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 12 (2), 10 February 1960, 3-16.

¹⁰⁰Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 67.

¹⁰¹A U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance plane flown by Francis Garry Powers was shot down near Sverdlovsk on 1 May 1960. The plane was flying from Adna (Turkey), Peshawar (Pakistan) to Bude (Norway), and was shot down while flying from Peshawar to Bude. It created a major international crisis. For details see *Department of State Bulletin*, 42 (1092), 30 May 1960, 852-3.

nature were incompatible with the interests of strengthening peace and security in the Near and Middle East. It called it a "hostile act aimed directly against the security of the USSR and in conflict with the Soviet-Iranian treaties in force,"¹⁰² (Article 5 of 1921 treaty).

It was not so much the bombers but the IRBMs that were causing concern to the USSR. According to Ramazani, the new weapon system held two imperatives for the USSR: elimination of all missile bases in the neighbourhood of the Soviet Union, and to keep such missile bases in the neighbourhood of the USA.¹⁰³ Chubin and Zabih also argue on a similar line. They argue that since the USSR had put the medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles targeted on Europe, it also believed that the USA might do the same to it.¹⁰⁴ In fact *Jupiter* was planned for that purpose and since NATO countries had shown reluctance to have them installed (reluctance to be targets of Soviet first and second strike), Turkey and Iran appeared to be the next best alternate sites. Thus Iran's geopolitical importance was temporarily enhanced. And Iran's desire to strengthen its links with the USA confirmed the Soviet fears. The Soviet fear that the Shah might get these missiles installed, lasted till the last moment. *Izvestia* of 21 April 1962, commenting upon the Shah's visit to the USA, said that the Shah had been urging the USA to join the CENTO and to install missiles in Iran.¹⁰⁵

The Chubin and Zabih team, while arguing on the possible impact of the IRBM on Soviet-Iranian relations, pointed out that the significance of the issue of foreign missile bases in Iran-Soviet relations had been greatly exaggerated. According to them the USSR used it as "a symbol rather than a physical entity."¹⁰⁶ They argued that it was unlikely that the USSR would credit the USA with the intent of placing rockets in the unreliable Iran of 1959-61, and thereby invite their possible capture by elements hostile to the United States. It must also be noted that the Iranian airforce was weak and in no condition to offer

¹⁰²*Pravda*, 15 May 1960, quoted in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 12 (21), 22 June 1960, 18.

¹⁰³Ramazani, n. 17, 317.

¹⁰⁴Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 53.

¹⁰⁵*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 14(16), 16 May 1962, 27.

¹⁰⁶Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 55.

any protection to these sites against possible Soviet air strikes. They also argue that placing *Jupiter* in Iran would have meant complete US willingness to underwrite the security of the regime.

No doubt these arguments are valid and must be borne in mind while keeping the totality of the Soviet threat perception from the northern-tier countries at that time. But if one looked at the question from the Soviet angle it could be argued that those missile bases were relatively small compact units that could be protected not by Iranian but American forces, including the air force. After all Turkey did offer examples of exclusive US bases where access was denied even to the Turks themselves. In such a case those missile bases could have posed a real first-strike capability. The USA would any way have underwritten the security of the Iranian regime as long as that regime acquiesced to the US presence in Iran. After all that is what the Americans were doing since the Second World War. Thus the IRBMs were a crucial factor affecting the international strategic environment influencing Iran's relations at that time, not only with the USSR but also with the USA. The change-over from IRBM to ICBM and SLBM as the main strategic-nuclear deterrent force brought about a basic change in international strategic environment that subsequently helped in 1962 in paving the way for the detente between Iran and the USSR.

It was revealed in 1963 that in the Fall of 1960 the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy made an on-site inspection in Turkey and other NATO bases, and as a result of its study recommended that construction on *Jupiter* sites in Turkey should not be permitted. Instead, it recommended that an alternative system such as the *Polaris* submarine with sixteen SLBMs could be assigned to NATO. The new system, it was suggested, would constitute a better retaliatory force.¹⁰⁷ The *Jupiter* was thus a stop-gap arrangement. The *Polaris* A-1 SLBM with a range of 1200 nautical miles became operational by 1961, and A-2 with 1500 nautical-mile range by 1962. The A-2, if deployed in the Eastern Mediterranean, could reach major Russian targets.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Hearings on Military Postures*, Committee on Armed Services, 88 Congress, 1 Session, GPO, Washington, 1963, 276-84.

¹⁰⁸ Jukes, Geoffrey, "The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy", Adelphi Papers No. 87, May 1972, 5.

By 1963 the *Polaris* reportedly became operational in the Eastern Mediterranean and the *Jupiter* IRBMs were removed. Thus, by 1952 the land-based IRBMs had already become obsolete¹⁰⁹ and there was no question of these missiles being put in Iran. The total impact of the development in weapon systems was that the USSR was convinced that the Shah's pledge that he would not permit the installation of missile bases in Iran had substance. It also meant that when the Iranians offered this pledge to the USSR there was no adverse response from the USA or UK because it did not signify any fundamental military disadvantage to the west.¹¹⁰

The change in the weapon system, and therefore in super-power strategy, also coincided with the change in the American ruling elite. The new Kennedy administration had different views on the Cold War, nuclear strategy and on Iran. Despite the Iranian demands for US membership of the CENTO and better arms for Iran the US military aid to Iran was generally reduced.¹¹¹ Arms aid to Pakistan was also drastically curtailed at that time. This provoked some commentators to doubt about the future of the CENTO.¹¹² Not only the military aid but also the economic aid to Iran was in danger of being drastically reduced. The Point IV aid programme for Iran had raised several eyebrows;¹¹³ 1960 onwards, the USA seemed to have adopted a policy of careful disinterest in the outcome of the Shah's plans. USA kept on urging the Iranian government to take

¹⁰⁹Sorenson, Theodore, *Kennedy*, New York, 1965, 3 and William Kauffmann, *The McNamara Strategy*, New York, 1964, 213-4.

¹¹⁰*The Times* (London), 17 September 1962, Ramazani, no. 7, 339 and W.E. Griffith, "Iran's foreign policy in the Pahlavi era", in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran under the Pahlavis*, New York, 1978, 375.

¹¹¹Ramazani, n 17, 360.

¹¹²"Uncertain CENTO", *Economist*, 199 (6141), 6 May 1961, 556 and Gordon Brook-Shephard, "West's forgotten alliance", *Reporter*, 25(2), 20 July 1961, 31-3.

¹¹³The Point IV programme was suspended by General Agreement for Economic Cooperation, 21 December 1961. *Treaty Series*, No. 6249, UN Secretariat 1962, 276-85. For a critical assessment of American economic aid to Iran see "Key ally broken and shaky after a billion made", *US News and World Report*, 20 May 1961, 43; *ibid.*, 10 July 1961, 73-4; Fred J. Cook, "The billion dollar mystery", *Nation*, 200(15) 12 April 1965, 380-97 and "New twist to the mystery", *ibid.*, 200(21), 24 May 1965, 550-56.

steps towards fiscal stringency. Iran was, however, not exactly starved of funds. Some money was made available “largely by accelerating the date of availability of loans committed at an earlier date.”¹¹⁴ The USA also backed Ali Amini, hoping that he might take same strong economic measures. But the US support for Premier Ali Amini itself became a source of threat to the Shah who feared that Ali Amini might compete with him for real power.

The Shah made one desperate attempt to woo the new administration in Washington when he visited the USA, but failed to get even the minimum of what he desired.¹¹⁵ He had no alternative but to search for new options that would assure Iran’s systemic security, help in political security, help political stability in Iran, create a buffer between Iran and radical Arab nationalism, and provide Iran with much-needed economic and technical help. Iran did turn towards the time-honoured Third Force theory and the Shah developed very close contacts with de Gaulle of France.¹¹⁶ But France was in no position to help Iran the way the Shah wanted. Hence the Shah had no option but to turn towards the USSR and seek a detente with that country.

Soviet-Iranian Detente

The Soviet-Iranian detente can be traced back to the letter dated 15 September 1962 from Aram Abbas to the Soviet ambassador, N. N. Pegov, in which the Iranian government once again assured the USSR that no missile bases would be established on Iranian soil.¹¹⁷ The Soviet response was presented by the *Pravda* article on 17 September, which praised the Iranian action, and said that if other allies of the USA in the NATO also followed on the footsteps of Iran it would lead

¹¹⁴Westwood, Andrew F., “Reform government in Iran”, *Current History*, 42(248), April 1962, 232.

¹¹⁵The joint communique issued on 13 April 1962 at the end of his visit lacked anything concrete, *Department of State Bulletin*, 46 (1193), 7 May 1962, 760. For the *Izvestia* comments on the Shah’s visit, *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 14(16), 16 May 1962, 26-8.

¹¹⁶Bayne, n. 35, 213.

¹¹⁷*Summary of World Broadcasts*, Part IV, 18 September 1962, ME/1050/D/1.

to an atom-free zone in Asia and Europe.¹¹⁸

The Soviet need for Iranian neutrality can be traced back to the twenties when the USSR and Iran signed treaties in 1921 and 1927, under which Iran was practically isolated from the rest of the world in the military sense. As far as the USSR was concerned that framework remained valid even after the Second World War, when the USSR objected to Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact and CENTO and the March 1959 bilateral agreement with the USA. The presence of a foreign power in Iran posed a strategic threat to the southern flank of the USSR. Hence the Soviets kept telling the Iranians that neutrality was good for them.¹¹⁹

The Soviet fear of strategic vulnerability began to decline by 1960-61 because of its modest ICBM programme that gave it some credible retaliatory capacity *vis-a-vis* the USA. This self-assurance was further bolstered by the change of administration in the USA and its new look at Iran. The Shah of Iran had sought the US umbrella basically for domestic purposes and not against Soviet aggression. Yet the Iranian and the American policies dovetailed in the forties and the fifties and Iran's benefits under the US umbrella far outweighed its disadvantages. But the new look at Iran under the Kennedy administration deprived the Shah of the basic advantage of US support in his quest of ultimate control over Iran. He felt that the USA might be willing to support others like Amini so as to curb his powers.¹²⁰ Moreover, there were trends that showed that the US economic and military aid to Iran might be seriously curtailed in the future as a means to force the Shah to follow the American line.

In the forties and the fifties, Iran had benefited to some extent from the American economic and military aid and also the political support extended to the Shah. That had given the Shah a sense of security and stability which enabled him to take the calculated risk of even appearing to annoy the USA by seeking a detente with the USSR. The new detente benefited Iran in many ways, both in terms of immediate advantages and also in the

¹¹⁸Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 14(38), 10 October 1962, 16-7.

¹¹⁹Zuyagin, Y., "Iran: The urge for neutrality", *New Times* (24), 14 June 1961, 8-9 and Leonidov, A., "Iran: neutrality, a national interest of the people", *International Affairs* (Moscow) (8), August 1961, 81-2.

¹²⁰Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 62.

long run. It brought about a favourable change in Soviet projection of the Shah's policies in terms of Soviet propaganda, that benefited the Shah *vis-a-vis* his right-wing and left-wing opponents in Iran. The new detente led to major economic and industrial benefits for Iran. It also neutralized the possibility of the USSR using Iraq against Iran. Iran even used the opportunity offered by the USSR to shop for military hardware in the USSR so as to pressurize the west to sell its sophisticated weapons to Iran. Thus, detente not only enlarged Iranian options but also benefited the Shah internally and also in his foreign relations.

The detente went a long way in satisfying the National Front leaders. There was a sentiment "nearly approximating a mystical belief in the efficacy of a policy of neutrality"¹²¹ that had long existed in Iran, which was generally termed as negative equilibrium by the Shah. The detente partly satisfied that group. The virulence of anti-Iranian Soviet propaganda also declined.¹²² The *Tudeh* Party that had been earlier backed by the USSR, consequently suffered a setback in its activities in Iran.¹²³ It split into a pro-Moscow and pro-Peking faction,¹²⁴ thus further weakening the party. The USSR even went ahead and began to offer direct support to the Shah against his local opponents. The Shah's White Revolution was supported. The switchover was rather dramatic. In June 1962, the land reform movement was called feudal.¹²⁵ By February 1963 it was a step forward that would help Iran break out of feudalism.¹²⁶ The Shah was given full support when the religious riots broke out in Iran in 1963.¹²⁷ Thus, everything was done not only to restrain anti-Shah forces in Iran but also to buttress the Shah's image in Iran by

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid., 75.

¹²³Chubin, Shahram, *Iran and International Organization*, Tehran Papers, No. 4, Tehran, 1976, 20.

¹²⁴Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 75.

¹²⁵Medvedev, V., "Iran's feudal land reforms", *New Times*, (24), 13 June 1962, 22-3.

¹²⁶Medvedev, V., "Iran's land reforms", *New Times*, (7), 20 February 1963, 22-3 and K. Ivanovsky, "Iran, blow at feudalism", *International Affairs* (Moscow), (3), March 1963, 88.

¹²⁷B., Y., "Reactionary plot in Iran", *New Times* (24), 19 June 1963, 17.

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giving direct support to his internal policies. Undoubtedly this helped the Shah to neutralize the threat posed by the internal forces to his systemic security.

The detente between Iran and the USSR also not only lowered the tension at Iran's northern borders but indirectly permitted Iran to divert most of the Iranian military resources towards Iraq and towards the Gulf. According to several scholars Iran, through its detente with USSR, successfully neutralized the possible Soviet support to its potential opponents in the Arab World and in the Gulf.¹²⁸ It is suggested by some that the USSR avoided taking sides in disputes like the *Shatt al-Arab* and the islands in the Gulf. Its publications remained prudent. They expressed regret over the dispute and published factual reports, neither allocating blame nor indicating a preference for either side. There are even some indications that it might have played a moderating role in 1971 in restraining Baghdad from aggravating the situation.¹²⁹

The easing of tension at Iran's northern borders because of the detente coincided with the growing Arab-Iranian confrontation and Iran's growing interest in the Gulf region. The Shah, taking advantage of the new detente, re-deployed, much against the wishes of the Americans, a bulk of the Iranian armed forces stationed in the north, facing the USSR to the south near the Iraqi border and nearer the Gulf.¹³⁰ This was a classic case of the US military aid being diverted by the recipient country to a task different from that for which the aid was intended. Other examples were the use of US military aid by Pakistan against India, and by Turkey against Greece and Cyprus. It also illustrates the end result of the US military aid policy to the CENTO countries.

The Iranian regime used its newly developed political and economic ties with the USSR into pressurizing the USA and the

¹²⁸Ramazani, n. 17, 321, 354, 408, and Chubin, n. 75, 200.

¹²⁹Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 73; *Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf States: New Wealth, New Power*, a summary record; the 27th Annual Conference of the Middle East Institute, Washington D.C., September 28-9, 1973 (Mimeographed), 15.

¹³⁰MacLaurin, R.D., "Soviet policy in the Persian Gulf", in Mohammed Mughisuddin, ed., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf*, Praeger, New York, 1977, 126.

UK into selling it sophisticated arms that it was demanding and not getting. Iranian Premier Hoveyda made a dramatic announcement in the *Majlis* on 9 February 1967 that Iran had placed an order for military goods worth \$110 million with the USSR. Though the goods ordered, like the anti-aircraft guns and armoured personnel carriers, were not very sophisticated equipment, there was a hint that Iran would not hesitate to order even sophisticated equipment like supersonic MIGs to match the equipment that Iraq had obtained. The Iranian threat worked and Iran acquired F-4 Phantoms even before they were promised to Israel.

The period following Iran's detente with the USSR also witnessed a gradual reduction in US economic aid. On 29 November 1967, Secretary of State Dean Rusk announced the termination of direct economic aid to Iran. The reason given was that Iran's rapid economic growth did not warrant any further aid programme and, thanks to its oil revenue, Iran had reached a take-off point where it could be on its own. According to Secretary Rusk, Iran had obtained \$605 million in direct loans and grants for economic development. But only \$37 million of that amount was given after 1962.¹³¹ The detente thus enabled Iran to obtain economic aid from the USSR. "From 1965 to 1968 Iran received more than one-fifth of the total Soviet economic aid committed to Afro-Asia, and Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan together accounted for one-third of the total."¹³²

The Soviet economic and technical aid to Iran helped to lay the foundation for heavy industry in Iran. The steel plant that was set up in Iran with Soviet help fulfilled an old Iranian dream. In 1938 the Germans were to build it. In 1958, the project was revived but could not make much of a headway because of lack of US interest.¹³³ It was finally completed thanks to Soviet help. A credit agreement for 140 million roubles was signed on 22 March 1973 for the expansion of the Aryamehr steel mill in Isfahan. The Soviets also helped to construct a machine-tool plant and to lay down a gas pipeline as well as to

¹³¹United States commemorates the closing of successful AID Mission in Iran", *Department of State Bulletin*, 57 (1486), 18 December 1976, 825.

¹³²Chubin and Zabih, n. 58, 79.

¹³³*Kayhan International*, 24 March 1973.

buy Iranian gas that was going waste. The payment for Soviet help was to be made through the supply of Iranian natural gas. The Soviet Union also helped Iran in the hydroelectric scheme of Areas. It was designed to irrigate 100,000 hectares of land on the border of Iran and Soviet Azerbaijan and also to produce electricity to the tune of about 21,000 kw.

Another major achievement of the detente was the transit facility provided to Iran by the USSR. Under that agreement Iran could use the Soviet transit routes for its trade not only with the USSR but also with Eastern and Western Europe.¹³⁴ In fact this route has given Iran a direct access to Europe and has short-circuited the Suez route. Iran and the USSR also agreed to have a direct rail link between them.¹³⁵ It is possible now to shift goods by rail between the two countries. Thus the old plan of a trans-Persian railway that was mooted before the First World War¹³⁶ has been indirectly fulfilled. These new developments have also helped Russia to open a new warm water route into the Indian Ocean, a long-cherished dream since the days of the Czars.

The centre piece of these economic agreements was the crucial gas deal between Iran and the USSR. Its details were announced by Premier Hoveyda in the *Majlis* on 9 February 1967. The whole project involved the construction of a 1106-km main gas pipeline and a 839-km sub-line from the gas fields in south Iran to the Soviet border across difficult terrain. The line was inaugurated on 28 October 1971 by the Shah and President Podgorny. Fresh negotiations began in 1973 to enlarge the scope of this gas deal.¹³⁷ The new three-way gas deal was arranged between Iran, the USSR and West Germany under which the USSR would pump its gas to West Germany and Iran would supply gas to the USSR. The project was to come into operation by 1981. From 1981 to 2001 Iran is supposed to pump 36.8 million cubic metres of natural gas per day to the Soviet Union, which in turn will deliver 31.3 million cubic metres of gas daily to Western Europe. West European consumers would pay Iran

¹³⁴Ibid., 2 November 1971.

¹³⁵Ibid., 3 February 1973.

¹³⁶Nazem, Hossein, *Russia and Great Britain in Iran 1900-1914*, Sherkat Iranchap, Rouznameh Feltela'at, Tehran, 1975, 313-33.

¹³⁷*Kayhan International*, 27 October 1973.

in hard currency for the Soviet gas, and the difference of 5.7 million cubic metres of gas per day would represent transit fee paid to the Soviet Union.¹³⁸ It was planned as a long-term deal lasting for 24 years. More than 1500 kilometres of new pipelines would have to be laid to pump this gas to the USSR from the gas field in the area south of the Caspian Sea.

Trade between Iran and the USSR also increased rapidly. A five-year trade and payment agreement was signed between the two countries in Moscow on 30 July 1970. Under that agreement the USSR agreed to supply machines, equipments, ferrous metals, cement, chemical goods etc., for the development of Iranian economy. There were reports that an agreement was reached to build or develop about 50 plants in Iran. It should be noted that these developments preceded the price-rise following the October war and reflected the Iranian desire to tap all possible sources for the development of Iran. Undoubtedly the surplus petro-dollars after 1973 removed the earlier economic constraints and the Shah could shop in the west for the most advanced technology that Russia probably could not supply. But there is no doubt that the Russian technical and economic aid was important for Iran and to that extent the 1962 detente was fruitful.

The detente also led to several high-level exchange visits from both sides, that paved the way for mutual understanding and also laid the foundation for bilateral economic relations. The Shah's visit from 21 June to 3 July 1965¹³⁹ was important in paving the way for economic cooperation. In July 1967 Premier Hoveyda led a big delegation to Moscow¹⁴⁰ that finalized the details of the Soviet-Iranian economic cooperation. In April 1968 Kosygin visited Iran, where he was accorded an enthusiastic reception.¹⁴¹ The visit coincided with the British decision to withdraw from the East of Suez and also with the official entry of the Soviet naval task-force in the Indian Ocean. Podgorny visited Iran in October 1971 and the Shah returned the visit in 1972. These developments led to a personal understanding between the top leaders of both countries that helped

¹³⁸ McLaurin, n. 130, 127.

¹³⁹ *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 17(27), 28 July 1965, 24-5.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 19(30), 16 August 1967, 17-8.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 20(14), 14 April 1968, 26-7.

Iran to influence the Soviet policy in the Gulf to its advantage. Even at the height of the controversy over the fear of Soviet encirclement in 1971-73 following the series of "friendship agreements" signed by the USSR with Iran's neighbours like India and Iraq, Iran was able not only to keep its channel of communication open but also to benefit from it.

This is very clear from Soviet policy in the Gulf in 1972. The controversial 9 April 1972 treaty between Iraq and the USSR¹⁴² was followed by an economic agreement between Iran and the USSR signed by Hushang Ansari, the Iranian Minister of Economy, in Moscow on 10 August 1972. According to that agreement the USSR agreed to increase Soviet help in petrochemical and textile industries and steel production. It also agreed to construct a large number of pre-fabricated houses in Iran. It was agreed that the USSR would offer 260 million roubles to cover the cost of machinery and other equipment for the expansion of the Isfahan steel mill.¹⁴³ This was followed by a 15-year economic and technical cooperation treaty, signed during the Shah's Moscow visit on 12 October 1972.¹⁴⁴

Iran was not only able to match the Soviet economic aid to Iraq but thanks to the detente, was also able to neutralize, to some extent, the military threat from Iraq. It is interesting that during all these years, despite Iran's acquisition of modern and sophisticated arms, despite the Iraq-Iran rivalry and the so-called Soviet tilt towards Iraq, the Soviet Union did not offer Iraq the type of armaments that it had offered Egypt and Syria, with the result that the military balance in the Gulf remained tilted in favour of Iran.

Despite several provocations the Iran-USSR detente has survived these last sixteen years, and there is no reason why it should break down. It seems that over these years the degree of real or assumed threat that both these countries felt for each other was considerably reduced, if not totally eliminated, and both have developed a vested interest in developing a cooperative rather than a conflictual pattern of relationship. Both had gone out of their way to defend their mutual ties. On 24 August 1973, Moscow

¹⁴²Ibid., 24 (24), 12 July 1972, 11 and *Arab World*, 6 April 1972.

¹⁴³*Kayhan International*, 12 and 13 August 1972.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 15 October 1972 and *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 24 (42), 15 November 1972, 6-7.

Radio bitterly attacked "certain circles" that were trying to disturb Iran-Soviet relations.¹⁴⁵ The Shah, in an interview with Cottrell, said that the USSR was becoming a conservative power and that the Soviet policy was no longer motivated by communist ideology.¹⁴⁶ In another interview the Shah was reported to have told the journalists that the Soviets were quite flexible.¹⁴⁷ The Iranian Foreign Minister, Ardeshir Zahedi, told Amir Taheri of *Kayhan* on 17 March 1971 that Iran's relations with the Soviet Union "have become a true model of peaceful coexistence."¹⁴⁸ "The Shah's strategy of socializing the USSR by giving her a stake in peace by entangling her in a commercial relationship of reliance on Iran's natural gas, and in bilateral projects which might restrain adventures and give substance to the Soviet slogan 'frontiers of peace and good neighbourliness', appeared to succeed."¹⁴⁹ Undoubtedly there were some causes for concern. Often the overtly pro-Iraqi attitude of the USSR must have irked the Shah. Sometimes that policy was criticized by Iran. But it was used not only as a justification to acquire more arms from the west but also as a lever to obtain more economic and technical help from the USSR, especially before the price rise in 1973. It was never used as an instrument to break off the detente. The USSR, on its part, also responded on a low key when Iran began to develop friendly ties with China. Even the large-scale arms acquisition by Iran drew only mild protest, except when Iran was planning to acquire a military capability and weapon systems that might directly affect the Soviet strategic interests. For example, the 1975 agreement between Iran and Rockwell International of the USA to build a sophisticated communication and electronics network that could eavesdrop on electronic traffic within the USSR, did provoke a critical article in *Pravda*.¹⁵⁰

Both Iran and the USSR publically announced that the foreign

¹⁴⁵*Kayhan International*, 25 August 1973.

¹⁴⁶Cottrell, Alvin J.. "Concern over Saudi Arabia's viability: an exclusive interview with the Shah of Iran", *New Middle East* (31), April 1971, 23.

¹⁴⁷*Kayhan International*, 29 January 1972.

¹⁴⁸Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press and Information Department, *A Decade of Dynamic Diplomacy* (no place, no date), 3.

¹⁴⁹Chubin, n. 75, 200.

¹⁵⁰McLaurin, n. 130, 126 '(footnote).

powers should leave the Gulf and that the vacuum, if any, should be filled by the regional powers. The Shah of Iran, in turn, endorsed the need for a system of collective security in Asia. Unlike the Soviets the Iranians want the Chinese to be a part of this system and the Soviets, instead of dropping the subject, keep on endorsing it in their statements with Iran. It was emphasized in the joint communique issued on 17 March 1973¹⁵¹ and reiterated in the statement on 20 November 1974 following the Shah's visit to the Soviet Union.¹⁵²

The events following the oil price rise since 1973 gave new options to Iran and its economic and technological dependence upon the USSR, to that extent, was reduced. Since then the west rushed to supply Iran with whatever it asked for, including atomic reactors. The Iranians also argued that for all its military power the USSR remained a backward state in the field of modern technology. It, thus, remained largely irrelevant for a state intent on rapid modernization. Undoubtedly Iran's trade pattern reflected that new economic tilt towards the west. But such a comparison is misleading. For Soviet-Iranian relations, based on non-hostility and economic cooperation, should have a relatively stable, positive aspect in Tehran's overall foreign relations.

Thus, the Soviet-Iranian detente of 1962 had a fundamental impact upon Iran's domestic and foreign policy. It drastically reduced the anti-Shah propaganda campaign. It also gave both direct and indirect support to the Shah against his local opponents, especially against the feudal and religious elements. The limited support given by the Soviet press to the Shah's reforms under the White Revolution gave them a degree of credibility that must have come handy to neutralize the criticism by the Shah's radical opponents in Iran. In the field of economic relations, the detente provided economic and technological help in crucial sectors like agriculture, power, heavy industry, steel plants etc. Thus it was not only the quantum but also the quality of economic aid that was crucial. In the field of foreign relations, detente helped to neutralize Soviet support to the Arabs. That in turn

¹⁵¹*Kayhan International*, 18 March 1973, and *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 24 (11), 11 April 1973, 25-6.

¹⁵²*Financial Express*, 22 November 1974.

helped Iran to evolve a new policy *vis-a-vis* the Gulf. Also, the Iranian efforts to acquire an independent military deterrent especially after 1965 was not checkmated by a Soviet-inspired arms race in the Gulf. The fundamentals of the Soviet-Iranian detente remained valid despite the new option—petro-dollars—acquired by Iran since 1973, and both Iran and the USSR showed no desire to disturb the pattern of their relationship.

2. ARAB NATIONALISM AND THE GULF

Iran's Arab Policy Under Reza Khan

Challenge, real or imaginary, immediate or potential, posed by Arabism was rated very highly by the Iranian ruling elite when it sought to define its threat perception. It acquired a new dimension following the rise of President General Abd al-Nasser to the leadership of the Arab World in 1955. Nasserism, with its four-fold programme—republicanism, socialism, Arab unity (and Arab nationalism) and non-alignment—was alleged to have posed a serious threat to the Iranian political system, both by instigating the Iranians against the Shah and also by attempting to group the Arab countries of the Gulf into an overall Arab block under a radical leadership that would be hostile to the Iranian monarchy in the sensitive Gulf area. The new threat from Arabism also coincided with the Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958 and the subsequent Iranian interest in the Gulf. Hence these two different trends, threat from Arabism and threat to Iran's geopolitical and strategic interests in the Gulf, coincided in the late fifties and the sixties. The result was that Iran began to shift the focus of its foreign policy from the north to east and south. It will not be incorrect to say that after 1962 the Arab World and the Gulf replaced the USSR as the main target of Iranian diplomacy.

Traditionally, the Iranian policy was not geared to meet the threat posed by Arabism. "Except for a few, Iranians tend to dislike Arabs and to suspect Arab nationalism."¹⁵³ Iran's conflict with the Arab states in general was partly rooted in divergent

¹⁵³Binder, Leonard, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1962, 329.

national-cultural ethos. Furthermore, modern nationalism among both the Arabs and Iranians had tended to intensify power rivalry and aggravate traditional attitudes of mutual contempt and mistrust.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, the long history of Persian-Ottoman conflict had kept the Arabs (till recently part of the Ottoman Empire) and the Iranians apart. Religion too had been a divisive force even during the Ottoman period, when *Shii* antagonism with the *Sunni* sect had often influenced Iran's policy toward the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁵ The neighbouring Arab state, Iraq, or ancient Mesopotamia had been a competitor of Iran. During the Islamic period too rivalries based upon variables like Arab versus Persian, *Sunni* versus *Shii*, overlapping religious sects and languages, had all contributed to regional conflicts. "Iraq had always, from Iran's viewpoint, been under the influence of her enemies; the Omayyad and Abbasid Caliphates; the Ottoman Empire; in the inter-war period the British; and, after the overthrow of the Hashimites there in 1958, the Soviets—to Iran, the most dangerous of all."¹⁵⁶

The emergence of Iraq as a separate political entity after the First World War, first as a British mandate and then as an independent state, by and large under British control, did not create an atmosphere of friendship between Baghdad and Tehran because of the anti-British policy of Reza Khan. But Reza Khan, desirous of creating a friendly regional environment, so as to project it as a regional alternative to the presence of traditional foreign powers in the region—Great Britain and Russia (the USSR)—went out of his way to cultivate good-neighbourly relations with Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey, that finally got reflected in the Saadabad Pact of 8 July 1937.¹⁵⁷

During the inter-war period, Iraq occupied the most prominent position in Iran's Arab policy. Other Arab states were also

¹⁵⁴Ramazani, R.K., *The Persian Gulf. Iran's Role*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1972, 34.

¹⁵⁵Ramazani, R.K., *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs 1500-1941*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1966, 9.

¹⁵⁶Griffith, William E., "Iran's foreign policy in the Pahlavi era", in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1978, 381.

¹⁵⁷For a detailed study see Abbas Khalatbary, *L'Iran et le Pacte Orientale*, Paris, Editions A. Pedone, 1938, 78-85.

not ignored. Iran signed a treaty with Saudi Arabia in 1929. Reza Khan arranged the marriage of the Iranian Crown Prince with Fawzia, the sister of the Egyptian king. The marriage took place in March 1939. "That marriage was perhaps a symbol of Iran's desire to seek closer cooperation between various Middle Eastern nations. . . ." ¹⁵⁸

Despite these overtures to the Arab World, Iran concentrated its efforts on improving its relations with Iraq. "The dominant British position in Iraq at first secured by a Mandate Agreement under the League of Nations, was unwelcome to Iran." ¹⁵⁹ The first point of difference, beside the perennial problem of minorities and religious shrines, was the right of capitulation claimed by the Iranian government following the judicial agreement signed on 25 March 1924 between Iraq and Great Britain. ¹⁶⁰ That agreement extended the Ottoman capitulatory privileges to the nationals of those states that had enjoyed such privileges under the Ottoman Empire at a time when Iraq formed a part of that Empire. The question was discussed in the League of Nations, but no settlement could be reached. The capitulations were abolished in 1928, thereby removing the basis of Iranian claims. "In reciprocating this friendly gesture *and after having received a British promise to assist Iran in obtaining satisfaction from Iraq in regard to Shatt al-Arab*, the Shah recognized Iraq on 25 April 1929." ¹⁶¹ The recognition paved the way for further cooperation between the two countries as exemplified by the official visit of King Faisal of Iraq to Iran in 1932. ¹⁶²

The question of frontiers, including that of the *Shatt al-Arab*, was too complicated to be settled easily. The Iran-Ottoman rivalry had left the question half-solved. Iraq, the successor state, claimed its rights on the basis of the Treaty of Erzerum of 1947, and subsequent notes exchanged between the Ottoman Empire, Iran, Great Britain and Russia, including the Constantinople Protocol of 1913 and the Tehran Protocol of 1915. Iran, however, refused to accept their validity on the ground that there

¹⁵⁸Elwell-Sutton, L.P., *Modern Iran*, London, 1941 (reprinted 1944), 172.

¹⁵⁹Avery, Peter, *Modern Iran*, London, 1965, 324.

¹⁶⁰Ramazani, n. 3, 260.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 261 (Emphasis added).

¹⁶²Elwell-Sutton, n. 6, 170.

was no joint consent. The matter was referred to the League of Nations in 1934-35 and once that formality was over the parties sat down to serious negotiations. The boundary treaty and protocol was signed between Iran and Iraq on 4 July 1937.

The 1937 treaty¹⁶³ dealt with the question of the Iraq-Iran boundary (including the *Shatt al-Arab*) and also the question of navigation in the *Shatt al-Arab*. Earlier Iraq had staked her claims on the basis of the Treaty of Erzerum of 1947, which had given Iraq (the Ottoman Empire) sovereignty over the whole of the *Shatt al-Arab* as far as its low-watermark on the Iranian side.¹⁶⁴ Under the new agreement that provision was retained except for the area opposite Abadan where the *thalweg* line was accepted as the maritime boundary between the two states. The land frontiers were defined on the basis of the Constantinople Protocol of 1913 and the minutes of the Frontier Commission of 1914. As far as navigation in the *Shatt al-Arab* was concerned, it was open to the trading vessels of all countries but to the war vessels of only the two contracting parties, and both had equal rights despite the Iraqi frontier stretching up to the low-watermark on the Iranian side. The agreement also provided for a convention to be signed within one year that would define questions concerning maintenance and improvement of the navigation channel and for dredging, pilotage, collection of dues, health measures, etc.

The 1937 agreement between Iraq and Iran was a major landmark in Arab-Iranian relations. Iran had made substantial concessions to Iraq. It had given up its claims of the *thalweg* line over the whole of the *Shatt al-Arab*, and had accepted the Iraqi control over its oil life-line. But it was politically very important for Reza Khan. It removed a major obstacle and the Saadabad Pact was signed four days after the signing of the boundary agreement between Iran and Iraq. The ties were further cemented when Iraq and Iran signed a treaty of friendship at Tehran on 18 July 1937.

Threat from Nasserism

The Second World War put an end to Iran's efforts to develop

¹⁶³Hurewitz, J.C., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, Vol. 11, Princeton University, New Jersey, 1956.

¹⁶⁴Avery, n. 7, 324.

close contacts with its neighbouring countries including those in the Arab World. Iran was occupied by Allied troops, Reza Khan was deposed and the country passed through a short period of Anglo-Russian condominium, with the Americans trying to play a modest role on behalf of Iran and UK. The post-war period saw Iran's attention diverted primarily towards the question of Soviet presence in the north and the demand for oil concessions there. By the time these issues were resolved, Iran was caught up in the problem arising out of the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951 that ended with the palace-led coup against Mossadeq in 1953. Iranian ruling elite, obsessed with its internal problem and also from the so-called historical threat from the north, joined the northern-tier group. Iraq, the next-door Arab neighbour, also sided with Iran and so also Turkey and Pakistan. Till 1955, Arabism was not projected as a serious threat. Once Iran obtained the western umbrella against the threat from radicalism inside and also from the USSR, time was ripe for searching for new sources of real or potential threat. Iran did not have to search very far. Nasser was emerging as a new power in the Middle East and he was projected as the next threat to Iran.

"The rise of Gamal Abd al-Nasser not only as the leader of the new Republic of Egypt but also as the symbol of Arab nationalism and unity, was watched with interest, if not concern in Iran."¹⁶⁵ The Shah saw in the Egyptian president's prestige and his ability to inspire the masses a significant spur to the anti-monarchical threat represented by the radical doctrines of Arab nationalism and Arab socialism.¹⁶⁶ According to another writer Iran, having made its peace with the USSR in 1962, pursued its regional policy with a single-minded emphasis on the Egyptian threat which "bordered on the obsessive."¹⁶⁷

To the threat of Arabism, as symbolized by Nasser at that

¹⁶⁵Ramazani, R.K., *Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1975, 397.

¹⁶⁶Cottrell, Alvin J., "Iran's armed forces under the Pahlavi dynasty", in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1978, 401.

¹⁶⁷Chubin, Shahram and Zabih, Sepehr, *The Foreign Relations of Iran: A Developing State in A Zone of Great Power Conflict*, University of California, 1974, 142.

time, was also added the potential danger arising out of the military coup in Iraq that on 14 July 1958 not only eliminated the traditionalist and monarchical rule there but also ushered in a new radical, pro-Soviet regime that at least for some time allowed the Iraqi Communist Party to operate openly in Iraq.¹⁶⁸ The Iraqi revolution was thought by many, both in and out of Iran, to be the signal for a similar event in Iran.¹⁶⁹ It was also feared that the Iraqi example might expose other states in the Gulf to a similar fate, and thereby reduce the number of friendly states—a kind of Gulf domino effect.¹⁷⁰ There is no doubt that the Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958 rocked the whole system of alliance between regional conservatism and the Western Bloc. Also the potential points of conflict like the Kurds, *Shatt al-Arab*, Iranian minorities etc., that had been brushed under the carpet during the alliance of Iraqi and Iranian monarchies once again came up in the open.

It is very interesting that despite the fact that Iraq was the next-door neighbour and a “radical” state, the Iranian political elite tended to give it second place as far as a threat from Arabism was concerned. Nasser remained the primary source of Arab threat to Iran. There were several reasons for it. By 1960 the USSR began to reduce its support to Premier Qassem, especially after he began to suppress the Kurds and the communists in Iraq. Also the 1961 Kuwaiti crisis exposed Iraqi isolation in the Arab World. By the 1962 detente with the USSR Iran had effectively contained the threat from Iraq. But Nasserism could not be contained that easily and it remained a potent threat to the Iranian political system in the sixties.

Arabism, or Nasserism to be more exact, posed a four-fold threat to Iran arising out of republicanism, Arab nationalism, Arab socialism and non-alignment. The Egyptian *coup d'état* of 1952 had within one year eliminated the monarchical system in Egypt; 1952-53 were dangerous years for Iran also due to the struggle for power between the Shah and Mossadeq. Though the Shah finally triumphed the fear of an anti-Shah coup remained. “The Shah saw in the Egyptian president's prestige and his

¹⁶⁸Ramazani, n. 13, 399 and Griffith, n. 4, 374.

¹⁶⁹Binder, n. 1, 334, and Ramazani, n. 13, 400.

¹⁷⁰Ramazani, n. 2, 34.

ability to inspire the masses a significant spur to the anti-monarchical threat represented by the radical doctrines of Arab nationalism and Arab socialism”¹⁷¹

Iran was also disturbed as early as 1956 by the radical postures adopted by Nasser. The 1955 Czech arms deal was followed by the nationalization of the Suez Canal company. Iran had also gone through the experience of nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and the Egyptian success, despite the high price of the 1956 war, must have had its impact in Iran. The nationalization of the canal company, however, was seen as cause for concern in Iran because, in 1955, 73 per cent of Iranian import and 76 per cent of its export was routed via the Suez Canal.¹⁷² Iran joined with the west in the London Conference to put pressure on Egypt but cautioned against the use of force.

The Arab policy of non-alignment predated the Egyptian coup of 1952. It was the reflection of anti-western, especially anti-British, feelings in Egypt arising out of the unequal treaties governing the Sudan and British bases in the Suez Canal zone. The new regime tried to break the impasse in the Anglo-Egyptian negotiations by signing two agreements, one dealing with the Sudan base in 1953, and the other with the Suez base in 1954. That agreement was, in fact, a step away from the policy of non-alignment. But by 1955 Nasser had joined Nehru, N’krumah, Sukarno and Tito to make non-alignment a new force in the Third World. Non-alignment, therefore, became a symbol of Arabism in the Middle East. Iran’s membership of the Baghdad Pact and its association with the Western Bloc and with Israel came under heavy attack. It also appeared to some in the west that non-alignment was a tilt towards the Soviet Union and hence Arab non-alignment acquired an additional sinister lustre. “Both Iran and Egypt have posed recent revolutionary challenges to Iran, and the neutralist pro-Soviet policies of both have tended to increase official suspicion.”¹⁷³

The Iranian responses to the threat posed by Nasserism were varied and Iran kept several options open to neutralize that

¹⁷¹Cottrell, n. 14, 401.

¹⁷²Ramazani, n. 13, 398.

¹⁷³Binder, n. 1, 329.

threat. Initially Iran came closer to the USA and signed the 1959 bilateral agreement with it. When it proved inadequate Iran reached a detente with the USSR in 1962. Besides availing of the international environment at the global level, Iran also sought to exploit the regional environment to gain political and diplomatic leverage *vis-a-vis* Nasser. Iran came closer to the regional members of the CENTO. It led to the creation of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in July 1964. This tripartite arrangement was finalized at a meeting of the Heads of State of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan at Ankara. Though the RCD envisaged regional economic development, by pooling the economic and industrial resources of the three-member-state, nothing much came out of it. The RCD started with great fanfare and ended in a near fiasco. It, however, came handy as a political counter-balance to Iran against Arabism in the Middle East.

The RCD carried the stigma of being a shadow of the Baghdad Pact and the CENTO. Moreover, it excluded Arab states. Efforts were, therefore, made to group these like-minded "conservative, pro-western" states, Arabs as well as others, under the green banner of Islam to counter Arab "radicalism." Undoubtedly slogans of Islamic solidarity had been used even earlier but a new impetus at official state level was given to it. The result was the creation of a so-called Islamic Alliance in 1965.¹⁷⁴ It was Islamic all right but it could not emerge as a full-fledged alliance. Yet while it lasted, it did bring the anti-Nasser states under one political and diplomatic umbrella. There was a feeling at that time that such an alliance might offer Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Tunisia, Libya and Morocco a buffer against the three Arab radicals: Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi, in an interview to Amir Taheri of *Kayhan International* on 17 March 1971, commented very favourably upon the exemplary relations between Iran and the Arab states like Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.¹⁷⁵ Pakistan, which had failed to secure adequate western support during the 1965 war with India, but was offered

¹⁷⁴Iran not only joined the alliance but the Shah openly said that Iran was opposed to Egypt's aggressive foreign policy. *Tehran Journal*, 9 March 1965, quoted in Chubin and Zabih, n.15, 153.

¹⁷⁵Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press and Information Department, *A Decade of Dynamic Diplomacy* (no place no date), 8.

plenty of diplomatic and subsequently military support by these Islamic states, hoped to use Islamic Alliance against India in future. On the whole this alliance gave a feeling of "Islamic" solidarity which was at least diplomatically very reassuring.

Unlike the conservative Arab states which were satisfied with political and diplomatic options alone, Iran went one step ahead and began to acquire an independent military option. The American military aid programme to Iran had shown a steady decline during the Kennedy era that also coincided more or less with Iran's new conflict with Iraq and Egypt. Iran, after its detente with the USSR, not only shifted its military focus towards Iraq and the Gulf but began to press for modern arms. Iran began to place orders for supersonic aircraft, naval vessels and tanks and began acquiring them during the second half of the sixties.

Another Iranian option *vis-a-vis* Arabism that raised a great deal of controversy was its close ties with Israel. "Set against the competition of Iranian and Arab nationalism, Iran's impatient quest for military and economic modernization has drawn it to Israel."¹⁷⁶ Iran-Israel relations are often traced back to ancient times when King Cyrus defeated the Babylonians in 538 BC, set free the Jews held captive there and permitted them to return to Jerusalem from where they had been exiled by the Babylonians some 60 years previously.¹⁷⁷

The Pahlavis too were kind to the Jews. The Persian Constitution of 1906-07 had already conferred citizenship on Iranian Jews. During the reign of Reza Khan the Jews got permission to own land and to live outside the exclusive Jewish quarters (the Mellahs). German influence in Iran before the Second World War did affect the Iranian Jews but the Allied occupation since 1941 improved their position. After the partition of Palestine and the formation of the State of Israel Iran became a jumping ground for the Iraqi and Afghan Jews on their way to Israel. Iran also granted *defacto* recognition to Israel in March 1950.¹⁷⁸ There was no exchange of ambassadors though relations

¹⁷⁶Weinbanm, Marvin G., "Iran and Israel, the discreet entente", *Orbit*, 18(4), Winter 1975, 1070.

¹⁷⁷Reppa, (Sr.), Robert B., *Israel and Iran: Bilateral Relationship and Effect on the Indian Ocean Basin*, Praeger, New York, 1974, 86.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 102. The author, quoting the *National Gazette of Iran*, 1st

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were maintained at the consellor level. Relations between Iran and Israel deteriorated during the days of Premier Mossadeq but were again strengthened after 1953. No one wanted to shout about those ties and they remained guarded and delicate. As Mohammed Reza Shah once observed, "Iran's relations with Israel are like the true love that exists between two people outside wedlock."¹⁷⁹

It was this relationship which everyone knew about but none wished to overtly espouse, that led to the Egyptian-Iranian conflict in 1960. It was sparked off by the Shah's controversial statement in a press conference on 23 July 1960. When he was requested to comment upon the rumours in the Iranian press about the possibility of Iran recognizing Israel, the Shah reportedly replied that Iran had already recognized Israel and that nothing new had happened in that respect. The Shah also added, "But because of certain events, and perhaps for reasons of economy, our envoy to Israel was recalled several years ago, and he has not so far returned. Anyhow, there is nothing new in this question of recognition."¹⁸⁰ *Reuter's* version, widely quoted in the Arab countries, differed from the *Kayhan* version. According to *Reuter*, the Shah said in the press conference that his country had recognized Israel. He added that the recognition was not new "since *de facto* recognition had been extended several years ago and an envoy, whose subsequent recall was due to a budget deficiency, had been appointed to Tel Aviv."¹⁸¹ It was this possible misunderstanding that a new Iranian envoy to Israel had been appointed that really sparked the controversy.

The reaction in the Arab World to the Shah's press conference was mixed. Baghdad underplayed it and so also Amman. But Cairo reacted violently. Not only did newspapers and radio attack the Iranian regime but the matter was taken up at the highest level. President Nasser, in a speech on 26 July 1960 at Alexandria, attacked the Shah and said that he was "suffering

Senate, 18th Session, 20 May, reports that the council of ministers under Prime Minister Sa'ed voted unanimously to recognize Israel on 11 March 1950.

¹⁷⁹ *Jerusalem Post*, 31 December 1961, quoted in Weinbaum, n. 24, 1070.

¹⁸⁰ *Kayhan International*, 24 July 1960, quoted in *Middle East Record*, Vol. 1, 1960, the Israel Centre, London (no date), 216.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

from a Mossadeq complex" which drove him "to sell himself to imperialism at a cheap price."¹⁸² He also announced that Egypt would close its embassy in Tehran. The same day the Iranian ambassador in Cairo was asked to leave. Iran reciprocated by asking the Egyptian ambassador on 27 July to leave the country. The same day, the Iranian Foreign Minister described Nasser as a "light-headed Pharaoh who based his illegal power on ambition, hues and cries, imperialism, assassination and creation of rifts and dissensions."¹⁸³ The Egyptian Foreign Minister too retaliated by describing the Shah as an "inferior and babbling creature whose face has been deformed through committing sin upon sin."¹⁸⁴

The official Iranian explanation of the whole controversy regarding recognition and diplomatic exchanges was released on 27 July but only after the Egyptian-Iranian relations had deteriorated. That day the Iranian Foreign Minister invited all Arab and Muslim envoys in Tehran and assured them that Iran had not changed its policy towards Israel. On 28 July Premier Qassem of Iraq, who had all long maintained a low profile, revealed that the Iranian Foreign Minister had shown the envoys two documents, a letter sent as far back as 1950 and addressed to the then Israeli Foreign Minister, Moshe Shareth, regarding Iran's *de facto* recognition of Israel, and a document issued in 1952 affirming the withdrawal of the Iranian Consul-General from Israel. Attached to the latter document was a circular to Iranian representatives abroad signed by Mossadeq's foreign minister to the effect that for the sake of the Arabs and the Muslim world Iran would not accord legal recognition to Israel but would leave it *de facto*.¹⁸⁵ Thus the argument that Iran had already granted *de facto* recognition to Israel and that it had no intention of granting *de jure* recognition, was reiterated.

Despite these explanations Egyptian attacks on the Iranian regime continued. Not only was the radio kept busy but attempts

¹⁸²*Al-Ahram*, 27 July 1960, quoted in *ibid.*, 217. According to Ramazani Nasser accused Iran of not supporting Egypt during the 1956 Suez crisis, Ramazani, n. 13, 404.

¹⁸³*Echo Reports*, 2 August 1960 quoted in *Middle East Record*, n. 28, 217.

¹⁸⁴*Al-Ahram*, 29 July 1960, quoted *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*

were also made to mobilize the Arab League to project a pan-Arab anti-Iranian stand. Also, the high-ranking Islamic leaders in Egypt were used to giving the whole controversy an Islamic colour. A meeting was called at the Arab League on 25 July to formulate an Arab policy *vis-a-vis* Iran. Egypt, it seems, was pressing the Arab states to break off diplomatic relations with Iran but was not gaining much support. A special meeting of the Arab League Council was called on 8 August but no plan of action was formulated. The question was postponed till the Arab Foreign Minister's conference in Shtura in Lebanon, and then put into cold-storage. After August even the Egyptian propaganda attacks were gradually reduced.

Egypt also used the Islamic institutions to generate an Islamic front against Iran. Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut, the Rector of *al-Azhar*, sent a cable to the Shah on 27 July 1960 requesting him to reconsider his decision on the recognition of Israel. He said:

The Israeli gang has hurt our sentiments as well as the feelings of the ulema at al-Azhar. We believe that the feelings of all Muslims in East and West have been equally injured. We consider this action contrary to the religious and cultural measures which we have taken for strengthening the brotherly relations among the Muslim peoples and which you have condoned. We should, therefore, hope you will reconsider this grave decision for the purpose of Muslim unity.¹⁸⁶

An Islamic Congress was also convened at Cairo on 7 August. It declared that the recognition of Israel was in violation of the teachings of the Quran, and urged all Arab and Muslim people to condemn the Shah's attitude.¹⁸⁷ This pressure was kept up. Egypt was accused of supporting the Islamic riots in Iran in 1963.

There can be several reasons for the violent anti-Shah reactions in Egypt. As *al-Ahram* put it, the recognition of Israel by a large Islamic country could have had a psychological effect reaching far beyond the limits of mere recognition.¹⁸⁸ The *New*

¹⁸⁶Ramazani, n. 2, 37.

¹⁸⁷*Middle East Record*, n. 18, 219.

¹⁸⁸*Al-Ahram*, 9 August 1960, *ibid*

York Times of 29 July 1960 saw in it an Arab attempt to stop Israel from developing friendly ties with the Afro-Asian countries. Persian authors have tried to look at it as a manifestation of Nasser's designs in the Gulf and the broad picture of threat to the Arab World not only from Israel but also from Iran. According to them the Egyptian propaganda drew a parallel between the Israeli policy in the Arab East and the Iranian policy in the Gulf.¹⁸⁹ The Iranian presence in the Gulf was on the increase and it was taken as a threat to Arabism in the Gulf. It should also be remembered that 1960 was a period when Iran was closest to the USA and was also drawing very close to Israel. Thus President Nasser's perception of Iranian policy, though farfetched, was not totally inaccurate. In a way, the Egyptian strategy of blowing the incident out of all proportions had one desired effect. Iran had to openly state that it had no intention either of granting *de jure* recognition to Israel or of exchanging envoys with it. Thus Nasser pre-empted any possible change in Iranian policy.

The Egypt-Iran conflict of 1960 only partly reflected the deep contradictions between the policies of the two countries. Given Iran's political evolution since the Second World War, its close ties with the USA, its fear of the Arabs and its sense of cultural isolation in the Middle East, it is not surprising that Iran found Israel a natural ally. They had several common denominators: quest for security against threats from regional rivals, trade (especially oil), military cooperation and covert operations against common enemies. Israel reportedly helped Iran in setting up the SAVAK.¹⁹⁰

"Iran and Israel are separated geographically from each other, but they have one major interest in common: each comes under attack from progressive Arab leaders."¹⁹¹ This common danger brought the leaders of the countries together. There are no official or unofficial reports of the Shah's visit to Israel but important Israeli leaders like Ben Gurion visited Iran in December 1961, and Moshe Dayan made a ten-day trip in 1962.¹⁹² The contacts between Iran and Israel first began with intelli-

¹⁸⁹Chubin and Zabih, n. 15, 147-48.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 157.

¹⁹¹Reppa, n. 25, 96.

¹⁹²Weinbanm, n.24, 1076.

gence sharing, then training programme for the SAVAK, and finally, in the sixties, military training and servicing of equipment.¹⁹³ Virtually every general officer in the Shah's army had visited Israel, and hundreds of Iranian junior officers have undergone some aspect of Israeli training.¹⁹⁴ At one time the Iranian command informally asked Israel to train Persian paratroopers, which Israel reportedly declined because it fell within the purview of the American military programme.¹⁹⁵ The silent partner in this relationship was of course the United States.¹⁹⁶ Much of the interchange had come under the auspices and cover of the US military assistance programme, and the Americans had identified and financed projects of mutual interest to Iran and Israel. But cooperative programmes had also been sustained by the belief that neither nation had reason to fear the military intentions of the other.¹⁹⁷

Economic relations too had played a vital role in linking Iran and Israel. Oil was the basis of the economic, political and even strategic linkage between these two countries. After the 1954 oil agreement between the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and the oil consortium in Iran, the NIOC was left with its share of oil that it had to market. Since the world market was already cornered Iran had difficulty in selling its share of oil. Since the Arabs had boycotted Israel the Israeli market went abegging until NIOC discovered it.¹⁹⁸ This link moulded Iran-Israel relations. One reason why Israel insisted on a right of passage through the Aqaba after 1956 was to keep open its oil lanes with Iran.

These contacts developed further after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. Once it became evident that the Suez Canal was not going to be reopened easily, Iranians began to use the pipeline

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, 1976.

¹⁹⁴Bayne, E.A., *Persian Kingship in Transition*, New York, 1968, 212.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶Binder, Leonard, "Iran's potential as a regional power", in Paul Y. Hammond and Sidney S. Alexander, eds., *Political Dynamics in the Middle East*, New York, 1972, 388-89.

¹⁹⁷Weinbaum, n. 24, 1076.

¹⁹⁸Hurewitz, J.C., "Iran in world and regional affairs", in Ehsan Yar-Shater, ed., *Iran Faces the Seventies*, Praeger, New York, 1971, 139.

connecting Aqaba to the Mediterranean. A small pipeline was already in use but a 1100-mile long large pipeline was planned in 1968. It was 42" in diameter and connected Aqaba to the Mediterranean on the beaches of Askelon. It was constructed at the cost of \$150 million and had the capacity, when fully developed, to pump 60-70 million tons of oil per year. The pipeline became operative in February 1970. There were also facilities to berth a 250,000-ton tanker at the port of Eliath.¹⁹⁹ The number of barrels of Iranian crude oil reaching Israel through Eliath is a state secret in both countries.²⁰⁰ Iranian estimates put the figure at about three million tons per year but outside estimates in 1973 put Israel's annual *re-export* of Iranian oil to Europe at 20 million tons per year,²⁰¹ which means that a lot more ought to have been imported.

Cut off from Arab oil, Israel needed to retain its Iranian source—especially if it had to relinquish the oil-fields in occupied Sinai. It became more relevant after the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai oil-fields. Oil also paved the way for other contacts. Israel could pay to Iran, for the oil obtained, with Israeli manufactured goods, including war material, technicians and their expertise. In fact, this trade had a symbolic political value for Israel in the light of Arab-Israeli conflict. It also provided routine contacts for essential reciprocity: exchange of technical personnel in the agricultural, military and security field.²⁰² No wonder the Arabs resented that link and urged Iran, without much success, to suspend oil shipment to Israel. Even the Arab oil embargo of 1973 did not evoke any positive response from Iran.

As seen earlier the concept of Nasserism included ideas that were basically opposite to the policies pursued by the Shah. Thus on an ideological level, Nasserism was a threat to the Shah. But the Shah also felt threatened by Nasser's presence and policies nearer home, especially in the Gulf. "Iran was suspicious of Abd al-Nasser's Arab unity plans mainly because of the prospects of a strong and united Arab confederation on the opposite

¹⁹⁹Reppa, n.25, 83.5.

²⁰⁰Weinbanm, n.24, 1079.

²⁰¹Chubin and Zabih, n.15, 162.

²⁰²Weinbanm, n.24, 1079.

shores of the Persian Gulf.”²⁰³ Added to it was Egypt’s control over the Suez Canal and the fear of possible extension of its control over the oil resources of the Gulf²⁰⁴ that would make Egypt a very powerful state in the Middle East. The Arab sheikhdoms, with which Iran was planning to develop close ties, were primary targets of Egyptian propaganda.²⁰⁵

Arab radicalism was conveyed to the Gulf in two ways. Firstly, Cairo attracted the intelligentsia of the Arab littoral of the Gulf.²⁰⁶ Many of them had studied there. Most of them listened to the Radio Cairo broadcasts.²⁰⁷ The books published there found ready market in the Gulf. Apart from this direct impact of Arab radicalism there was another source that also influenced the intelligentsia in the Gulf. That was the presence of a large number of Palestinians who were working in that region.²⁰⁸ Quite a few of them were a part of the Gulf intelligentsia and exerted a great deal of influence on the mass media, especially in Kuwait. The Palestinians thus buttressed the force of Arabism and Arab radicalism in the Gulf. All these factors helped to project Nasserism as a major threat to Iran and the Shah’s regime.

Added to the threat of Arab nationalism and Arab unity in the Gulf was the fear of creeping Egyptian advances via Yemen. Alvin J. Cottrell, an American scholar very close to the Shah, analyzed this threat perception. According to him the growing Nasserist influence in Yemen “raised the specter of the establishment of Egyptian forces on the southern-fringes of the Arabian Peninsula whence infiltration and subversion could be carried out into Muscat and Oman before threatening the Arab countries of the Gulf itself. If these fears were realized, Egypt would

²⁰³Ibid., 1975.

²⁰⁴Marlowe, John, *Iran*, New York, 1963, 134.

²⁰⁵Binder, n.1, 330.

²⁰⁶Chubin and Zabih, n.15, 143.

²⁰⁷Watt, D. C., “Britain and the future of the Persian Gulf”, *World Today*, 20 (ii), November 1964, 492.

²⁰⁸Sullivan, R., “The Architecture of Western Security in Persian Gulf” *Orbit*, 14(1), Spring 1970, 78. According to Croizat these are 100,000 palestinians in the Gulf, Victor I. Croizat, “Stability in the Persian Gulf”, Proceedings, N S Naval Institute, 99 (7), July 1977, 57.

be in a position to threaten Iran's economic life-line seriously."²⁰⁹

The Iranian government believed that Nasser's intervention in the Yemen civil war in 1962 reflected his intention to establish a foothold on the Arabian peninsula in order to eventually penetrate the rich Gulf sheikhdoms.²¹⁰ Thus, according to this view Nasser wanted oil, and Arab unity was only a cloak. "The scale of Egyptian military activity in Yemen, together with the possibility of a British withdrawal from Aden, raised the specter of Egyptian forces ensconced on the southern fringes of the Arabian Peninsula, whence subversion could be directed into Oman prior to threatening the Arab countries of the Gulf itself. Arab radicals could thus be in a position to imperil Iran's economic life-line—her oil exports."²¹¹

Such a threat projection has to be carefully examined. Maybe the Egyptian military intervention in Yemen on behalf of the republican forces in the initial phase, coupled with the old slogan of Arab unity, might have lent some credence to such a threat projection in the early sixties. But it must be remembered that by 1965 Saudi Arabia under Faisal was emerging as a potential balancer for Egypt in the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia, supported by the western powers and to some extent by Iran, was checking Nasser in Yemen by extending support to Prince al-Badr, who was leading a royalist movement in Yemen. By 1967 not only was Egypt bleeding badly in Yemen but had lost a war in Sinai and was saddled with a long-drawn confrontation that demanded every ounce of Egyptian resources. Thus Egypt could pose no threat to Southern Arabia or the Gulf after 1967. Yet the dead horse had to be whipped occasionally, maybe to justify a policy already planned and being implemented. Threat from Nasserism in fact legitimized the Iranian actions and hence had to be projected, if necessary, even beyond proportion. According to Iranian authors like Chubin and Zabih,²¹² the Iranian government also played up the Nasserite threat of the support to the so-called subversion in Iran to explain away domestic opposition or resistance to the Shah's programme to

²⁰⁹Cottrell, Alvin J., "Iran, the Arabs and the Persian Gulf," *Orbis* 17(3), Fall 1973, 980.

²¹⁰Chubin and Zabih, n.15, 143, 152.

²¹¹Cottrell, n. 14, 401.

²¹²Chubin and Zabih, n. 15, 155.

justify arms build-up and to direct public attention from domestic to foreign affairs. It also legitimized Iran's growing links with Israel.

Nasser's defeat in 1967 and Egypt's confrontation across the Suez Canal drained away Egyptian capacity to project its power in far-off places like Southern Arabia and the Gulf. That coincided in 1968 with new developments that had long-term impact upon Iran's policy, like the British withdrawal from Aden, British East of Suez policy, entry of the Soviet task-force into the Indian Ocean and the radical Baath coup in Iraq. Thus gradually the threat perception from Egypt faded away to be replaced by that of the new radical power nearer home: Iraq. Also these developments focused the Iranian interests primarily upon the Gulf, where it felt threatened by Arabism as reflected in the name Arab Gulf, and the questions of Khuzistan, radicalism in Dhofar, pro-Soviet Iraq across the controversial *Shatt al-Arab*, and Kurdistan.

Iran and the Gulf

"No matter who rules in Iran, the Iranian possesses vast economic stakes in the Persian Gulf and is inspired by an ancient memory of deeply felt aspirations to play a continuously leading role in the region."²¹³ Broadly speaking Iran has three primary objectives in the Gulf: the protection of the regime's safety from internal subversion directly or indirectly sponsored by hostile Arab states or groups or by "Soviet proxy," preservation of free transit through the Straits of Hormuz, the Gulf and the *Shatt al-Arab*, and the protection of Iranian oil resources and facilities on land as well as offshore against any deliberate or accidental disruptions.²¹⁴ The Pahlavi dynasty, unlike its predecessors, had taken a deep interest in the Gulf and had taken equal if not greater interest in its maritime policy as compared to its land-frontier policy. In that sense its policies compare favourably with those of Nadir Shah in the eighteenth century.

²¹³Ramazani, n. 2, 88.

²¹⁴*The Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf States: New Wealth, New Power*, a summary record, the 27th Annual Conference of the Middle East Institute, Washington DC, September 28-9, 1973 (Mimeographed), 22.

Undoubtedly the Persians were sea-faring people in the past, especially during the later Sasanian and early Islamic period of Persian history. But it would not be wrong to say that during the last few centuries the Persians were a land power rather than a sea power. Nadir Shah did make an attempt to acquire sea power²¹⁵ but his successors failed to continue his policy. He converted Bushire into a naval base: even changed its name to Bandar Nadiriya. During his days Iran acquired naval vessels mostly from Europe and some from the dockyards of Surat in India. During the 1730s and 1740s the Iranian navy did make its presence felt in *Shatt al-Arab*, Bahrain and even in Oman.²¹⁶ Nadir Shah even planned to build his own warships though timber had to be carted all the way from the forests near the Caspian Sea to the Gulf ports. But these efforts proved abortive.

Nadir's bid for sea-power in the Gulf like his attempts to conquer Oman, ended in ultimate failure. Nevertheless, the energy and persistence with which he strove to revive the ancient Persian mastery of the sea afford proof of his breadth of vision and his other remarkable gifts. However, in the course of a few short years not even an autocrat like Nadir, powerful though he was, could turn into seamen a people who, at that time, were neither by inclination nor training in the least sea-minded. In order to man his ships, he had to fall back upon Arabs, and to a lesser extent, Baluchis and Indians, none of whom had any real feeling of loyalty to him or to Persia; that is the real reason why, in the end, his great endeavour achieved no lasting success.²¹⁷

The growth of the British sea-power in the Gulf after the eighteenth century, its bases in India and the protectorate agreements with the Arab sheikhdoms, along with the threat to Persia from the land frontiers, from Afghanistan and the Ottoman and Russian Empires, made it almost impossible for a weak Persian kingdom to have an effective naval policy in the

²¹⁵Lockhart, Laurence, *Nadir Shah*, London, 1938, 92, 4.

²¹⁶For details see Chapter XXI, "Operations in the Persian Gulf 1740-1747", *ibid.*, 212-22.

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, 221-22.

Gulf till the coming into power of Reza Khan in the twenties. He first got interested in the Gulf as a result of his efforts to impose the central authority upon provinces like Khuzistan, and his efforts in the twenties to eliminate the influence of Sheikh Khazaaal of Muhammara. In 1927 he claimed sovereignty over Bahrein. The same year he sent Iranians to Italy for naval training. They returned in 1932 and soon Iran acquired two destroyers and four gunboats,²¹⁸ thus making the beginning of the modern Iranian navy.

Reza Khan's attempt to have a Gulf policy was short-lived. In 1941 he was deposed, his country was occupied and his navy either sunk or captured and subsequently used by the British during the Second World War. The focus of the Iranian ruling elite in the post-war period was largely directed towards the "threat from the north" and the threat to the monarchy from within. Its internal and foreign policies were thus geared to meet those requirements. Undoubtedly, Iran did maintain some naval vessels to which others were added after Iran joined the Baghdad Pact. Only three old (1935) Italian gunboats had survived through the Second World War. In 1949 Iran acquired an ex-British frigate and an ex-British escort minesweeper (rated as frigate). It also added nine large motor launches (Italian) and six small launches. Iran began to acquire new naval equipment after it joined the Baghdad Pact. By 1965, when Iran initiated its independent naval programme, it had obtained two corvettes, four coastal minesweepers, two inshore minesweepers, six patrol boats, three landing craft, oiler, water-boat etc., mostly from the USA under the Military Aid Programme. It is interesting to note that despite the small size of the Iranian navy it was the only regional navy in the Gulf in the fifties and early sixties to have a capacity to keep its sea-lanes open (thanks to the minesweepers) and to escort its ships through the Gulf. No other Gulf power had acquired either that capability or shown the slightest inclination to acquire it. Even the Iraqi navy acquired torpedo boats, basically a sea-denial weapon rather than a sea-control weapon. Hence in terms of naval strategy Iran, even before it had begun seriously to formulate its Gulf policy, had already laid down a naval policy and had begun acquiring

²¹⁸Ramazani, n. 2, 25-6.

weapons to suit that strategy.

By 1955 Iran had acquired a politico-military umbrella from the west (USA) *vis-a-vis* the potential threat from within the country and also from the north. That year also marked the beginning of Arab hostility towards Iran, largely directed from Egypt. Arab unity, radicalism and non-alignment posed potential dangers but Egypt was too far off to pose an actual threat. The Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958 brought the threat from Arabism almost next-door. The threat became more intense after the development of close contacts between Iraq and the USSR. Iran tried to meet the threat first by coming closer to the USA and by signing the 1959 agreement with the USA, but finally tried to meet the Arab threat and to neutralize it indirectly, by seeking its own detente with the USSR. Also, 1962-63 marked a favourable domestic environment. The White Revolution marked a new approach to the Shah's policy of acquiring internal stability. Its initial success enabled Iran to follow a more aggressive independent foreign policy, especially in the Gulf.

The same period also witnessed a renewed American interest in the Indian Ocean and therefore in the Gulf. Thanks to the A-3 *Polaris* programme, the USA was taking a new interest in the area, like sending an independent task-force into the Indian Ocean, constructing the north-west cape communication base in Australia, and initiating talks about the Diego Garcia base. The change in American policy coincided with the change of administration in the USA. The new Johnson administration was favourably inclined towards the Shah. The British policy of eventual withdrawal from the Gulf was already clear by 1965. Also the Indo-Pak war of 1965 conveyed to the Shah the need to have an independent military option for regional requirements. All these factors helped to mould Iran's policies in the early sixties. The result can be summarized as Iran's Gulf policy.

The year 1968 marked another milestone in Iran's Gulf policy. The regional and international environments were focusing sharply on the Gulf. The Arab-Israeli war of 1967 had intensified the already growing direct super-power commitments in the Middle East, including the Gulf. The year 1968 witnessed a series of new developments—declaration of the East of Suez policy by Britain, dispatch of the Soviet task-force into the Indian Ocean, the July 1968 coup in Iraq that brought the radi-

cal wing of the *Baath* party to power, and the intensification of the Dhofar rebellion. All these developments forced Iran to concentrate more on the Gulf. Also, the decline of Nasser after 1967 and the gradual evolution of Iraq as the radical Arab state, brought the threat from "Arabism" nearer home. In the post-1968 period Iraq-Iran rivalry symbolized Iran's threats in the Gulf and Iran's efforts to neutralize the Iraqi threat, by and large, signified Iran's Gulf policy.

When one seeks to analyse Iran's threat perception and its response *vis-a-vis* the Gulf, one has to analyse several inter-linked variables. Its threat perception can be analyzed under several variables like Arabism, radicalism, oil, prevailing regional and international environment, etc. Threat from Arabism ranged from an anti-Iranian Arab front to a question like Khuzistan. The controversy over the name Arab or Persian Gulf itself symbolized the threat from Arabism. Radicalism meant Arab support to anti-Shah forces in Iran or the growth of radical movements on the Arab littoral. The Dhofar movement symbolized that threat. The threat to Iranian oil ranged from Arab claims to Iranian oil-bearing territory like Khuzistan and the continental shelf in the Gulf, to threats to oil installations and safety of the oil lanes in the Gulf and beyond it. The international environment—Soviet support to the Dhofar movement, Soviet-Iraqi relations and the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean—might have also contributed to the overall threat perception of Iran. It is clear that most of these variables were interconnected and based upon a set of assumptions like inevitability of Arab-Iranian rivalry, radical movement in the Arab World posing a direct threat to Iran, continuing threat from the north etc. Thus these assumptions and Iran's threat perception were logically interlinked.

The Iranian response can be studied under several interconnected moves: quest for legitimacy as a Gulf power either through diplomacy or by force, projecting Iranian power as the dominant factor in Gulf politics, manipulating the international environment to suit Iran's requirement etc. The question of legitimacy assumed a paramount position because of the threat from Arabism. Iran had to be accepted as a Gulf power by the Arabs. Hence, agreements with Arab states, especially on the question of demarcation of the continental shelf, security of the

Gulf, closed-sea concept, control of navigation in the Gulf etc., assumed great significance for Iran. Diplomacy was buttressed with military might and the capacity and the will to demonstrate it and use it. The Iranian occupation of the three islands in the Gulf and the use of Iranian troops in Oman illustrated that variable. Iran had also skilfully used the international environment to suit its policy. While retaining its old links with the USA it strengthened its new links with the USSR so as to limit Iraqi capacity to use its ties with the USSR against Iran. A detailed study of the threats and the responses would thus help to analyse Iran's Gulf policy.

The Arab-Iranian relations, though coloured by historical factors, were of very recent origin. None existed prior to the First World War. Even in the inter-war period Iran's Arab relationship was influenced by the fact that Iraq, the Arab state next to Iran and most important from the Iranian point of view, was not an independent variable but controlled by the British. Also, Iran-Iraq relations were full of pitfalls in view of boundary problems. Yet Iran leaned backwards to accommodate Iraq because of the need to have a friendly Iraq. Iran was planning to have a ring of friendly regional powers around her. The policy led to the Saadabad Pact. This friendly ring survived despite the growth of Arabism and Nasserism, till it was broken in July 1958 by the military coup in Iraq. Since then, till recently, Iraq and Iran have been antagonists in the Gulf. The 1958 coup also broke the ring of conservative monarchies in the Gulf and this posed a direct challenge of "radicalism" in that sensitive area.

Though Arabism and Nasserism constituted a potential threat to Iran the Iraqi *coup* added substance to that overall threat from the Arab World. Unlike Egypt, Iraq was directly involved in several conflicts with Iran. Some of these problems, like the *Shatt al-Arab* question, were lying dormant during the period of enforced entente before the 1958 *coup d'état*. Others, like the Khuzistan question and the continental-shelf agreement etc., were added subsequently. The question of Iranians in Iraq was also the result of the deterioration in Iraq-Iran relations. Iraq's close ties with the USSR and military and economic aid from that quarter also accentuated Iraq-Iran rivalry.

Iraq was relatively a weaker power in the Gulf. Hence, to seek more leverage *vis-a-vis* Iran and also the conservative Arab sup-

porters of Iran, Iraq began to use the slogan of Arab solidarity against Iran and attempted to colour the Iraq-Iran dispute with the Arab-Iran dispute. It sought Arab League support for the *Shatt al-Arab* dispute. On 16 July 1970, just before the formal British withdrawal, Iraqi President Ahmed Hasen al-Bakr proposed the creation of an Arab defence alliance in the Gulf.²¹⁹ In October 1971, on the eve of the British departure from the Gulf, the Iraqi President sent a personal envoy to Arab capitalists in the Gulf to solicit Arab support and cooperation to form an Arab bloc against Iran.²²⁰ Saddam Hussein Takriti, Deputy Chairman of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council and the strong man of Iraq, told *As-Siyasa* of Kuwait (17 October 1971):

We want the Arab Gulf to be a free Arab region. We are an Arab Party (the *Baath* Party of Iraq) and we are very jealous for our Arabism to a great extent, but imperialism concentrates its attack on us because we refuse cooperation with it. We do not want others to picture us as the first threat to the Arab Gulf region and the foreigners as the second. What we believe is that the Iranian regime and the Shah, who is in power, are the first threat. What we want for the Arab Gulf is that it keeps its Arabism, its freedom and its independence.²²¹

Saddam Hussein continued to harp on the theme of an Iranian threat to the Arabs in the Gulf. In an interview to the Libyan news agency in July 1974 he said that Iran's policy was aggressive and expansionist and that Iran was linked with the Zionist and imperialist scheme aimed at destroying the entire Arab World.²²²

In another interview in February 1975 he even offered to sign a defence pact with Saudi Arabia²²³ so as to have an Arab group in the Gulf. On 1 February 1975, in an inaugural speech at the Arab People's Conference for solidarity with Iran against Iranian aggression, he said that the Iraq-Iran problem was a pan-Arab

²¹⁹ *News Review, West Asia*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, August 1970, 13.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, November 1971, 13.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, August 1974; 1977-78.

²²³ *Arab World*, 24 February 1975.

problem and called upon all Arabs—rulers, people and organizations—to support Iraq.²²⁴ Apparently Iraq did not get that support and it had to sign an agreement with Iran in March 1975. Though Iraq, a “radical” threat to “conservative” Arab states, did not get Arab support it did not mean that Iran was sure that such an Arab grouping might not emerge in the future.

Besides the large question of Arab-Iranian conflict there were specific issues that, from the Iranian government’s point of view, constituted a threat to its national security. They were the question of the name of the Gulf (Arab or Persian), demarcation of the continental shelf, the Khuzistan or Arabistan question, and the question of Iranians in Iraq.

Both the Arabs and the Iranians were extra-sensitive about the name—Arab/Persian—of the Gulf. The Persian Gulf had been the traditional name but by 1955 the term Arab Gulf had gained popularity in the Arab World. “This was not a mere matter of nomenclature—it is a symptom of a rivalry which was rooted in history, a rivalry between two different races, two different religions, two different cultures.”²²⁵ Not only are the two different terms mandatory in the publications in the Arab World and in Iran, but efforts were made to give them, especially the new term Arab Gulf, international recognition. In the mid-sixties an attempt was made to have Arabian Gulf currency²²⁶ which was quietly foiled by the British who were still the dominant power in the Arab sheikhdoms of the Gulf.

Efforts to create an Arabian Gulf news agency in 1976, however, created a bitter Arab-Iranian controversy. Iranian ambassadors from all Persian Gulf countries were recalled urgently. Foreign Minister Khalatbari was reported to have said on 7 January 1976 that if the report of that news agency was correct Iran would review its ties with these countries.²²⁷ The idea of forming an Arabian Gulf news agency was initiated by Abu Dhabi in a conference of Ministers of Information of seven Arab states in the Gulf. The Iranian government objected to it very

²²⁴Ibid., 3 February 1975.

²²⁵Marlowe, John, “Arab-Persian rivalry in the Persian Gulf”, *Royal Central Asian Journal*, 51(1), January 1963, 23.

²²⁶*Economist*, 219 (64-6), 4 June 1966, 1077-78.

²²⁷*Tehran Journal*, 8 January 1976.

violently.²²⁸ The Iranian displeasure seemed to have had its effect because by 19 January Khalatbari could declare in the Iranian Senate that the dispute was nearing solution and that the Arab ministers were expressing their personal opinion and not reflecting the official policy.²²⁹ The idea of such a news agency was ultimately shelved for good very soon.

The question about the name was raised, among others, by Hasnein Heikal, the noted Egyptian journalist, who was interviewing the Shah for a Beirut paper, *al-Anwar*. Heikal said that one possible explanation for the change of name was that there were seven Arab states and only one Iran (Persia). The Shah refuted that argument by saying, "Do facts of history and geography change in this manner? Can Pakistan change the term Indian Ocean or add its own name to it?"²³⁰ The Shah did not see the question of the nomenclature in that simple framework. For him the denial of the name "Persian" to the Gulf meant potential exclusion of Iran from the Gulf. In a speech on the occasion of the audience granted to the Heads of the two Houses of Parliament in 1969, he said:

... it is beneath our dignity to reply to juvenile and banal statements from an official source in this trouble-ridden world of ours that Iran is a stranger to the Persian Gulf, (to which they of course ascribe another name). This means that if you build wave-breakers in the sea at Bandar Abbas you have infringed on the rights of others, that all the islands of the Persian Gulf which are part of Iran cannot belong to this country, as Iran is a stranger to the Persian Gulf. This means that all the oil wells in the area around the island of Kharg and elsewhere which belong to Iran have been unlawfully seized. Plainly, in the face of such logic and reasoning, one maintains silence, that is to say, a verbal silence. But the response is physical and military preparedness to cope with any eventuality. After all, the final work rests with our own

²²⁸ Shah's interview with Ahmed Jarollah, a Kuwaiti journalist, *ibid.*, 21 January 1976.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1976.

²³⁰ *Kayhan International*, 16 September 1975.

preparedness. To swap rhetoric in this regard will lead to no result.²³¹

As things stand today there is no acceptable solution to this deep-rooted problem. Neither the Indian practice of using only "the Gulf" to denote the Arab/Persian Gulf nor the suggestion of the responsible British diplomat William Luce, "Arab-Persian Gulf",²³² is acceptable to the Arabs or the Persians.

The second point of dispute is Khuzistan or Arabistan. Arabs have been claiming that this strategically located area on the Persian Gulf coast oil-bearing strata belonged to the Arab World and it was occupied by force by Reza Khan in the early twenties. A Khuzistan Liberation Committee was reportedly established as early as 1955.²³³ In 1964 Arab jurists began claiming it as a part of the Arab World²³⁴ and in November 1965 the Syrian government referred to Khuzistan as Arabistan and called it a part of the "Arab homeland."²³⁵ The 1969 Iraq-Iran dispute over the *Shatt al-Arab* highlighted the Khuzistan question and in April 1969 the deputy prime minister and minister of interior began calling Khuzistan an Iraqi territory.²³⁶ Radio Baghdad took up that theme in May-June 1969 and launched a propaganda attack against Iran. Khuzistan also became known as Occupied Arabistan. An Arabistan Liberation Front also came into existence.²³⁷

The Arab-Iranian rivalry, or rather Iraq-Iran rivalry, also led to the expulsion of Iranians from Iraq. The status of Iranians in Iraq was always a thorny issue, even in the past. The problem became more complicated because of waves of Iranians migrating in the fifties and sixties to Arab sheikhdoms for work and the simultaneous Arab propaganda comparing the Israeli expansionist policy in Palestine to the Iranian policy in the Gulf. Thus

²³¹Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Iran's Foreign Policy* (no place, no date), 96-7.

²³²Luce, Sir William, "Britain in the Persian Gulf, mistaken timing over Aden", *Roundtable* (277), July 1967, 277.

²³³Burrell, R.M., "Iranian foreign policy", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 61, part I, February 1974, 9 (Previously *Royal Central Asian Journal*).

²³⁴Ramazani, n.2, 41.

²³⁵Chubin and Zabih, n. 15, 146.

²³⁶*Ibid.*, 183.

²³⁷*Ibid.*

the Iraqi expulsion of Iranians had a wider connotation for Iran. This is one reason why Iran reacted rather strongly.

According to news reports, thousands of Iranians were expelled from Iraq. It was reported that 30,000 persons were deported in one day alone, on 29 November 1971.²³⁸ Iranians claimed that more than 100,000 Iranians were expelled from Iraq since 1969.²³⁹

The Iranians took the issue to the UN. The Iranian ambassador, Feréydoun Hoveyda, informed the UN Committee on Refugees on 17 November 1971 about the expulsion of Iranians from Iraq.²⁴⁰ On 18 January 1972, Iran officially asked the UN Commission on Human Rights to take up the issue in its next meeting in March 1972.²⁴¹ The reaction of the Shah was dignified but stern. He is reported to have said, "All the same, they should be careful because no one can go beyond a certain point in a policy of provocation. After a certain point those subjected to that policy will no longer tolerate it."²⁴² The Iraq-Iran confrontation and the expulsion of the Iranians from Iraq must be studied at this juncture in the light of the British withdrawal from the Gulf and Iran's occupation of the three islands in the Gulf, Abu Musa and the two Tumbs. Iraq, in a way, was reacting to Iranian policy in the Gulf.

Iran, despite its detente with the USSR in 1962, was not able to treat it as a friend and despite close economic cooperation still looked at the USSR as a potential threat. Undoubtedly Iran did make conscious efforts to neutralize the Soviet pressure so as to pursue a forward policy in the Gulf, and these efforts did succeed but things began to look difficult after 1968. Series of events, regional and global, in that year influenced Iran's foreign policy. It had a special significance for Soviet-Iranian relations. The British decision of January 1968 to withdraw from the East of Suez by 1971 generated a fear that the Soviets might like to fill the vacuum.²⁴³ The entry of the Soviet task-force a few months

²³⁸*Kayhan International*, 30 December 1971.

²³⁹*The Times of India* (New Delhi), 4 January 1972.

²⁴⁰*Kayhan International*, 18 November 1971.

²⁴¹*Ibid.*, 19 January 1971.

²⁴²*Ibid.*, 29 January 1972.

²⁴³Sullivan, n. 56, 72. The author was advocating a more dynamic US role in the region.

afterwards and its permanent deployment in the Arabian Sea gave substance to this fear.

Another source of indirect Soviet threat was Iraq. The moderate *Baath* regime, which was not very close to the USSR and which was seeking a detente with Iran, was overthrown by a *coup d'état* and replaced by a radical *Baath* group on 17 July 1968. Before that the chances of Iraq-Iran cooperation were fairly good, as was reflected in the visit of the Iraqi Premier to Tehran on 24 June 1968, when the questions of Gulf security were discussed.²⁴⁴ But the fall of the Aref regime not only dashed this spirit of co-operation but also opened the doors for close Soviet-Iraqi co-operation that finally led to the controversial 1972 treaty. The growing Iraq-Iran rivalry after the 1968 coup in Iraq and the growing Soviet presence in Iraq was taken seriously by Iran at that time.²⁴⁵ Added to those developments was the escalation of guerrilla efforts in Dhofar in 1968 with Soviet and Chinese support and with the active cooperation of the radical regime in Aden. Above all, the Soviet armed intervention of Czechoslovakia in 1968 had a profound influence in Iran.²⁴⁶ Iran too was a next-door neighbour of the USSR.

Another factor that dominated Iranian policy in the Gulf was its threat perception *vis-a-vis* its oil resources. The scope of this threat ranged from the security of its oil-fields on land and in the continental shelf, oil installations like refineries and oil terminals, and of the sea-lanes. Over a number of years oil became more and more the crucial variable in Iran's national security. It was the basis of Iran's economic development, military power, diplomatic strength and also the basis of the systemic security of the ruling elite. Hence the Shah's regime became increasingly touchy about the security of Iranian oil. It would not be wrong to say that oil diplomacy had assumed a crucial place in Iran's foreign and domestic policies.

Since the basis of oil power lies in having an effective control over the oil-producing areas, Iran reacted violently to any attempt by the Arabs that would deny Iran the use of that area. Hence Iran reacted violently to the Arab claims that Khuzistan was

²⁴⁴Ramazani, n.13, 412.

²⁴⁵*The Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf States*, n. 62, 24.

²⁴⁶Burrell, n. 81, 8.

Arab territory or that the Gulf was an exclusively Arab area from which Iran should be excluded. Khuzistan was an old problem that had plagued Arab-Iran relations even during the twenties. But the question of the continental shelf was a new one. The question concerned the ownership of oil resources in areas that had not been claimed till then by any of the littoral states. Thus the continental shelf of the Gulf had to be divided among the littoral states and Iran wanted its due share. Since the exploitation of the off-shore oil resources became practicable in 1957,²⁴⁷ the Iranian desire to acquire control over its share of the continental shelf (and islands) came into clash with "Arabism" in the Gulf.

The second threat was to the security of the Iranian oil installations like the refinery, storage tanks and the oil terminals. Before the construction of super-tankers, Abadan served as the major centre of Iranian oil installation. It had a large refinery and also a port where oil could be pumped into the tanker. But Abādan was situated on the controversial *Shatt al-Arab*. It was also within the range of even a medium-range mortar from the Iraqi side.²⁴⁸ As long as Iraq-Iran relations were smooth Iran could underplay that threat. But after 1959, following the outbreak of Iraq-Iran hostility on the *Shatt al-Arab* issue, Iranians began to have a second look at Abadan. That was one reason why the oil terminal was shifted to the Kharg island.²⁴⁹ Also the use of super-tankers made the Abadan oil terminal redundant since these big tankers could not navigate the shallow waters of the *Shatt al-Arab*. Kharg island is about thirty miles from the shore. It has the advantage of deep water and a sheltered harbour for big tankers. Though it is relatively distant from the Iraqi borders, its isolation poses problems of security of the major oil terminal against either a surprise attack or a guerrilla raid.

The third aspect of Iran's oil security lies in ensuring an uninterrupted passage of oil tankers in the Gulf and beyond it. It is important to note that Iran, unlike Iraq or Saudi Arabia, does not have a pipeline to the Mediterranean. (It does have a gas pipeline to the USSR.) Therefore, freedom to use the waterways,

²⁴⁷Cottrell, n. 57, 980.

²⁴⁸Cottrell, n. 14, 401.

²⁴⁹Cottrell, n. 57, 980.

both in the Gulf and beyond, and also in the *Shatt al-Arab*, became a cardinal principle of Iran's oil diplomacy. Iran's fear of the threat to her oil lane in the Gulf arose both from a larger fear of Arab vs Iranian rivalry as well as the fear of guerrilla threat to tankers in the Gulf and of subversion based on the Arab littoral. It also arose out of the general fear of Iraq, especially in the controversial *Shatt al-Arab*.

The *Shatt al-Arab* controversy was a part of the boundary dispute that could be traced back to the days of the Ottoman Empire. Efforts to demarcate the boundary between the Ottoman and the Iranian Empires were made as early as the middle of the nineteenth century. Great Britain had established a "factory" in Basrah in as early as 1639.²⁵⁰ The steam navigation during the nineteenth century increased the importance of Basrah and the *Shatt al-Arab*. Attempts were, therefore, made to define jurisdiction over the river. The treaty of Erzerum, 1847, was a partial solution to that problem.²⁵¹ Article 2 of that treaty dealt with the *Shatt al-Arab*. It said:

Article 2. . . The Ottoman Government formally recognizes the unrestricted sovereignty of the Persian Government over the city and port of Muhammara (now Khurramshahr), the island of Khizr (now Abadan), the anchorage, and the lands on the eastern bank—that is to say, the *left bank*—of the *Shatt al-Arab* which are in the possession of tribes recognized as belonging to Persia. Further, Persian vessels shall have the right to navigate freely without let or hindrance on the *Shatt al-Arab* from the mouth of the same to the point of contact of the frontier of the two parties.²⁵²

This treaty thus discarded the old pattern of basing frontiers on the basis of nomadic or sedentary tribes, and based it on well-

²⁵⁰Melamid, Alexander, "The *Shatt al-Arab* boundary dispute", *Middle East Journal*, 22(3), Summer 1968, 351-52.

²⁵¹L. E., "River boundaries: legal aspects of the *Shatt al-Arab* frontier", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 9(2), April 1960, 209-10.

²⁵²Edmonds, C.J., "The Iraqi-Persian frontier, 1639-1938", *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 62 (Old Series), VI New Series, part II, June 1975, 149.

defined geographical features. It allowed Iran to claim sovereignty over an area that was predominantly Arab in character and which subsequently created the controversy over Khuzistan or Arabistan. But it also stopped Iranian sovereignty at the "left bank" only. The right of navigation, however, was granted. The demarcation commission, provided for in the treaty, began its work in 1850 but could not accomplish much.

In the meanwhile the *Shatt al-Arab* areas had acquired a new significance. Oil was discovered and Britain developed significant economic and strategic stakes in southern Iran and in the area around the *Shatt al-Arab*. Thus Abadan acquired a special significance. This was reflected in the Constantinople Protocol of 1913 under which the *thalweg* line became the boundary in the *Shatt al-Arab* for a four-mile stretch opposite Abadan.²⁵³ The boundary delimitation commission established in 1913, however, failed to demarcate the new frontier because of the First World War, in which Britain and the Ottoman Empire were in opposite camps. The Ottomans did not ratify that treaty²⁵⁴ and the attempt to find a legal solution was thwarted.

The question was raised by Iran during the inter-war period before the League of Nations. Iraq was claiming *de jure* control over the whole body of the *Shatt al-Arab*. Iranians claimed that the *thalweg* line should form the basis of the river boundary. The Iranian navy had already begun to disregard the Iraqi claims that led to small incidents.²⁵⁵ Iran disclaimed the Treaty of Erzerum, and the Protocol of 1913. The League could not resolve the dispute. The question was taken up on a bilateral basis and a treaty was signed on 4 July 1937. It provided for the *thalweg* line as a basis of the boundary opposite Abadan but Iraq claimed sovereignty over the rest of the river up to the low-watermark on the Iranian shore. The concession on Abadan also benefited Britain at that time because it controlled the oil fields and the oil industry in that area.

There is no doubt that the 1937 treaty did not offer much satisfaction to Iran. Also, the commission that was to look into the follow-up actions did not do much. The Second World

²⁵³Ibid., 150.

²⁵⁴Melamid, n. 98, 353.

²⁵⁵Ibid., 354.

War allowed Britain to control the Gulf because of its presence in Iraq and also the occupation of Southern Iran after 1941. Iran, however, once again began complaining about the *Shatt al-Arab* in the post-World War II period. It said that 70 per cent of the dues were collected from vessels going to Iran and yet only 40 per cent of that amount was spent on pilotage, navigational aids etc., and the rest of the money was spent on improving port facilities in Iraq.²⁵⁶ Diplomatic moves initiated by the Iranian government in 1949 were ignored by Iraq. In 1957 Iran sought arbitration. Negotiations were delayed and before a final solution could be found the July 1958 *coup d'état* overthrew the Iraqi monarchy and once again the *Shatt al-Arab* dispute remained unresolved.

In December 1959 Premier Abdel Karim Qassem of Iraq claimed full control over the *Shatt al-Arab* (including the three-mile *thalweg*-line zone opposite Abadan). Iran responded by arguing that Iraq had failed to conclude the convention for the joint administration of the *Shatt al-Arab* as stipulated under the 1937 treaty. It reiterated its old demand for drawing the boundary on the basis of the *thalweg* line. The Iranian government also said that a tentative agreement on that line had already been reached between Iraq and Iran before the 1958 Iraqi *coup d'état*.²⁵⁷ Tension built up and Iran began making preparations for a military confrontation. The situation did not deteriorate despite a few skirmishes. The Shah was reluctant to start a war because of the adverse military balance at that time between Iran and Iraq.²⁵⁸ Great Britain and the USA cautioned restraint on Iran. The USSR, however, gave full support to Iraq.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶Ibid., 355.

²⁵⁷Ramazani, n. 13, 402.

²⁵⁸Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mohammad (His Imperial Majesty), *Mission For My Country*, London 1961, 313-14.

²⁵⁹Damirlov, S., "Middle East: who is interested in the Iran-Iraq Conflict?" *International Affairs* (Moscow), (2), February 1960, 88-9. Author argued that the 1937 treaty was imposed on Iraq and thereby Iraq lost the advantages that it had acquired under the 1913 Constantinople Convention which gave Iraq control over the waters of the *Shatt al-Arab* upto the low-watermark on its eastern bank all along with the boundary including Abadan. The Soviet support to Iraq at that time should also be seen in the light of the bitter Soviet-Iranian rivalry following the 1959 agreement between Iran and the USA.

The *Shatt al-Arab* dispute, one of the barometers of Iraq-Iran relations, once again showed signs of tempest in February 1961. The dispute was over the question of whether the Iraqi port authority or the Persian port authority should get the revenue from berthing tankers at Abadan.²⁶⁰ This developed into a serious dispute. The Iraqis refused to cooperate with Iranian shipping with the result that tankers could not use Abadan for almost two months.²⁶¹ Finally the Iranians gave way. The virtual blockade of the oil refinery and oil terminal brought home to Iran the harsh reality about its total dependence upon Iraqi goodwill as far its oil routes were concerned.

The 8 February 1963 *coup d'état* in Iraq brought new hopes of improvement in Iraq-Iran relations. A high-ranking Iraqi delegation went to Tehran in February 1964. Premier Hoveyda of Iran and Abdal Rahman al-Bazzaz of Iraq exchanged notes in December 1965 but there seemed no signs of settlement. Efforts were made once again in 1967 to solve outstanding problems between the two countries. In March 1967 discussions were held between high-ranking Iraqi and Iranian officials on all the major issues involved. But no solution could be reached. The July 1968 *coup d'état* in Iraq brought into power a more radical regime in Iraq and the Iraq-Iran rivalry took a more acute turn.

The new regime in Iraq also claimed the whole of the *Shatt al-Arab* as Iraqi territory. It tried to check papers of ships moving up the *Shatt al-Arab*, a right that Iraq had apparently not exercised earlier. It also demanded that vessels carrying the Iranian flag should lower the flag before entering the *Shatt al-Arab* and that there should be no Iranian naval personnel on board the ships. It warned that Iraq would employ force if the ships defied the new regulations. These developments sparked a new crisis in April-May 1969.

The Iranian government on 19 April 1969 declared the 1937 treaty null and void. The Shah of Iran, in a speech in 1969, said:

With regard to the *Shattal-Arab*, as you are aware that after 32 years of patience and forbearance, we have terminated

²⁶⁰Marlowe, John, "Arab-Persian rivalry in the Persian Gulf", *Royal Central Asian Journal*, 51(1), January 1963, 26-7.

²⁶¹Marlowe, n. 52, 134.

the treaty of 1937, a treaty which was the legacy of the colonial policy which even the other party to the engagement had never respected. However, we had declared our readiness to conclude a just and equitable treaty in this connection with our neighbour based on the principle of international equality of rights.²⁶²

Iran also threatened Iraq with grave consequences if it tried to stop Iranian shipping. In fact Iran decided to call the bluff. By then it was militarily in a better position. On 22 April 1969 the Iranian freighter, *Ebn-i-Sina*, escorted by the ships of the Iranian navy and covered by an umbrella of jet fighters, navigated the disputed waterways into the Persian Gulf. An Iraqi naval motor launch approached the *Ebn-i-Sina* near Fao at the mouth of *Shatt al-Arab* but was ordered to clear the way. The Iraqi vessel complied. An important precedent was established. After that Iraq did not interfere with Iranian shipping in the Gulf. Restraint on the part of Iraq and Iran averted an open conflict. Iraq, however, retaliated by deporting thousands of Iranians from Iraq.

Both Iraq and Iran offered to settle the issue through legal and diplomatic channels. In July 1970 President Bakr of Iraq offered that the question be referred to the International Court of Justice but Iran rejected that offer. It said that the 1937 treaty was an imposed one. Iran, however, showed its willingness to negotiate a new treaty. In November 1971 Iraq made an offer for international arbitration. That offer too was rejected. Iran insisted upon a new agreement based upon the *thalweg* line formula. The question remained unresolved till March 1975 when it was settled along with other outstanding problems between Iraq and Iran.

Iran's Policy in the Gulf

Iran had sought a dominant position in the Gulf in the past. In the nineteenth century Nadir Shah tried to acquire a naval presence in the area. In the inter-war period Reza Khan tried to follow a similar policy. None succeeded because of the dominant

²⁶²Iran's Foreign Policy, n. 79, 109.

British presence in the Gulf and even beyond it. Iran's threat perception in the Gulf during the fifties was not conditioned by a naval threat but by the forces of Arabism as represented by Nasser. The Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958 did bring the threat nearer home and Iran turned its attention to meeting it, both diplomatically and, if necessary, militarily. But in the recent years Iran's Gulf policy was also conditioned, to a large extent, by gradual British withdrawal from the area. A power that had for centuries thwarted Iranian ambitions in the Gulf, was leaving almost abruptly. It was probably the most significant event that shaped Iran's Gulf policy since the sixties.

The rapid British withdrawal from the area offered Iran all the arguments it needed to project itself in the Gulf. It could become the guardian of the sea-lanes and the leader of the anti-subversive movement in the region. It could offer its political and military support to any sheikhdom threatened by subversion or even military attack from another regional power. These arguments would have been meaningless, especially to the weak sheikhdoms of the Gulf, if Britain had not contemplated withdrawal or had agreed, at the last moment, to accept the offer of Abu Dhabi to underwrite the financial aspect of British expenditure if Britain had decided to remain in the region, or had postponed its departure till an Arab state like Saudi Arabia had been suitably strengthened to take over from Britain its traditional role in the Gulf. This suggestion was made by William Luce, at one time the British Governor of Aden (1956-60) and Political Resident in the Gulf (1961-66), in an article in the influential British journal, *Roundtable*.²⁶³ But none of these things happened. Britain left the Gulf almost in a hurry. The resulting confusion strengthened Iran's position in the Gulf. Thus, Iran's Gulf policy cannot be understood fully without analysing the British withdrawal and its repercussions on Gulf politics.

There were several reasons that led to the decline of British power in the post-World War II era. The process of decolonization that started with India "destroyed the original *raison d'être* of the British position in the Gulf."²⁶⁴ But other

²⁶³Luce, n. 80, 282.

²⁶⁴Killey, J.B., "The British position in the Persian Gulf", *World Today*, 20(6), June 1964, 238.

commitments remained, viz., the line of communication to other colonies or the Commonwealth countries, oil, the protectorate treaties, the Cold War commitments like the Baghdad Pact (the CENTO) and the SEATO etc. But as years passed, Britain found it increasingly difficult to maintain its pre-eminent position in this region. The Anglo-French failure, during the 1956 Suez War, to re-establish their lost control over the area culminated in the promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, which was justified on the ground that the decline in Anglo-French influence had created a vacuum and the USA ought to fill it lest the USSR should step in. Thus, the promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 was the first overt manifestation of the loss of British capability to "manage" the area.

The Suez episode also coincided with the British plans for a strategic withdrawal from the controversial periphery of the USSR into a second line of defence that stretched from bases in East Africa to Mahe in Seychelles, and Gan in the Maldives.²⁶⁵ These alternate bases gradually merged with the Anglo-American strategy in the Indian Ocean in the middle of the sixties that revolved around the Diego Garcia base. But events were changing fast in the Gulf. The Iraqi *coup d'état* of 1958 knocked off the British power base in the Gulf. In 1961 Kuwait was offered independence partly under pressure of Arab nationalism though an attempt was made to protect British interests by signing a defence treaty with Kuwait. Soon the Baghdad Pact too lost its value in 1962, when Iran worked out a *detente* with the USSR and Pakistan drew closer to China and the USSR. Britain was also not a member of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) that was formed in 1964. During the first half of the sixties the British had been winding up their presence in East Africa. Also Aden, the major British base of intervention in the Arabian Sea area, was coming under pressure from the nationalist forces in Aden. It was from here that the British forces have moved to Kuwait in 1961²⁶⁶ and to East Africa in 1963. Finally Britain decided to give up even that base. The British decision in 1966 to withdraw from Aden after 1968 had severely shaken the con-

²⁶⁵Hoskins, Halford L., "Changing the guard in the Middle East", *Current History*, 52 (306), February 1967, 71.

²⁶⁶Watt, D.C., "The decision to withdraw from the Gulf", *Political Quarterly*, 30(3), July-September 1968, 315.

fidence of its friends in the Gulf in the value of the British connection and had lowered British credit in the eyes of other leaders in the region.²⁶⁷

There were other reasons too that compelled Britain to withdraw from the East of Suez. Britain, in the sixties, was going through an economic crisis and there was a pressure for economising on defence expenditure. The defence budget of £1.9 billion amounted to about 7-8 per cent of the GNP and almost one-third of the total budget.²⁶⁸ There were serious debates as early as 1964 in the British Parliament on the extent of British commitment East of Suez.²⁶⁹ The British White Paper on Defence of February 1966 also highlighted the economic liabilities of the British defence commitments East of Suez. According to Cottrell, Britain was spending about \$260 million per year on its troops in this area.²⁷⁰

Another argument that was advanced was that Britain should reorient its defence strategy and give priority to British commitments to the NATO defences in Europe proper. It was pointed out that approximately 65,000 to 70,000 British troops that were stationed East of Suez were more than the British commitments in the Rhineland.²⁷¹ A section of British public opinion was also piqued at the thought that Britain should go on policing the area where her interests were dwindling while those whose interests were increasing, the Americans or the oil-rich states of the region, should keep aloof from it. The issue had its domestic policy angle also. A large section in the Labour Party was committed to the idea of reducing the defence budget and the only place it could be cut was East of Suez.

Everyone expected the British to withdraw eventually. The announcement of Harold Wilson on 16 January 1968 that the withdrawal would be completed by the end of 1971, however, came as a surprise. It postponed the British departure from 1973-

²⁶⁷Luce, n. 80, 283.

²⁶⁸Verrier, Anthony, "British defence policy under the labour", *Foreign Affairs*, 42 (2), January 1962, 284.

²⁶⁹"East of Suez: West of Suez," *Economist*, 214 (6337), 6 February 1965, 512.

²⁷⁰Cottrell, Alvin J., "British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf", *Military Review*, 50 (6), June 1970, 15.

²⁷¹"East of Suez: West of Suez", n. 117, 512, 15.

1977 to 1971.²⁷² The new conservative government of Edward Heath at first showed an inclination to reverse the trend but finally went along with the Labour Government's policy. The four-year period between Wilson's announcement on withdrawal from the East of Suez and the final withdrawal in 1971 marked a very hotly contested quest for power in the Gulf and, as it became clear by 1971, Iran had won that race, at least temporarily.

When we analyse the British withdrawal from East of Suez we must keep in mind that the Gulf, though important, was not the major concentration of British military presence. South-East Asia accounted for a large chunk, about 50,000, in 1965. British commitments in the Gulf region did not exceed about eight thousand personnel. The number declined to about six thousand by 1971.²⁷³ It must also be noted that unlike South-East Asia, where the British were engaged in a confrontation with a major regional power, Indonesia (and therefore the need for a large number of men there), British policy in the Gulf was based upon naval supremacy and a capability to intervene swiftly thanks to its naval presence, and air and naval bases in the area. Also, its commitments were more tuned to counter-insurgency operations like in Aden, Oman and even in the Gulf, rather than a large-scale politico-military confrontation as in South-East Asia. Hence, the British could do with a smaller number provided they had access to bases in Aden, Bahrain and Sharjah. Since Aden was the key to British naval strategy in the area, the decision to withdraw from there by 1968 had already limited British military capability in the area. They could scarcely maintain their presence in the Gulf without Aden, especially when the Suez Canal was blocked. This factor becomes important in understanding British reluctance to accept the offer of the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi to underwrite British expenditure if the British decided to stay on in the Gulf.

²⁷²Cottrell, n. 118, 14.

²⁷³Cottrell, Alvin J., "Conflict in the Persian Gulf", *Military Review*, 51 (2), February 1971, 35. According to another report Britain had about 7,000 servicemen in the region; they included two battalions at Sharjah and Bahrain, two RAF *Hunter* Equadrons, at attachment of *Shakleton* maritime reconnaissance aircraft, and a naval establishment of the frigate and six coastal minesweepers. *Times of India* (New Delhi), 3 March 1971.

Once the decision was taken to withdraw Britain had to tie up the loose ends. Britain gave a three-year notice to Kuwait to terminate the 1961 agreement under which Britain could be asked to render military help to Kuwait. It also had to make alternate arrangements for its protectorates in the Gulf. Initially it planned to have a federation of all the nine small sheikhdoms. But Iran claimed Bahrain and opposed the formation of such a federation. Finally, Bahrain and Qatar became independent states and the seven states of the Trucial Coast formed a federation—United Arab Emirates (UAE).²⁷⁴ Britain removed its bases from Bahrain and Sharjah. The tribal forces controlled by Britain earlier became the bases of the civil and military forces of the new states in the Gulf. Britain continued to “advise” them. Britain, however, retained its base in Masirah and also a small military presence in Oman because of its active involvement in anti-insurgency operations there. Britain had withdrawn but the residual presence still gave it a substantial say in Oman and the Arab sheikhdoms.

The British withdrawal evoked a wide-spectrum reaction in the world. The USA felt that it was not adequately consulted. It, however, showed no inclination to step in.²⁷⁵ In fact the US Under Secretary of State, Eugene Rostow, in an interview to the *Voice of America* on 19 January 1968, was reported to have said that the USA relied upon a security system for the Gulf, after the British withdrawal, that would involve Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.²⁷⁶ Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, as would have been anticipated, refused to join such a pact.²⁷⁷ Despite the suggestions offered by some experts²⁷⁸ that the USA should step in to fill the so-called vacuum before the USSR does so, the USA did not get directly involved in the defence of the

²⁷⁴The seven sheikhdoms that joined to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaima, Sharjah and Umm al-Raywayn.

²⁷⁵The US spokesman said that the USA has no intention of filling the vacuum but would instead depend upon local security arrangements among the region's powers to replace the British, *New York Times*, 17 January 1968.

²⁷⁶*Dawn* (Karachi), 20 January 1968 and *Economist*, 226 (6492), 27 January 1968, 31.

²⁷⁷*The Times* (London), 23 January 1968, 31.

²⁷⁸Cottrell, n. 121, 41.

area. It, however, retained its naval presence in Bahrain (MID-EASTFOR), and to that purpose leased a portion of the ex-British naval base from Bahrain.

The response from local powers was also by and large negative. Except for Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan of Abu Dhabi who offered to underwrite the cost of the British presence if Britain agreed to retain its military presence in the Gulf,²⁷⁹ no other senior politician in the area openly advocated the desire to have the British continue to play their traditional role in the Gulf. Kuwait demanded on 12 July 1970 that Britain should withdraw its troops from the Gulf by the end of 1971, as originally planned. Saudi Arabia and Iran too made a similar statement on 14 July 1970. Iraq had always insisted upon total British withdrawal.

Iran not only welcomed the British decision to withdraw from the Gulf but also desired to fill the vacuum that would be created by the speedy British withdrawal.²⁸⁰ It also did not want any other foreign power to step into Britain's shoes.²⁸¹ The British decision dovetailed with Iran's Gulf policy. It helped Iran to emerge as the dominant regional power—militarily, politically, even economically. Thus it had no desire either to see Britain retain its position in any form, or other powers, like the USA or the USSR, to step in. Their presence would have pre-empted Iran's pre-eminence. Also, a continued British presence would have hindered Iran's policy *vis-a-vis* Bahrain or the three small islands in the Gulf. Thus it was imperative for Iran that Britain leave immediately and no other outside power step in.

Iranian diplomacy in the sixties was geared to fulfil its aspirations in the Gulf. It pursued an astute policy that after an initial setback got the USA once again firmly committed to fully supporting Iran. The UK actively helped her to protect and promote the Iranian interests on the eve of the British departure

²⁷⁹*The Times* (London), estimated the cost to be about \$12 million in foreign exchange. Sheikh Zaid's offer was rejected, rather brusquely, by Mr Healey on 22 January 1968 in a TV interview. *New York Times*, 22-3 January 1968.

²⁸⁰Schulz, Ann T., "Leadership role for Iran in the Persian Gulf"? *Current History*, 62 (365), January 1972, 25.

²⁸¹Press interviews, Hoveyda, 27 January 1968, *Ittilaat Havai*, 28 January 1968, quoted in Ramazani, n. 13, 410.

from the Gulf. Iran, after 1962, had developed close political and economic contacts with the USSR that allowed her to neutralize the possible Soviet support to Iraq in the Gulf. During the last days of the British withdrawal Iran even recognized China to prevent her from aligning with anti-Iranian forces in the Gulf. The major Arab powers, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in the Gulf and Egypt outside, were cultivated as friends. Conscious efforts were made to cultivate India despite the adverse repercussions of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965. Thus by the time the British withdrew from the Gulf, Iraq, the main rival of Iran, had been diplomatically isolated and to a large extent neutralized. Iran had achieved it while working against heavy odds. It was indeed a tribute to her diplomacy.

Relations between Iran and the USA had deteriorated during the Kennedy administration. The process was reversed when Johnson became the US President. During the presidency of Johnson and subsequently of Nixon, the friendly relations between the two countries were put on a close personal basis, which was reiterated time and again in several speeches and joint statements.²⁸² Top leaders like the Shah and Nixon also exchanged visits during this period. As a result of these visits and the warm personal relations between the top elite of the two countries, not only was Iran strengthened politically *vis-a-vis* the Arab states in the area including Saudi Arabia, but also the bottlenecks regarding the delivery of sophisticated arms as well as the economic aspects of arms trade were removed. Iran once again began to receive the same type of priority treatment that it used to get during the Eisenhower Administration.

Iran's relations with the USSR too improved greatly during this period. It represented a positive move by Iran, partly in order to foster Soviet stakes in Iran as a counter against Moscow ex-

²⁸² "Personal" relations between the Shah of Iran and President Johnson and President Nixon of the USA were stressed in several documents. The joint statement issued on 12 June 1968 during the Shah's "personal" visit to the USA stressed it. *Department of State Bulletin*, 59 (1514), 1 July 1968, 15. That sentiment was reiterated during Premier Amir Abbas Hoveyda's official visit to Washington, *ibid.*, 59 (1539), 23 December 1968, 662; during the Shah's US visit in October 1969, *ibid.*, 61 (1585), 10 November 1969, 396-400, and during Nixon's Iran visit in May 1972, *ibid.*, 66 (1722), 26 June 1972, 906.

panding relations with Baghdad.²⁸³ Soon the relations between the two countries improved greatly. Trade improved. A big natural gas deal was finalized. Iran received a steel-mill, even arms, from the USSR. Attempts were also made to upgrade bilateral relations from the impersonal level to a more personal level, an important aspect of the Shah's diplomacy. Series of high-level visits were exchanged. President Leonid Brezhnev came to Iran in November 1963. The Shah visited the USSR in June 1965. Kosygin returned the visit in April 1968 on the eve of the Soviet naval deployment in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. In October 1970, the Shah and Podgorny opened the gas pipeline near the border between the two countries. Relations were gradually strengthened to such an extent that even a renewed Russian interest in Iraq after 1968 could not put the clock back as far as Iran was concerned.

One possible reason that brought the USSR closer to Iran during the sixties was the gradual deterioration in Iraq-USSR relations. The process had already started during the days of Premier Qassem, when he began to impose curbs on the Iraqi communists. But the *Baath coup d'état* of February 1963 can be termed as the crucial turning point in Soviet-Iraqi relations that indirectly benefited Iran. Soviet newspapers like *Pravda* began to criticize the anti-Kurdish policy of the new *Baath* regime in Baghdad.²⁸⁴ In June 1963 Khrushchev personally intervened through a letter dated 19 June 1963 on behalf of three Iraqi women (communists) who were sentenced to death.²⁸⁵ The Iraqis naturally did not appreciate it.²⁸⁶ The *Economist* reported that the Soviets had even warned Iraq not to use Soviet arms against the Kurds. Soviet-Iraqi relations had deteriorated to such an extent that the *Voice of the Iraqi People's Radio*, allegedly broadcasting from East Germany in Arabic and Kurdish, attacked the *Baath* regime of Iraq.²⁸⁷

²⁸³Ramazani, n. 13, 354.

²⁸⁴*Pravda*, 6 May 1963 in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 25 May 1963, 27 and *Pravda*, 12 June 1963, *ibid.*, 25 (24), 10 July 1963, 26.

²⁸⁵*Pravda*, 20 June 1963, *ibid.*, 25 (25), 17 July 1963, 21. It was reported that twenty Iraqi communists were executed by the new regime.

²⁸⁶*Economist*, 207 (6253), 29 June 1963, 1344.

²⁸⁷Wheeler, Geoffrey, "Soviet interests in Iran, Iraq and Turkey", *World Today*, 25 (5), May 1968, 200.

The result of this development was that gradually the supply of Soviet military equipment to Iraq came to a halt and Iraq once again had to turn to its traditional source, Britain, for arms, especially the counter-insurgency (COIN) aircraft and armoured cars that were needed for military operations against the Kurds. This in turn helped Iran to gradually rectify, through her accelerated arms acquisition programme, the military imbalance *vis-a-vis* Iraq. The changed relationship between Iraq and the USSR also enabled Iran to draw the USSR closer to it, with the result that though the July 1968 coup in Iraq brought a more radical and pro-USSR regime to power in Baghdad, the USSR had developed enough stakes in Iran-USSR friendly relations that it even went out of its way to mediate on behalf of Iran in the Iran-Iraq dispute in 1969-70.²⁸⁸

Iran also did its best to neutralize opposition from all sides. It shows an interesting deviation from its earlier policy of balancing one power against another. Under the new policy the Shah was trying to neutralize opposition by an all-round detente with as many potential enemies as possible. Iran's China policy is a good illustration of this tactic. Iran had not recognized the Peking regime. But gradually Iran's policy began to change. In September 1969 the Shah said that though Iran did not recognize the People's Republic of China, yet it must be admitted into the United Nations.²⁸⁹ The question of recognition was taken up during the visit of the Shah's sisters to China in April 1971. On 17 August 1971 Iran recognized the Peking regime as the sole legal Government of China. By befriending China Iran had not only neutralized the possible Chinese support to Iraq but also to insurgency movements in Dhofar and even in Iran. Iranian action was also in line with the American policy. The USA too was beginning to change its China policy.

Iran also normalized its relations with India. Despite the political attitude of Iran *vis-a-vis* the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, Iran went ahead and concluded the major deal about the oil refinery in Madras. The refinery was to be supplied with Iranian

²⁸⁸ Interview with the Shah, *Kayhan International*, 29 January 1972. The Shah did not refute the hint thrown by the interviewer that the USSR had put pressure upon Iraq so as to put a halt to the influx of refugees from Iraq in 1969-70. Quoted in Ramazani, n. 2, 146.

²⁸⁹ *Kayhan International*, 6 September 1969.

crude. Also, Iran was to give \$30 million towards the foreign exchange requirement of the cost of construction of that refinery. In 1968, the Shah visited India. The trip strengthened Indo-Iranian relations. Iran also got India's assurance that the vacuum that might be created in the Gulf due to British departure ought to be filled by the local powers themselves.

Iran did not neglect to neutralize possible opposition in the Arab World. Egypt had been its old enemy. Despite the setback of 1967 Nasser was still a force to be reckoned with. The Shah set about neutralizing him. Two factors helped in this detente: the slightly pro-Arab stand of Iran after the 1967 war and the Cairo-Baghdad rivalry especially after 1968. Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers Proposals in 1970 was violently criticized by the "radical" regime in Baghdad. Thus, following three months of hard bargaining, diplomatic relations between Cairo and Tehran were finally established in August 1970. Relations improved significantly following Sadat's rule in Egypt after Nasser's death. Egypt was finally neutralized, as became clear from its very mild reaction to the question of Iran's occupation of the three islands in the Gulf on the eve of the British departure.

Saudi-Iranian relations too had suffered a temporary setback in 1968 on the question of Iranian claims to Bahrain. But the soothing touches of Anglo-American diplomacy healed the rift between the twin pillars of western presence in the Gulf. The Saudi-Iranian solidarity was reflected in the statement by the Saudi Foreign Minister, Omar Saqaf, during his visit to Iran in April 1971. He said that Saudi Arabia and Iran had agreed to coordinate their policies on joint actions to be taken in the Gulf. The result of this alliance was that the Iraqi strategy of creating an Arab defence alliance, that was declared by President Bakr in a broadcast on 16 July 1970, was cold-shouldered by these Arab littoral states. Iran had finally isolated Iraq in the neighbouring areas and even *vis-a-vis* the super-powers.

Iran not only moved diplomatically to create an international environment favourable to its Gulf policy but also proceeded with concrete moves to reach the goals that would help her to emerge as the dominant power in the Gulf. But before it could acquire that position it had to seek legitimacy even as a Gulf power because the controversy whether the Gulf was Arab or Persian had already emerged as a major issue confronting Iran.

Iran had created an international environment that buttressed Iranian diplomacy *vis-a-vis* the Arab claims. But diplomacy had to be converted into hard realities. Iranian moves to get her position accepted in the Gulf, whether through bilateral agreements like the continental-shelf treaties, multilateral pacts dealing with Gulf security, recognition of the newly formed UAE, claims over the islands in the Gulf, her pre-eminent role as the guardian of the sea-lanes or its anti-insurgency role in the area, must also be seen as moves to seek legitimacy as a Gulf power *per se*. Thus concrete issues like continental-self agreements, the Bahrain issue and the dispute over the three islands in the Gulf become very important issues in Iran's Gulf policy.

The question of state control over the continental shelf assumed importance after it became feasible to exploit its mineral resources, especially oil. The proclamation of President Truman on 28 September 1945, staking the US claims to its continental shelf, was a signal to others to do the same. The Persian Gulf, like the Gulf of Mexico, was shallow and rich in oil resources. Also many American oil companies had either acquired or hoped to acquire concessions in that area. Hence the littoral states like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the Trucial Coast sheikhdoms issued proclamations in 1949 in the light of the Truman proclamation of 1945.²⁹⁰ Iran too put up a draft legislation to that effect but it could be passed as a law only in 1955.²⁹¹

The fifties saw several conflicting boundary disputes among the Gulf states because they had granted oil concessions on the continental shelf without even caring to delimit their maritime boundaries. Very often these concessions overlapped. Three Arab states lodged protests with Iran on this issue—Iraq, May 1973; Kuwait, June 1963 and Saudi Arabia, June 1963.²⁹² These protests, coupled with the Arab stand that the "Arab" Gulf belonged exclusively to the Arabs, must have unsettled the Iranians at that time. Hence there was an urgency to get Iranian claim to the Gulf recognized but without Iran losing its

²⁹⁰Albaharna, Hossein M., *The Arabian Gulf States: Their Legal and Political States and their International Problems*, Librairie du Liban Beirut, 2nd Revised Edition, 1975, 278.

²⁹¹Ibid., 279.

²⁹²Ibid., 292-93.

legal advantages. Negotiations were initiated with Saudi Arabia on the question of delimiting the continental shelf. An agreement was reached in December 1965 but the final signing of the treaty was delayed. The final version, which gave an added advantage to Iran, was signed on 24 October 1968. The new agreement, by reckoning the mileage from Kharg island rather than from the mainland, permitted Iran to have possessions over the newly discovered oil fields in that area.²⁹³ Iran also obtained the Saudi recognition of her sovereignty over one island in the middle of the Gulf, the Island of Farasiyah.

Once the ice had been broken other agreements followed: Iran and Qatar, September 1969; Iran and Bahrain, June 1971; Iran and Oman, July 1974; and Iran and the UAE, August 1974. But Iran has not been able to sign an agreement with Kuwait and Iraq. Iraq had already protested to Iran on this question in 1963. It also effectively blocked any agreement between Iran and Kuwait by lodging its protest on 25 February 1968.²⁹⁴ Iran and Kuwait made another abortive attempt to conclude an agreement during the visit of the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ardeshir Zahedi, to Kuwait in July 1970. But the Iraqi Foreign Ministry's official spokesman said on 11 July 1970 that Baghdad would not recognize any agreement on the demarcation of the Gulf without a formal Iraqi approval. The question of delimiting the continental shelf in the northern part of the Gulf is interlinked with Iraqi claims over certain Kuwaiti territory, especially the islands of Bubian and Warba and the legal question of the equitable distribution of natural resources. The median-line principle and the recognized international land boundaries put constraints on Iraqi demands on the continental shelf in the Gulf. This issue has not been resolved as yet despite the Iraq-Iran detente since 1975.

The policy pursued by Iran to stake her claims to the continental shelf was also extended to the disputed islands in the Gulf. Iranian sovereignty over some of them, like over Farasiyah, was settled when Iran negotiated the continental shelf agreements. But Iranian claims over four islands were hotly contested by the Arabs and proved a challenge to Iranian diplomacy. Iran's

²⁹³Schulz, n. 128, 29.

²⁹⁴*Middle East Journal*, 22 (3), Summer 1968, 329 (Chronology).

"island diplomacy" was like mixing as alad: a right combination of oil and vinegar; oil being sweet reasonableness on Bahrain and Abu Musa and vinegar being the forceable occupation of the two Tumb islands. These islands were important to Iran in pursuing a forward policy in the Gulf because they not only allowed Iran to control and exploit possible oil-bearing areas in the Gulf but also gave her control over strategic points on the sea-lanes in the Gulf.

The Persians have been claiming Bahrain as a part of their empire since the days of Nadir Shah. In the twentieth century Reza Khan pushed Iran's claims very vigorously through diplomatic channels.²⁹⁵ Nothing much came out of it thanks to the dominant British position in the Gulf at that time. But Iran continued to claim control over Bahrain and called it its 14th province. A bill to that effect was passed in the *Majlis* on 12 November 1957.²⁹⁶ On 16 November, Syria denounced the Iranian move and called Bahrain a part of the Arab nation.²⁹⁷ The Shah in a press conference in 1960 said that Bahrain was a part of Iran. "Our policy is surely irrevocable. We will take advantage of the first opportunity to ensure the realization of this ancient right which we hold in full faith."²⁹⁸ The opportunity presented itself on the eve of the British East of Suez policy.

Iran renewed its claims to Bahrain after the British declaration of withdrawal from the East of Suez. The Shah summed up the Iranian case as follows. He said that Britain took away Bahrain 150 years ago. Now, when Great Britain was leaving, "We cannot accept the fact that an island detached by Great

²⁹⁵The historical background of this dispute has been discussed in detail by several scholars. Pro-Arab stand is taken by the following: Hussein M. Albaharna, n. 138, 167-95; Majid Khaduri, "Iran's claim to the sovereignty of Bahrain", *American Journal of International Law*, 45 (4), October 1951, 631-47, and J.B. Ketty, "The Persian claim to Bahrain", *International Affairs*, 33 (1), January 1957, 51-70. The Iranian position is ably explained by Ramazani, n. 3, 248-50 and Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Bahrain Islands, A Legal and Diplomatic Study of the British Iranian Controversy*, New York, 1955.

²⁹⁶Ramazani, n. 13, 398.

²⁹⁷Ibid.

²⁹⁸Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Press Department, *Iran's Foreign Policy* (no place, no date), 101.

Britain from our country should be handed over to others at our expense.”²⁹⁹ Iran refused to accept the newly planned Federation of Gulf Sheikdoms unless the Bahrain issue was resolved to its satisfaction. On 8 July 1968, the Iranian Foreign Minister said that the creation of a so-called Confederation of Persian Gulf Emirates embracing the Bahrain islands was absolutely unacceptable to Iran.³⁰⁰ The Bahrain issue even created a temporary rift between two friendly pro-western regional powers: Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia offered to the visiting Sheikh of Bahrain what the Iranians thought was a “royal” welcome. The Shah, to show his displeasure, cancelled his proposed visit to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and Iran were the twin pillars of western diplomacy in the Gulf and it was imperative that they should cooperate. A detente was reached between them by mid-1968. Also it was necessary to evolve a face-saving formula on Bahrain that would suit the Arabs and also the Shah. Secret talks between Bahraini and Iranian officials were held in Switzerland but no solution could be reached till the parties concerned hit upon the formula of mediation by the UN Secretary General. Official cognizance of the new relationship was taken by the Shah who, in his press conference in Delhi on 4 January 1969, said that Iran would not resort to force for the acquisition of territory against the will of its people.³⁰¹

The final drama on the Bahrain issue began when the UN Secretary General, on 28 March 1970, announced his acceptance to exercise his good offices. Vittorio Winspeare Guicciardi, Under Secretary General and Director General of the UN Office at Geneva, was appointed as his personal representative. Guicciardi reached Bahrain on 30 March and met a large cross-section of people in Bahrain. After his twenty-day stay in Bahrain he submitted a thirteen-page report to the Secretary General which was subsequently submitted to the Security Council for its consideration on 11 May 1970. The formula, suggesting the creation of an independent state of Bahrain, was unanimously accepted by the Security Council.³⁰² (Security

²⁹⁹Ibid., 103.

³⁰⁰Ramazani, n. 2, 47-8.

³⁰¹*Iran's Foreign Policy*, n. 146, 102-3.

³⁰²Albaharna, Hussein, “Fact-finding mission of the United Nations

Council Resolution 278 of 11 May 1970.) All the parties to the dispute also accepted it. There was some opposition to it in Iran which was led by Mohsen Pezeshkpur but it was quickly silenced. Iran was the first state to recognize the newly created state of Bahrain, which it did on 14 August 1971. It was suggested by some that Iran, by following a policy of sweet reasonableness on the Bahrain issue, had assured British and Arab support on the Iranian claims to three small islands in the Gulf: Abu Musa and the two Tumb islands.³⁰³ Ramazani, however, discounts it and argues that if that were the case there would have been no need for "the secret, protracted Anglo-Iranian negotiations over the three islands after the Bahrain settlement . . .".³⁰⁴

While Iran modified its stand on Bahrain it refused to alter it on the question of Iranian sovereignty over the three small islands in the Gulf: Abu Musa, Little Tumb and Bigger Tumb. Like Bahrain, these three islands were also claimed on the basis of historical links. Iran reiterated its claims on these islands after the British declaration of 1968 on the proposed withdrawal from the Gulf. Iran maintained its claims despite strong Arab protests. The Iranian Foreign Minister, in a strongly worded statement on 27 December 1970, said that Iran would never abandon its legal claims to sovereignty over these islands, and that there would be no peace and security in the Gulf unless these rights were completely recognized.³⁰⁵ Iran also claimed these islands by using the argument that unless Iran controlled them they would pose a threat to its security. The bazooka attack by a small speedboat on an oil tanker (taking Iranian oil to Israel) near the island of Perim in Bab al-Mandeb in June 1971, was used as an illustration of such a potential threat.³⁰⁶

The Shah of Iran, in an interview on 15 February 1971, threatened to use force if those islands were not handed over to

Secretary General and the settlement of the Bahrain-Iran dispute, May 1970", *International Comparative Law Quarterly*, 22 (3), July, 545-48.

³⁰³Chubin and Zabih, n. 15, 222.

³⁰⁴Ramazani, n. 2, 57.

³⁰⁵*The Times* (London), 29 December 1970.

³⁰⁶Chubin and Zabih, n. 15, 223.

him peacefully.³⁰⁷ He reiterated his threat in June in his interview to the *Blitz* (Bombay)³⁰⁸ and in October 1971 to *Le Figaro*. He also put the onus of returning those islands on Britain. He said that when the British came to the Gulf, Iran was weak and hence Britain occupied those islands to combat piracy. But they always belonged to Iran,³⁰⁹ and Britain could not hand them over to someone else. He added, "I do not intend to preside over the action of my country. . . ."³¹⁰ The Shah said that his father had tried to get back those islands from Britain but his attempts were foiled by British warships. He added:

But things have changed now. I have a fleet of warships, Phantom warplanes and brigades of parachutes. I could defy Great Britain and militarily occupy the islands. That would make me very popular and earn me headlines in the newspapers all over the world. But that would not be convenient. I prefer to talk with the English. When they will have left, if necessary, I will send a company of marines to the islands.

It is interesting to note that while giving a warning to the Arabs the Shah was making the British the scapegoats of his Gulf diplomacy. It is also possible that since the British were largely responsible for the humiliating deposition of his father in 1941, the son was, in a way, seeking to avenge the family honour—a debt that has to be settled, in the east.

Iraq was the most vocal Arab opponent of Iran's policy *vis-a-vis* the three islands in the Gulf. On 29 June 1971 the Iraqi Foreign Minister, in a statement to the Iraqi News Agency, criticized the Iranian claims on the ground that they were based upon "extinct colonist conditions." He said that Iran was endeavouring to inherit British colonialism in that Arab area. He

³⁰⁷*Kayhan International*, 20 February 1971.

³⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 24 June 1971 and *Blitz* (Bombay), 26 June 1971.

³⁰⁹The Persian government had put a claim to the two Tumb and Abu Musa islands in 1930. Even at that time, Britain had advocated leasing out these islands to Iran but Arabs did not agree to it. Burrell, R.M., "Britain, Iran and the Persian Gulf", in Derek Hopwood, ed., *The Arabian Peninsula, Society and Politics*, Totowa, New Jersey, 1972 171-73.

³¹⁰*Kayhan International*, 20 February 1971.

demanded Arab support on the basis of Arabism. The next day, President Ahmed Hasan al-Bakr of Iraq, in an address at the Baghdad University, accused Iran of serving American imperialism. Kuwait also rejected Iranian claims. After the meeting of the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers on 14 June 1971 a spokesman declared that the islands were Arab. Saudi Arabia did not take an open stand but was busy along with Britain to work out an optimum solution to the problems created by the British East of Suez policy.

There were several attempts at mediation. The Shah of Iran had threatened that he would not recognize the proposed Union of Arab Sheikhdoms unless Iran's claims on Gulf islands were recognized. Saudi Arabia sought to mediate between Iran and the sheikhdoms and it was reported that King Faisal of Saudi Arabia told the rulers of six Trucial states in Dubai that Iran had asked for their cooperation in the Gulf and that since Iran had the longest border along the Gulf, its interests could not be denied. He, however, denied that Saudi Arabia had been working out a secret formula with Iran on the future of the Gulf.³¹¹

The threat of non-recognition of the proposed federation in the Gulf was potent and acted as a strong diplomatic pressure upon the Trucial Coast sheikhdoms. Seikh Zaid of Abu Dhabi, while on a three-day visit to Iran, said on 17 May 1970 that he was confident that the Iranian government would confirm and support the formation of the federation. The Iranian government did recognize the UAE on 4 December 1971, after it had occupied the three islands, but the question of exchange of diplomatic missions was delayed till October 1972, so as to use it as a lever to neutralize unified Arab action against Iran on the question of Iran's forcible occupation of the three islands.

There were some Arab proposals on the question of the future of the three islands, as were revealed on 8 November 1971 by the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister to *Al-Nahar* of Beirut. According to him one formula envisaged the leasing of those islands to Iran for a period of 99 years, provided Iran recognized them as being Arab. The second offer was to station joint Arab and

³¹¹*News Review, West Asia*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, June 1970, 12.

Iranian forces on the islands. Both these offers were rejected by Iran.³¹²

Finally Britain decided in July 1970 to send a top negotiator, Sir Luce, to the Gulf to smoothen the final phase of the British withdrawal from the Gulf. Sir William Luce, former Governor of Aden and British Representative in the Gulf before the British East of Suez declaration, knew the area and the personalities involved and was best suited for the mission. Among other things, he was entrusted with the task of settling claims over these three disputed islands, the Buraini oasis, and Britain's future relations with the sheikhdoms, including the future of the British military presence there.

Sir William Luce visited the Trucial Coast sheikhdoms, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. He also visited Iran from 12-25 May 1971. The question of the three islands was on the top of the agenda. After Sir Luce's return a Gulf paper, *al-Khalij*, reported on 5 June 1971 that he had told the rulers of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaima that Iran would forcibly occupy three islands by the end of the year and that Britain would not come to their help at that time. He advised the rulers to negotiate with Iran, which had offered to pay compensations to these rulers for the possible loss.³¹³ The Sheikhs refused his suggestion at that time. Negotiations, however, continued.

Al-Khalij reported in early November 1971 about definite Anglo-Iranian proposals to Sharjah and Ras al-Khaima. The ruler of Sharjah reportedly told a rally in the sheikhdom on 31 October 1971 about the offer. According to him these proposals envisaged a partition of Abu Musa with the lion's share including strategic sites and deep underground water resources on the island going to Iran. The oil would be worked under Iranian laws though the oil income would be divided equally between Iran and Sharjah. Iran also promised to give Sharjah £1.5 million annually for nine years. Agreements on these lines were to be confirmed by exchange of letters through the British Foreign Office.³¹⁴ Ras al-Khaima too was offered a similar deal. According to Sheikh Saqr bin Mohammed al-Kassimi of Ras

al-Khaima, Sir Luce had conveyed to him on 31 October a proposal according to which he was asked to relinquish the two islands in return for annual payment by Iran amounting to £1.6 mn. for a period of nine years. Ras al-Khaima was also offered 49 per cent share in any oil and other mineral wealth discovered there. The ruler rejected the offer.³¹⁵ British officers in London declined to comment.

But Sir Luce persisted in his negotiations. The final round of talks were held in November 1971, following which an agreement was reached between the ruler of Sharjah and the Iranian government through the intermediary of the British government, which was the Protectorate authority till then. The agreement, reportedly reached on 28 November, was announced by Sharjah radio on 29 November 1971.³¹⁶ The ruler, in an interview published on 27 December 1971 by *Al-Ushb al-Arabia*, said that he had no alternative but to reach an agreement with Iran. He said that his emirate was too weak and all he received from other Arabs were words of advice. He reiterated his accord subsequently also and said that it was in the interest of the Arabs in the Peninsula.³¹⁷ It is reported that oil has been found in Abu Musa. Sharjah, according to the November 1971 accord, would continue to get £1.5 million annually till a period of 9 years or till its share of oil revenue reached 23 million. No agreement could be reached with the ruler of Ras al-Khaima.

The Iranian troops landed on the three islands on 30 November 1971. The landing in Abu Musa was peaceful because of the agreement signed on the eve of the landing but the Ras al-Khaima police stationed in the two Tumb islands fired at the Iranians who had gone to occupy the islands. There were casualties on both sides.³¹⁸ Britain, as expected, did nothing. The Iranian action generated a storm of protest in the Arab World and some Arab states raised the question before the Arab League and the UN.

Apart from a few hostile acts like demonstrations and burning of Iranian banks and business houses in Ras al-Khaima, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah there was no mass upsurge in the Arab

³¹⁵ Ibid., 3 November 1971.

³¹⁶ Ramazani, n. 2, Appendix C, 140.

³¹⁷ *Kayhan International*, 14 June 1973.

³¹⁸ Three killed and one wounded on the Iranian side and four killed and five wounded on the Arab side.

World over the Iranian action. Official protest can also be divided into three categories: hostile like the stand taken by Ras al-Khaima, Iraq and Libya, moderate like Kuwait, and conciliatory on the side of Iran, as demonstrated by the Egyptian and Saudi Arabian position in the Arab League and the United Nations.

Ras al-Khaima protested to Britain against the forcible occupation of the Tumbs by the Iranian troops on 30 November. It also declined to join the newly formed United Arab Emirates (UAE). It wanted the UAE to boycott Iran and Britain politically, economically and culturally and to expel the Iranian forces from the Arab territories of the three islands. Its conditions were ignored and Ras al-Khaima, one of the poorest of the sheikhdoms, joined the UAE in February 1972. Among the Arab states, Iraq and Libya took a strong stand. Iraq broke off diplomatic relations with Iran and Britain. It accused both those powers of colluding in this matter. The British Foreign Office rejected the Iraqi charge. Iraq also nationalized the British oil interests and expelled thousands of Iranians from Iraq. The Libyan action was similar to that of Iraq except that there were no Iranians to be expelled. It was also reported that Libya was even contemplating sending guerrillas to Ras al-Khaima to initiate anti-Iranian operations.³¹⁹

The stand taken by Kuwait was that of a public denunciation but official acceptance of the *fait accompli*. The National Assembly of Kuwait denounced the Iranian occupation of the three islands. One of the members even went to the extent of declaring the large Iranian community in Kuwait as a fifth column. But the Kuwait government took a more moderate stand. The Kuwaiti Minister of State for the Council of Ministerial Affairs, in a statement on 28 January 1972, tried to explain why Kuwait did not sever diplomatic relations with Iran as demanded by some Kuwaitis. He said that it was no longer a way to recover usurped Arab rights.³²⁰

Egypt took a still moderate stand. The Egyptian press, as early as October 1971, had argued that the three islands were nothing but pieces of rock that did not deserve a confrontation with Iran and argued that the Arabs ought to concentrate their energies

³¹⁹ *Egyptian Gazette*, 2 December 1971.

³²⁰ *The Arab World*, 28 January 1972.

on their struggle against Israel.³²¹ The official Egyptian position was outlined on 1 December 1971 by Tahsin Bashir, the official spokesman of the government. He said that Britain was responsible for the protection of the Arab islands in the Gulf against any foreign attack. As far as Iran was concerned, he said that Egypt considered Iran's unilateral action to change the *status quo* of the islands as an act incompatible with the UN Charter and the historical friendship between the Arab and the Iranian people. Egypt called on Iran to withdraw its troops from the islands and to enter into negotiations for an urgent peaceful solution.³²² The Saudi reaction was the most mild one. "Even the landing of Iranian troops on the three islands did not seem to ruffle irreparably the basic friendly relations between Tehran and Riyadh."³²³

The question was also discussed in the emergency session of the Arab League between 5-7 December 1971. Iraq suggested that the Arab states should break off diplomatic relations with Iran. It was not accepted. The League reportedly agreed upon five decisions whose contents were kept secret.³²⁴ It also requested its Secretary General to contact Iran and the Arab states involved in the problem of consultation regarding the settlement of the problem, which would preserve the friendly relations between Iran and the Arab governments. The prospects of any talks were squashed by the Shah who said that Iran's action was a purely internal matter that did not concern anyone else.³²⁵ The Political Committee of the Arab League continued its diplomatic mediation. The Secretary-General informed the committee that King Faisal was mediating with Iran to solve the problem.³²⁶

The question was taken to the United Nations on 3 December by four radical Arab states: Algeria, Iraq, Libya and South Yemen. The Security Council discussed the question on 9 December in an emergency meeting. Iraq took the lead in attacking Iran and Britain. It called the occupation of the three islands

³²¹*News Review, West Asia*, n. 159, November 1971, 13.

³²²*Egyptian Gazette*, 2 December 1971.

³²³Ramazani, n. 2, 91.

³²⁴*Ibid.*, 66.

³²⁵*Kayhan International*, 29 January 1972.

³²⁶*Egyptian Gazette*, 14 March 1972.

as "blatant aggression against the Arab people everywhere."³²⁷ Iraq also accused Britain of not fulfilling its obligations. It argued that the sheikhdoms were British protectorates when the agreement with Sharjah was signed. Britain was legally responsible for that agreement. Also since Britain was the protecting power at the time of the Iranian occupation, she should have legally prevented the interests of Ras al-Khaima, even by using force if necessary.³²⁸ The British representative replied that Britain could not be expected to fulfil its obligations at that late stage.

The Iranian representative argued that though it was an internal matter he would inform the Security Council about the Iranian position. After claiming that these islands were Iranian territory, he said that Iran had already signed an agreement with Sharjah about Abu Musa. As regards the two Tumb islands he said that Iran had tried to solve the problem through negotiations but having failed to reach a settlement, it had no alternative but to exercise its sovereign rights in an area which was "always an Iranian domain and will remain Iranian."³²⁹ No action was taken at that meeting of the Security Council and the matter was postponed on Somalia's suggestion to allow a third party negotiation. The Iranians, however, warned all outsiders from intervening in its domestic affairs.

The Arabs also tried to use an unofficial body to condemn the Iranian action. The Middle East committee of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Conference (AAPSC) passed a resolution on 14 January 1972 demanding Iranian withdrawal from the three islands. It also blamed Britain for its alleged complicity with Tehran and denounced the US for setting up bases in the Gulf. The Iranian delegation staged a walk-out when this resolution was being passed.³³⁰ The Iranian government took no official note of the AAPSC resolution.

The Iranians were lucky in one way when they occupied the three islands. It coincided with more important events that overshadowed this Arab-Irani conflict in the Gulf. It came at a time when Britain was leaving the Gulf and when the Bangladesh con-

³²⁷ Albaharna, n. 138, 340.

³²⁸ Thomas, Roy E., "Iraq and the Persian Gulf region, *Current History*, 64 (1), January 1973, 24.

³²⁹ Ramazani, n. 2, 66-7.

³³⁰ *Kayhan International*, 15 January 1972.

flict had erupted into an armed clash between India and Pakistan. It also coincided with the end of President Sadat's "year of decision" on the Suez front. The Iranian action was swift, and moderate Arab leaders helped Iran to neutralize the policy of radical Arab states. Iran can claim a legal document as the basis of its possession of Abu Musa. As regards the Tumb islands, possession is nine points in law. But the Arabs have not officially relinquished their claims over these islands and Iran's arguments of *fait accompli* to that extent are fraught with future troubles.

Many Arab states continued to denounce Iranian occupation of those islands even after 1971. A press statement issued in Baghdad and Kuwait at the end of the Iraqi foreign minister's visit to Kuwait on 3 May 1972 denounced Iranian occupation of these islands. The joint communique issued at the end of the visit of the Sudanese President to Abu Dhabi on 28 April 1972 said that the UAE and Sudan regarded these three islands as an integral part of the Arab nation. The UAE, in a letter addressed to the UN Security Council President, and signed by the UN representatives of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, North Yemen, Oman, South Yemen, Sudan, Syria and Tunisia said that three islands occupied by Iran were Arab territories and belonged to the UAE.³³¹ It was reported that Iraq, Libya and Kuwait were the active force behind this move. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Qatar and Sudan had refused to sign the letter. Tehran observers described the letter as a "pitiable moan" of anti-Iranian states in the Arab World.³³² Whether it was a moan or a roar the fact is that the issue is being kept alive.

Even the basis of Iran's occupation of Abu Musa is being questioned. The Arabs and the Iranians are putting different interpretations to the 8 November 1971 agreement between Iran and Sharjah. It is argued that Sharjah was coerced into signing it. Moreover, the agreement is rather ambiguous on the question of sovereignty over the island despite the fact that Iranian troops could occupy parts of the island and the Iranian flag could fly over it. Even the British representative, in his statement in the Security Council on 9 December 1971, is reported to have said that under

³³¹Ibid., 22 July 1972.

³³²Ibid., 26 August 1972.

that agreement “neither party has given up its claim to the island, nor recognized the other’s claim.”³³³ This controversy was marked even in November 1971 if one compares the announcement of the Sheikh of Sharjah on 29 November and the statement of Premier Hoveyda on 30 November. According to the Sheikh of Sharjah:

Arrangements under this agreement shall not affect Sharjah’s view regarding its sovereignty over the island of Abu Musa. The Sharjah flag shall continue to be hoisted on the island. A police station and government offices shall remain on the island. Citizens on the island shall also remain under the authority and jurisdiction of the Government of Sharjah.³³⁴

The statement of Premier Hoveyda, on the other hand, said:

I deem it necessary to point out here, however, that His Imperial Majesty’s government has in no conceivable way relinquished or will relinquish its incontestable sovereignty and right of control over the whole of Abu Musa island. Thus, the presence of the local agents in parts of Abu Musa should in no way be regarded as contradictory to this policy.³³⁵

Thus the issue of the three islands is dormant but not finished. It can be a source of future Arab-Iranian confrontation if the Arabs so desire, or it can also be projected as an inter-Arab issue. Either way it is capable of posing a threat to Iran’s security in the Gulf.

It was essential that Iran, if it had to play a dominant role in the Gulf, had to project a strong military capability at least on paper. This would permit Iran to use a valuable option to buttress its diplomacy in the regional environment. It would also enable Iran to project itself as a guardian of the sea-lanes, as well as a strong regional power capable of safeguarding the “security” of the Gulf against the possible threat from insurgency and also from the threat to systemic security that might result due to sudden

³³³Chubin and Zubih, n. 15, 227.

³³⁴Ramazani, n. 2, 140.

³³⁵Ibid., 141-2.

change of regimes in the region.

Iran was anxious about the possible threats from the Dhofar movement which had started as early as 1965. In 1970, the Shah drew closer to young Sultan Qabus of Oman. The *coup d'état* in Oman had brought Oman and Iran closer after a long time. After 1972, Iranian involvement in Oman took the form of the dispatch of Iranian troops to fight against the insurgents in Dhofar. Iran also offered its support to any Arab state that felt itself threatened by another Arab state. This "forward" diplomacy could be based only upon an image of Iran as a strong and dominant regional power. Projecting a strong military capability, therefore, was an intrinsic part of Iran's diplomacy in the Gulf.

The rapid military build-up of Iran during the sixties can be attributed to five main reasons: Iraq-Iran rivalry going back to 1958, the futility of the CENTO as a military shield during the Indo-Pak war of 1965, the lessons of the surprise attack of the June 1967 war, the inevitability of the British withdrawal and, lastly, the growing Soviet presence in and around the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean. Iran had limited options in the first half of the sixties to fulfil its desired goal. The economy was still weak and the US regime under the Kennedy administration was hostile to Iran's military build-up. Things changed for the better after 1964-65. The Johnson administration was more sympathetic to Iran's demand for modern arms. Economic conditions had also improved enough for Iran to contemplate buying modern arms rather than to depend upon the old arms transferred from the US surplus stock. The British too were prepared to sell arms to Iran. Also the Iran-USSR detente not only helped Iran buy a few items from the USSR but even allowed it to use the threat to go to the USSR as a diplomatic lever to get sophisticated arms like the F-4 Phantom aircraft from the USA. The Nixon Doctrine of 1969 opened the doors of the US military-industrial complexes for Iran who could shop for anything the USA produced, even the best conventional arms that had not been introduced into the US armed forces. Thus it was not only the arms acquisition but also the fact that Iran could get anything it wanted from the west, that proved to be of great diplomatic value to Iran in furthering its interests in the Gulf.

Before analyzing Iran's military policy during this period it would be important to note that Iran had been trying to develop

a Gulf-wide military capability, especially naval capability, even before Wilson's 1968 statement. The British declaration of 1968 that Britain would withdraw its military commitments from the Gulf by 1971 only accelerated the pace of Iran's military policy that had been chalked out earlier. This continuity of Iran's military policy *vis-a-vis* the Gulf is very important if one wishes to analyse Iran's threat perception and response before the British East of Suez declaration and also following the British withdrawal after 1971. In fact, the post-1971 policy was a continuation and a logical follow-up of the policy defined in the first half of the sixties. The four-year period of 1968-71 only forced Iran to accelerate the pace of its evaluation. This becomes very clear if one analyses Iran's arms acquisition programme during this period.

Iran was worried about the military imbalance between Iran and Iraq, especially after the 1968 *coup d'état* in Iraq and the transfer of Soviet arms to Iraq. Iran was not able to match Iraqi weapons at that time because of the arms control policy of the Kennedy administration. The situation changed by 1964-65 and Iran began to place orders for new weapons. Between 1964 and 1967, *i.e.*, before Wilson's East of Suez declaration, Iran had placed orders for F-5 and F-4 planes, helicopters, C-130 transport planes, M-60 tanks and HAWK surface-to-air missiles with the USA, and one destroyer, four SAM-class frigates and about ten hovercraft with Britain.³³⁶ In other words Iran, even before 1968, was already laying the foundation of an air force and navy that would enable Iran to dominate not only the sea-lanes but also the littoral of the Gulf. Material ordered at that time began to arrive by 1968, thereby giving the impression that Iran was reacting to the British East of Suez policy and the entry of the Soviet task-force in the area. Iran enhanced its capability after 1968 by ordering two destroyers, two corvettes, helicopters and Phantoms from the USA, and Rapier SAM and about 700-800 Chieftain tanks from Britain. The end result of the arms acquisition policy was that by 1971 Iran emerged as the dominant regional military power in the Gulf. (See chart for growth of

³³⁶ "Iran: equipment ordered from Britain", *Military Review*, 47 (1), January 1967, 107. Data compiled by using sources like the *Jane's Fighting Ships* (London), *The Military Balance* (1155, London), *Arms Trade with the Third World* (SIPRI, Stockholm) etc.

	1964-65	1967-68	1971-72
Total Armed Forces	208,000 plus 300,000 gendarmarie	180 000 plus 25,000 gendarmarie	181,000 plus 40,000 gendar- merie armed with light weapons, helicopters and patrol boats \$1,023 mn.
Defence Budget (estimated)	\$195 mn.	\$480 mn.	
Army	200,000 men A few M-47 and old Sherman tanks	164,000 men 1 armoured division and 1 indep. armoured brigade with M-24 and M-47 tanks HAWK SAMS (Soviet APC and transport on order)	150,000 3 armoured divisions M-24, M-47 and M-60 tanks, armoured cars, APCs heavy guns, helicopters (700-800 Chieftan tanks on order)
Navy	1000 men 2 frigates 2 corvettes 4 minesweepers 6 patrol boats 2 landing craft	6000 1 destroyer 1 frigate 2 corvettes 6 minesweepers 3 landing craft 24 patrol vessels (4 SAAM-class frigates and 10 hovercraft on order)	900 1 destroyer 1 frigate 4 SAAM-class frigates deliver 4 corvettes 4 patrol boats 6 minesweepers 10 hovercraft 4 landing craft

Air Force	7000 men 25 F-84 G Thunderjets (But conversion to F-5 had begun)	10,000 men 3 Sqs F-86F 3 Sqs F-5 helicopter and transport planes (30 F-4 on order)	(2 destroyers on order) 22,000 2 Sqs F-4 5 Sqs F-5 20 F-86 (being phased out) 20 C-130 Several heavy helicopters like Huskie and uper Frelon (32 F-4, Rapier SAM 30 C-130 on order)

Iran's military capability.)

Not only did Iran acquire new weapons in large quantities, it also did its best to absorb them. Towards that end its links with the USA and membership of the CENTO proved very useful. Iran participated in the several joint military exercises like the *Dilawar*, *Shahbaz* and *Midlink*. *Dilawar* was a joint US-Iranian exercise conducted in the Dizful area near the *Shatt al-Arab* and the northern half of the Gulf. The US airborne brigade, operating from bases in the USA and Turkey, reportedly participated with the Iranian troops in this exercise.³³⁷ *Pravda* of 1 April 1964 denounced the USA for it and said that it was an attempt by the USA to thwart the growing Soviet-Iranian detente.³³⁸ *Pravda* had definitely missed the point because this exercise coincided with the renewed interest taken in Iran by the US administration and the orders placed by Iran for the F-5 planes. Iran had also been a regular participant in the annual CENTO naval and air exercises code-named as the *Midlink*³³⁹ and *Shahbaz*.³⁴⁰ Pakistan dissociated itself with them after 1965 but Iran continued to take advantage of these exercises to improve her military capabilities.

Iran also staged a big display of its air and naval firepower in the Gulf on 5 November 1970. The island of Bani Farur was first "bombed" and then occupied by paratroopers and airborne troops carried by transport planes. Finally hovercraft-borne troops joined in the final mopping-up operations and for the effective occupation of the island. The Shah himself watched the operations from a destroyer that led the "mock" invasion. This display of Iranian military capability was probably designed as an image projection of Iran as the dominant power in the Gulf and also to convey the readiness of Iran to translate into action its threat to use force to occupy the three islands in the Gulf. It also demonstrated Iranian capability to control the sea-lanes in the Gulf. These military preparations, therefore, prompted the Shah to declare on 15 February 1971 that Iran was ready to take Britain's place as the policeman of the Gulf. "We are the only country with the economic and military sophistication necessary

³³⁷ "Iran—Exercise Dilawar", *Military Review*, 44 (7), July 1964, 102.

³³⁸ *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 16 (23), 22 April 1964, 102.

³³⁹ "CENTO-Midlink XI", *Military Review*, 47 (4), April 1967, 24.

³⁴⁰ "CENTO-Shahbaz XIII", *ibid.*, 47 (9), September 1967, 107.

to offer the area protection," he said.³⁴¹

Thus by the end of 1971 when Britain officially withdrew from the Gulf, Iran, by its arms acquisition policy and its demonstrated independent military capability, by its links with the west, membership of the CENTO, growing detente with the USSR and China and by its friendly relationship with India and several important Arab states, had acquired such overwhelming politico-military advantages that it could not only project itself as the dominant power in the Gulf and the guardian of the sea-lanes but could also acquire the required legitimacy for its policy from all quarters except a few radical Arab states like Iraq, which were effectively neutralized. Iran's Gulf policy in the sixties was indeed a success story and became the basis of its policies in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean in the seventies.

3. THE ENCIRCLEMENT AND BEYOND: IRAN'S EXPANDING SECURITY PERIMETERS

By the end of 1971 Iran had succeeded in emerging as the dominant regional power in the Gulf despite the fact that there were seven, small and big, oil-producing Arab states in the same region. Iran's policy in the seventies was the result of the logical continuity of its earlier policies. Variables like the need to control the life-line of Iran to protect its oil wealth, to ensure the systemic continuity by opposing radicalism and insurgency in and around the Gulf, and to remain the dominant power in the region not only influenced her policy *vis-a-vis* the Gulf in the fifties and the sixties but also provided justifications and legitimacy for its policy in the seventies. Thus Iran's quest for a dominant role first in the Strait of Hormuz (Oman), then in the Arabian Sea (South Asia and the Bab al-Mandeb region), and finally in the Indian Ocean was, in essence, the logical result of her Gulf policy. It was like waves breaking out when a child drops a stone in a pond. The waves tend to reach the farthest limit. It is also true that the farther they travel the weaker they become, till they finally exhaust themselves. So was the case with Iran.

³⁴¹*News Review, West Asia*, n. 159, March 1971, 9.

The ruling elite, in pursuit of a well-defined policy, tends to utilize all possible opportunities not only to justify its policy but also to enlarge the number of options available to it. In the fifties and sixties, Iran used the threat from Arabism, radicalism, insurgency, and the question of the security of the sea-lanes as the justification for its policies. The British announcement of speedy withdrawal from East of Suez came as an extra bonus and gave Iran added options to pursue its policy that was chalked out even earlier. Similarly, in the seventies too, Iran used the old arguments of threat from Arabism, radicalism, insurgency and security of the sea-lanes, which can be termed as constant variables. In addition, it also used the shifting international environment not only to justify its policy but also to seek international support for the same.

Between 1971 and 1973, the Iranian elite propounded the thesis of "encirclement." It was suggested that Iran was being surrounded on all sides by a combination of interlocking forces hostile to Iran. The threat was projected from Afghanistan, Baluchistan, India, Dhofar, Iraq and above all from the USSR, that was present not only in the north but also in the Indian Ocean. Iran, it was argued, was surrounded by hostile forces controlled by the USSR. This thesis gave Iran an excellent justification to follow an "aggressive" political and military policy in Oman, and a tough policy *vis-a-vis* India and Iraq. It also justified Iran's arms acquisition policy. Another factor that was picked up and used by Iran was the so-called energy crisis. Experts, especially in the USA, suddenly discovered that the USA would be more and more dependent on Gulf oil in the second half of the seventies and in the eighties. It was logical to argue from it that since the USA could not rely totally upon the Arab oil-producing states because of the Arab-Israeli problem, Iran was the best bet to ensure a steady supply of oil to ward off the energy crisis. Thus, the so-called energy crisis enabled Iran to get the full backing of the USA. Iran and Israel emerged as the two reliable supporters of the USA in this region worthy of full political, economic and military support.

It must be noted that these developments preceded the October 1973 war, the subsequent use of oil as a political weapon by the Arabs, and also the price-hike of oil. The events since October 1973 not only further strengthened Iran's position *vis-*

a-vis the west but also offered Iran sufficient petro-dollars to think in terms of developing a really independent foreign and military policy by using the huge petro-dollars as the new bargaining point *vis-a-vis* the west. Iran did benefit from the October war for some time but the international environment, however, began to change after 1975, when the USA began a deliberate policy of wooing not only the oil-rich Arab states in the Gulf but also Egypt, so as to enlarge its long-term strategic options in the Middle East. Iran began to face difficulties. But the five-year period, 1970-75, was the most important period in Iran's foreign policy because it was during that period that it reached the peak of its political, economic and military ambitions.

Threat of Encirclement

By the end of 1971 the British were legally, and also in fact, out of the Gulf. Iran had emerged as the dominant Gulf power. It had attained its objectives in the Gulf. It publicly proclaimed its legitimate claims as the dominant Gulf power when Premier Hoveyda declared that Iran was strong enough to deal with any trouble in the region. He also justified Iran's arms acquisition policy by saying that the Arabs should not worry about it. "Why fear this reinforcement? The stronger we are the better for the Arabs."³⁴² Iran also transformed Abu Musa into a strong air base, reportedly with US help.³⁴³ These developments permitted Iran to control the Gulf. But the Gulf could not be controlled fully unless Iran also controlled the access to it. Thus Iran had to peep out of the Gulf and try to control not only the Strait of Hormuz and the Arabian Sea but also the littoral dominating it, *i.e.*, the northern arc from Sri Lanka to Kenya. This brought Iran into the Indian Ocean.

The north-eastern corner of the Indian Ocean was not a vacuum, despite the propaganda that the British East of Suez might lead to one. The British had already left Aden by 1968. The Soviet task-force had moved in and was spending part of its time in anchorage around the Bab al-Mandeb region. The new

³⁴² *Kayhan International*, 20 September 1971.

³⁴³ *Al-Majlis* (Kuwait), 29 July 1972, quoted in *Baghdad Observer*, 31 July 1972.

Anglo-American base at Diego Garcia was already talking shape. There was a small US naval base in Bahrain whose capability was being upgraded by substituting new and better ships for the old and obsolete vessels that were stationed there before. The US task-force was cruising the area periodically and participating in annual CENTO naval exercises called the *Midlink*. Also, regional powers like India and Pakistan had already evolved as medium-level naval powers.

Iranian expansion beyond the Gulf into the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, though the logical extension of its Gulf policy, had to face the inevitable resistance from forces that had already established themselves in the area. Iran used the possibility of resistance in future from these established forces—especially from the USSR and possibly from India—as a potential source of threat to Iranian security, and began to establish a hypothesis that might legitimize her subsequent moves. The theory of encirclement of Iran³⁴⁴ was propounded to give Iran a justification to develop options that might strengthen her policy to emerge as a major regional power in the Arabian Sea and even in the Indian Ocean.

The age-old fear of Russia was revived more forcefully. "With the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean on the increase, Iran feared that it might have to face Russia for the first time in history in the south as well as in the north, if the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean were to be extended into the Persian Gulf."³⁴⁵ Over and above this Russian threat from the north and the south, it was also alleged by some scholars that Russia was using Iraq and India to encircle Iran. Iraq was an old rival of Iran and the 1972 treaty of friendship between Iraq and the USSR was projected as a part of that encirclement. It was also not difficult to link the Dhofar movement with Iraq and the USSR. But projecting India as a threat to Iran's security was a new feature.³⁴⁶ Developments like the Indo-Soviet Treaty of

³⁴⁴Ghadimipour, Fatemeh, "Les relations regionales de l' Iran avec les pays non-Arabs", *Aspects de la Politique Etrangere de l' Iran et de la France*, Universite de Teheran, October 1976, 174.

³⁴⁵Ramazani, R.K., *Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-1973*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1975, 429-30.

³⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 437, and R.M. Burrell and A.J. Cottrell, "Iran and her neighbouring states, security and subversion", *Iran, Afghanistan and*

1971, followed by the Bangladesh war and the revolt in Baluchistan, Sindh and Pakhtoonistan against the discredited Pakistan regime, and the July 1973 *coup d'état* in Afghanistan³⁴⁷ were linked with the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean, the Dhofar movement and the Iraqi threat, to project a fairly convincing scenario for the "encirclement" theory. Most of these variables, including the Indo-Pakistani rivalry in South Asia and the growing friendship between India and the USSR, had been present even earlier. But it was the way they were linked up, and their linkage highlighted,³⁴⁸ that projected the Iranian capability for controlled dissemination of propaganda so as to justify a certain course of action.

The theory of encirclement rested upon the hypothesis that India was prepared to link up with Iraq and the USSR in their alleged front against Iran. Circumstances like the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971, the Bangladesh war, the threat of disintegration of Pakistan from within, growing Indo-Iraqi ties etc., did strengthen this hypothesis for those who wanted to believe in it or to use it for projecting a certain policy based upon a given threat perception. It is interesting that those who propounded this hypothesis forgot that between 1962 and 1972 Pakistan, a close friend and ally of Iran, was not only the closest ally of China but had also sought a close relationship with the USSR. China and the USSR were following a policy towards Iran that could not be termed as friendly. But Pakistani policies were ignored and the Pak-Iran friendship continued. India's friendly ties with Iran were, however, ignored and India was projected as a power that was working actively against Iranian security. Those who proposed this hypothesis forgot the history of Indo-Iranian relations since India's independence and the geopolitical compulsions that force these two powers to be friendly. The result was that after a very short time, even those who were projecting India as a threat to Iran began to change their tune. Also since the encirclement theory hinged around Indo-Iranian rivalry, the theory itself

Pakistan: Tensions and Dilemmas, Washington Papers, vol. ii, no. 20, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 1974, 3.

³⁴⁷Chubin, Shahram, "Iran between the Arab West and the Asian East", *Survival*, 16(4), July-August 1974, 175-6.

³⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 177.

had to be discarded by 1974.

Iran pursued a policy in South Asia that endeavoured to neutralize conflicts there so that they could not adversely influence Iranian security. Towards that end Iran not only tried to maintain friendly relations with all the South Asian states but also attempted to mediate between India and Pakistan, and Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Shah offered to mediate on the Pakhtoonistan conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan during his visit to Pakistan in the first week of July 1962. The matter was taken up further when he visited Afghanistan and Pakistan during the last week of July. But efforts proved to be abortive. It was during this period that the idea of an Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan confederation was mooted by the Shah. The Shah also offered to mediate between India and Pakistan on the controversial Kashmir question. He made that offer during a press conference in New Delhi on 4 January 1969. Though his offers of mediation proved abortive, they go to prove the extent of a friendly image he had been able to build in the subcontinent, despite Iran's membership of the CENTO and open support for Pakistan on several occasions.

The Shah's policy towards India and Pakistan is an interesting example of tight-rope walking, using CENTO membership of Pakistan and the growing economic links with India as the two ends of the balancing pole. The Shah visited India in February 1956 soon after joining the Baghdad Pact. Ancient Indo-Iranian relations going beyond the Islamic period were stressed. Prime Minister Nehru and President Radhakrishnan visited Iran in 1959 and 1963 respectively. Indo-Iranian relations suffered a partial setback in 1965 due to Iran's open support to Pakistan during the Indo-Pak war of 1965. But the Shah was reacting more violently to the inability of the CENTO and the USA to support their ally than to India's fighting with Pakistan. In fact the Indian performance, despite its limited military capability, might have even prompted Iran to maintain its ties with India. It is interesting to note that despite the Iranian stand during the 1965 war, the Indo-Iranian negotiations on the Madras Oil Refinery were successfully concluded and an agreement was signed, providing not only for a continued supply of Iranian crude for that refinery but also \$30 million in hard currency for the construction of that refinery.

Indo-Iranian relations continued to improve. After 1968 Iran needed India's diplomatic support in its Gulf policy. That was one reason for the Shah's visit in January 1969. The joint communique issued at the end of the visit reaffirmed that the preservation of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf was the exclusive responsibility of the littoral states and there should be no interference by outside powers. This helped Iran in getting India's endorsement of Iran's Gulf policies.³⁴⁹ That visit also helped to lay down the infrastructure of economic cooperation between the two countries that promised close ties between them. These developments led the Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi, to comment to Amir Taheri of *Kayhan* on 17 March 1971, "How could we be uninterested in India? It is the second biggest country in Asia, and we have benefited from our trade with it."³⁵⁰

From the strategic angle too Iran could not afford to antagonize India. By 1971 Iran was already looking beyond the Gulf and was seeking to evolve an Indian Ocean strategy. According to Amirsadeghi, "Iran needs the active cooperation of India if she is going to formulate a viable Indian Ocean policy for the foreseeable future, but any hope for such a cooperation would be destroyed in the event of Iran actively supporting the Pakistanis if war were to break out between India and Pakistan."³⁵¹ According to the same author Iran's strategy ought to endeavour to establish some form of cooperation between India and Pakistan and to ensure that Iran could enjoy active military cooperation with both, "without openly alienating either India or Pakistan."³⁵² The suggestion was excellent but the events of the 1971 war and the encirclement thesis postponed an action on that line for about three years.

Iran also tried its best to cultivate Afghanistan's friendship.

³⁴⁹*The Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf States: New Wealth, New Power*, a summary record, the 27th Annual Conference of the Middle East Institute, Washington D.C., September 28-29, 1973 (Mimeographed), 23.

³⁵⁰Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press and Information Department, *A Decade of Dynamic Diplomacy* (no place, no date) 5.

³⁵¹Amirsadeghi, Hossein, "Iran's new outward look and authoritarian report from Tehran", *New Middle East* (35), August 1971, 10.

³⁵²*Ibid.*

Afghanistan enjoyed a unique geopolitical location, being a meeting point of four major geopolitical entities: the Middle East, South Asia, Soviet Central Asia and Chinese Central Asia. Iran needed a friendly Afghanistan as a buffer against China and the USSR. Iran feared that if Afghanistan turned "radical" it might not only threaten the north-eastern flank of Iran but also destabilize the balance of power in South Asia. Thus, Afghanistan had to be won over or neutralized at all costs.

Iran and Afghanistan are bound by historical ties. Persian is the language of the elite. "Nationalist Iranians feel a strong kinship for Afghanistan, sometimes even considering it an integral part of the Iranian homeland."³⁵³ This, of course, does not reassure the Afghans. Iran had always sought to cultivate its relations with Afghanistan within the context of a regional grouping like the Saadabad Pact of 1936. The idea was revived in 1962 when an attempt was made to unite Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan into some sort of confederation. The Shah was prepared to accept to have a joint armed force and a common foreign policy as the minimum requirement for the confederation idea.³⁵⁴ Though the idea was probably mooted during the Shah's visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan in the last week of July 1962, during his attempt at mediation on the Pakhtoon issue, it was broached for the first time in public on 6 August 1962 by Ayub Khan during his speech in Quetta.³⁵⁵

Pakistani papers like *Dawn* attacked the idea at that time.³⁵⁶ There were also other difficulties. A confederation could not be a solution to the Pakhtoon problem. It is also doubtful if the confederation idea would have found favour with the Bengalis of East Pakistan, who would then be reduced from a majority to a minority. Undoubtedly Ayub Khan wanted to float that idea to draw Iran closer to Pakistan in its confrontation with India. Iran was willing to support the idea because it was searching for options *vis-a-vis* the USSR and the Arabs, especially in the light of reduced American commitments during the Kennedy era.

³⁵³Binder, Leonard, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1962, 331.

³⁵⁴Bayne, E.A., *Persian Kingship in Transition*, New York, 1968, 211.

³⁵⁵Dupree, Louis, "A suggested Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran federation", *Middle East Journal*, 17(4), Autumn 1963, 394.

³⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 395.

Iran was aware of the implications of such a union with economically weaker partners and was even prepared to "bail them out financially too."³⁵⁷ The plan was good enough but the time was not ripe and it was dropped very soon. Yet the idea of a confederation of three so-called Aryan states showed the degree of Iranian interest in its non-Arab neighbours.

The Bangladesh crisis of 1971 had a marked influence upon Iran's South Asia policy. The crisis began in March after the refusal of President Yahya Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), to allow the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to fulfil its 6-point formula, that included granting of full internal autonomy to provinces of Pakistan under the new constitution that was to be framed. It should be remembered that the Awami League, that had secured 201 seats as against 99 seats of the PPP, had a strong base not only in East Pakistan but also in Baluchistan. By 26 March Yahya Khan proclaimed Martial Law in East Pakistan and unleashed a reign of terror. The same day, in response, the people of East Pakistan declared their independence. A provisional government was formed on 28 March. Civil war broke out. Pakistan had stationed about 70,000 troops in East Pakistan who were equipped largely with American and Chinese weapons.³⁵⁸ The troops unleashed a reign of terror, atrocities, massacre and rape that led to massive exodus of population from East Pakistan to India. There was no turning back. The people of Bangladesh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Bangladesh on 17 April 1971.

Pakistan had full support of the USA, China and several Muslim states in its repressive policies in Bangladesh. The growing seriousness of the Bangladesh crisis posed long-term internal and international implications for India. Also India was being gradually isolated. All these factors, and also the slowly but steadily evolving Indo-Soviet friendship, finally led to the signing of the friendship treaty of 1971. The 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between India and the USSR was

³⁵⁷Bayne, n. 13, 211.

³⁵⁸Sri Lanka had put serious restrictions on the use of its port and air facilities and hence the Pakistani troops were being routed via the British bases in the Maldives. Pakistan had reportedly involved the right to use these base facilities under the CENTO.

signed in New Delhi on 9 August 1971. The agreement strengthened India politically and militarily against Pakistan and China. Article IX specified:

Each High Contracting Party undertakes to abstain from providing any assistance to any third country that engages in armed conflict with the other party. In the event of either party being subjected to an attack or a threat thereof the High Contracting Parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries.

The first part of this article helped to stop the sale of Soviet arms to Pakistan. The second part not only proved useful against Pakistan but also could be used as an effective diplomatic shield against the supporters of Pakistan, including China and even the USA. Article VIII and X declared that neither party would enter into military alliance directed against the other party or enter into an obligation that may cause military damage to the other party. Under Article IV of this treaty the USSR recognized and respected India's policy of non-alignment and reaffirmed that "this policy constitutes an important factor in the maintenance of universal peace and international security and in the lessening of tensions in the world." There is no doubt that despite the criticisms levelled against it, the treaty proved very useful to India, both during the actual fighting and also in blocking the US-backed pro-Pakistani actions in the United Nations. For example, the USSR vetoed a US resolution on 12 December 1971 in the Security Council which said that the Indian troops that were on the verge of liberating Bangladesh, should be asked to pull out of Bangladesh.

Iran offered full political and diplomatic support to Pakistan. It also offered as much military help as it could within the constraints imposed by the American military aid programme. Within a month of the declaration of Martial Law in East Pakistan the Iranian Chief of Army Staff met President Yahya Khan. This was followed by a joint Iran-Pak air exercise, *Irpak*, during which a few Iranian F-5 and F-86

jets were reportedly transferred to Pakistan.³⁵⁹ It was also reported that Iranian and Turkish pilots were flying either their own transport planes like C-130 or were flying Pakistani transport aircraft and were helping Pakistan in ferrying troops from West to East Pakistan.³⁶⁰ These pilots were reportedly filling the vacancies caused by the grounding of Bengali pilots after the crackdown in East Pakistan. Their services were covered up under the auspices of a joint tactical exercise by CENTO members. All this was done before the Bangladesh war of December 1971.

Apart from offering substantial military help Iran also provided valuable political and diplomatic backing to Pakistan in its policy *vis-a-vis* Bangladesh. A spokesman of the Iranian Foreign Ministry in a statement to the Paris News Agency on 29 March 1971 said that Iran strongly advised all powers to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan.³⁶¹ Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi visited Islamabad on 26 June to deliver a special message from the Shah to Yahya Khan. Zahedi also denied that Iran intended to act as a mediator between India and Pakistan.³⁶² The joint statement, issued at the end of Yahya Khan's Iran visit on 15 September, said that Iran and Pakistan pledged continued support to each other in matters of mutual interest.³⁶³ However, on 29 September the Shah, in an interview to *Le Figaro*, said that he had offered to mediate between India and Pakistan but India had rejected his offer. He added that Iran was "one hundred per cent with Pakistan."³⁶⁴ One possible result of this total Iranian support to Pakistan was that in return Pakistan too had to show total solidarity with Iran in its Gulf policy. Thus Pakistan supported the Iranian occupation of the three islands in the Gulf on the eve of the British departure.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹The *Statesman* (New Delhi), 9 May 1971.

³⁶⁰Ibid.

³⁶¹*News Review, West Asia*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, April 1971, 5.

³⁶²Ibid., June 1971, 9.

³⁶³*Times of India*, 16 September 1971.

³⁶⁴Ibid., 30 September 1971.

³⁶⁵Radio Tehran quoting *Pakistan Times*, 5 December 1971, *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, December 1971, 11.

The situation in the subcontinent was worsening rapidly. By November, the possibility of an Indo-Pakistan war could not be ignored. Minor skirmishes were being reported. The battle, however, was joined when the Pakistani aircraft raided Indian airfields in the evening of 3 December 1971. The war continued in both sectors. The Indian troops, by launching a multi-pronged attack, succeeded, thanks to the help rendered by the people of Bangladesh and the *Mukti Bahini*, to isolate Pakistani garrisons and to surround Dacca with the result that the Pakistani forces surrendered on 16 December 1971. The next day India declared a unilateral ceasefire to be effective from 8 PM on 18 December 1971. Yahya Khan had no option but to accept it and the Bangladesh war came to an end. Bangladesh attained its independence.

During the war, Iran rendered considerable help to Pakistan. Pakistani airline planes and other civilian aircraft were not only allowed to take shelter in Iran but also permitted to fly to bring essential supplies from other countries friendly to Pakistan. Iran offered modern fire-fighting equipment and experts when the oil tanks in Karachi were hit by the Indians. Iran also promptly met critical shortages of ammunition and aircraft. When Karachi was blockaded and otherwise rendered unusable Iran allowed strategic supplies like oil to be routed to Pakistan via the Iranian land routes. Iran also reportedly gave help in maritime air reconnaissance and also offered a fully equipped base military hospital.³⁶⁶ Undoubtedly this was very valuable assistance. But Iran too, while accusing the USA and Britain of not permitting direct military help to be rendered by one CENTO member to another in case of regional conflict, did not offer any direct military help to Pakistan. There were reports of Pakistani naval involvement in the 1965 war but there were no such reports in 1971.³⁶⁷ Its newly acquired Phantoms, destroyers and

³⁶⁶Ibid., July 1973, 17.

³⁶⁷*New York Times*, 30 November 1971, reported Soviet troop movements on the northern frontier of Iran. Some Iranian experts took it as a diplomatic pressure from the USSR upon Iran with the aim of impressing upon Iran not to support Pakistan in any war. Chubin, Shahram and Zabih, Sepehr, *Foreign Relations of Iran: A Developing State in a Zone of Great Power Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974, 84.

missile firing frigates did not help Pakistan to keep open even the port of Karachi and defy the Indian naval blockade of the Pakistani port in the Arabian Sea. The Indian naval supremacy during the 1971 war, however, must have caused a great deal of concern to Iran, especially *vis-a-vis* its Indian Ocean policy.

The Bangladesh crisis and the 1971 war seems to have disturbed Iran's framework of its South Asia policy. In that framework Pakistan had an important role as a balancer not only *vis-a-vis* Afghanistan but also India. The events of 1971 not only weakened the balance militarily but also the demand of regional autonomy raised by the people of Bangladesh had its repercussions in parts of West Pakistan too, like in Baluchistan, Pakhtoonistan and even Sindh. Undoubtedly these movements were present even earlier and explain why the Awami League obtained 201 out of 300 seats in the 1970 elections. The breakaway of Bangladesh, the military defeat and the crisis of leadership in West Pakistan during and after the 1971 war, gave a greater impetus to these centrifugal forces in West Pakistan. If these forces had been allowed to take their logical course Pakistan's role of a balancer in South Asia would have been jeopardized, and Iran's South Asia policy would have been seriously affected.

The Shah explained his position on this matter in an interview to *Kayhan International*. Answering the question if the Indo-Pakistani war had altered the strategic situation in the region and whether the outcome of that war had any effect upon Iran's defence policies, he said:

If Pakistan remains a powerful country, strong and united, the danger will be less. But if what happened on the other side ever shook the unity of West Pakistan then very grave problems would be created for us. The same would be true from international point of view as well. The entire international scene would be changed.³⁶⁸

The Shah was worried about the possible break-up of West

³⁶⁸ *Kayhan International*, 29 January 1972, quoted in R.K. Ramazani, *The Persian Gulf: Iran's Role*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1972, 145.

Pakistan as late as 1974. In an interview to *Le Monde* of 24 June 1974, he said that he was merely worried when Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan. But commenting upon the possible break-up of West Pakistan, he said that Iran would have considered intervening in any way to prevent an "intolerable" situation for Iran.³⁶⁹

Thus Iranian policy towards South Asia immediately after 1971 was governed by the threat to Iran from the possible disintegration of West Pakistan. Pakhtoonistan and Baluchistan would have become independent. Beside its repercussions on Iran's internal affairs it would remove the strong balancer and even provide a convenient foothold to the USSR in the Indian Ocean next to Iran. Not only did Iran consider the threat of disintegration of Pakistan as real but many Iranian and other scholars linked this threat of disintegration of Pakistan with the threat of encirclement of Iran. A conscious effort was made to prove that India, Iraq and the USSR were engaged in the break-up of Pakistan and, therefore, were working together against the interests of Iranian security.

Since the whole threat perception of Iran *vis-a-vis* South Asia, emanating from the possibility of disintegration of West Pakistan and the fear of encirclement, hinged upon the Baluchi question, it will be essential to examine in brief this controversial issue. Geographically, Baluchistan straddles territories belonging to Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. The total Baluchi population is estimated to be about 2,500,000, of which 1,500,000 are in Pakistan and approximately 600,000 in Iran.³⁷⁰ The present-day boundary dividing the Baluchis was set up by the British during their imperialist expansion in South Asia in the nineteenth century. They coerced the Iranians into accepting it. There were several Baluchi revolts and uprisings against the British. The Baluchis were also involved in the nationalist movement that led to the independence of India and the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. The Baluchi demand for provincial autonomy can be traced back to the partition days. There were mass demonstrations and even armed clashes in Baluchistan in

³⁶⁹*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, August 1974, 963.

³⁷⁰Kashtanov, N., "Baluchistan", *International Affairs* (Moscow), (11) November 1964, 97-8.

the fifties and sixties on the question of autonomy. The degree of hostility between the Baluchis and the Punjabis in Pakistan was also clear from several clashes between the Baluchi and Punjabi troops stationed in several places in East Pakistan between April and May 1971. Thus, the Baluchi movement in the post-1971 period was not a new movement but the continuation of a long-drawn struggle for the demand of regional autonomy.

The intensification of the Baluchi movement following the declaration of Bangladesh's independence, the defeat of Pakistan in the 1971 war and, above all, the crisis of leadership in Pakistan that had led to these two developments, was seen as a potential threat to Iranian security. It was also projected as a part of the encirclement theory. It was feared that the independence in Pakistani Baluchistan would have a comparable effect upon the people of Iranian Baluchistan. If Baluchistan did break away from Pakistan it would have seriously affected Iranian strategic perspective in South Asia. Pakistan would no longer be the balancer. It would not be a buffer. The USSR, with a friendly Afghanistan and a friendly Baluchistan,³⁷¹ would not have only a land corridor to the Indian Ocean but would be able to have naval facilities in the Makaran coast, just off the Strait of Hormuz. This would complete the encirclement of Iran because, according to the proponents of this theory, Iran was already encircled from the north by the USSR, and the west by Iraq. The Dhofar movement was already posing a serious threat to Iran and the Baluchi movement would have completed the circle. The Shah was so worried about such a development that he hinted in an interview to the *New York Times* that if Pakistan did break up, Iran might seize Baluchistan before anyone else could do so.³⁷² It was also argued that the USSR had a large political and military presence in India, Afghanistan,³⁷³ Iraq, South Yemen and Somalia and operated a fairly large task-force in the Indian Ocean itself. Some circles in the Iranian capital had voiced the

³⁷¹According to some scholars, the National Awami Party of Baluchistan had Russian leanings. Burrell, R. M., "Iran's foreign policy during the last decade", *Asian Affairs*, 61 (New Services, vol. V), Part I, February 1974, 13.

³⁷²*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20. May 1973, 9-10.

³⁷³Burrell and Cottrell, n. 5, 3.

opinion that the July 1973 coup in Afghanistan did fit into a pattern of long-term Soviet plans for the encirclement of Iran. It should also be noted that the period 1971-73 witnessed an intense Arab-Israeli confrontation and the Soviet presence in the Eastern Mediterranean too was very substantial. All these factors were used to prove the encirclement theory and the Baluchistan movement was destined to play a crucial role in projecting a serious threat to Iranian security under that theory.

No direct linkage between India and the Baluchi movement was established but the Iraqi and Soviet involvement was highlighted, especially after the involvement of the Iraqi embassy in Pakistan, in February 1973, in the transfer of Soviet arms allegedly to the Baluchi movement, was publicized. It is reported that the Iranian secret service tipped the Pakistanis about it. The whole episode was dramatized. The Iraqi ambassador to Pakistan in a televised press conference, was asked about the contents of about seventy bags and crates that had recently arrived at the Iraqi embassy at Islamabad under diplomatic seal. The envoy replied that they contained books and literature. When those containers were opened it was revealed that they contained 300 submachine guns, 1000 spare magazines, over 65,000 rounds of ammunition, short-wave radio equipment and a manual in Russian language. The equipment too was of Russian origin.³⁷⁴ It was easy to link this with the encirclement theory. But it is also possible that Iraq was using this opportunity to start a guerrilla movement in Irani Baluchistan and thereby to counter the Iranian support to the Kurdish movement which was being supported by Iran against the Iraqi regime.³⁷⁵ Iraq was already hosting the so-called Popular Front for the Liberation of Baluchistan and was providing it not only with a base of operations but also every help, including military help.

Iran took a serious view of the developments in South Asia—creation of Bangladesh, defeat of Pakistan, growing trouble in Baluchistan and internal crisis in West Pakistan. Its responses to the changing environment in South Asia have to be studied in the context of Iran's basic policy of keeping Pakistan as a buffer and a balancer in South Asia. That accounted for full Iranian support

³⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 8.

³⁷⁵Chubin, n. 6, 176.

to Pakistan during and shortly after the 1971 crisis. But while doing so Iran, wittingly or unwittingly, accepted Pakistan's enemies as its enemies, and therefore developed a conflictual relationship with India and Afghanistan. Thus Iran was dragged into the South Asian conflict as a partner of Pakistan. It not only harmed Iran's image as a friendly power which could hope to mediate or offer good offices in the resolution of regional disputes in South Asia, but also reduced the role of Pakistan as a buffer and a balancer by making Pakistan one end of the Pak-Iran axis that was seeking to influence South Asian politics. Though this change in Iran's South Asian politics was most welcome to Pakistan, it seriously affected the fundamentals of Iran's traditional South Asian politics under which Iran avoided getting directly entangled in South Asian problems.

Iran, therefore, quickly corrected the drift in its South Asia policy and made conscious efforts to get back to the fundamentals of its South Asia policy. Thus while it sought a detente with India and Afghanistan after 1973, it also kept its position *vis-a-vis* Pakistan very clear by giving political, economic and even military support to Pakistan to enable it to play an independent role in South Asia. This support continued even after the Indo-Iranian detente and the need for a strong Pakistan was reiterated during the Shah's Pakistan visit in March 1976 and also in the interview given by Premier Hoveyda to Dilip Mukherji of the *Times of India*.³⁷⁶ It also openly supported the territorial integrity of Pakistan, but nothing more. Pakistan, seeing that it could no longer get direct Iranian support against India, began to seek other options that further alarmed Iran and helped Indo-Iranian detente. Thus the period 1971-75 is an interesting example of Iranian threat perception and response *vis-a-vis* South Asia.

The short-term reaction of Iran to events in the subcontinent was to give total support to Pakistan. No sooner had the 1971 war ended than the Shah of Iran paid a surprise visit to Pakistan on 8 January to meet Bhutto who had become the new President of Pakistan. Bhutto returned the visit soon after. The two heads of state called for the withdrawal of Indian troops from all

³⁷⁶*The Times of India*, 15 May 1976.

occupied Pakistani territories.³⁷⁷ It should be noted that Iran had not recognized Bangladesh and still accepted Bangladesh as a part of Pakistan. The Shah, however, cautioned Bhutto from taking any precipitate step that might further complicate the situation. The influential sister of the Shah, Princess Ashraf, visited Pakistani Baluchistan in May 1972. Unfortunately, that visit followed soon after the ransacking of the Iranian Culture Centre in Quetta by Baluchi students, and the Quetta public meeting, that was attended by Bhutto and Princess Ashraf, ended abruptly following public disturbances.³⁷⁸ Iran also gave full support to Pakistan in its dispute with India over the question of about 90,000 prisoners of war³⁷⁹ and also on the question of recognition of Bangladesh. Iran refused to recognize Bangladesh till Pakistan had done so in February 1974.

The Iranian government continued to back Pakistani policies in Baluchistan and to support the territorial integrity of West Pakistan. This becomes clear from the statements of Premier Hoveyda and the Shah. The Shah, commenting on this subject during the visit of President Bhutto in May 1973, put the whole question very candidly. He said that whatever happened to Pakistan was of vital importance to Iran not only because both were Muslim nations but also because of Iranian national interests. He said that Iran would not close its eyes to any secessionist movement in Pakistan.³⁸⁰ But the Shah's support was not unconditional. In his interview to NBC's TV programme on 30 July 1973, he said that Iran would not tolerate further disintegration of Pakistan. But he also added that Iran was not encouraging Pakistan to adopt an aggressive, hostile attitude towards India.³⁸¹ It is interesting to note that this significant change in tone followed the visit of Indian Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh to Tehran during 21-23 July 1973. That visit officially marked the beginning of the new detente between India and Iran. It is also reported that P.N. Haksar, a close confidante of Mrs Indira Gandhi, had made several unpublicized "private" visits to Iran even earlier.

³⁷⁷ *Kayhan International*, 25 January 1972.

³⁷⁸ *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, June 1972, 4.

³⁷⁹ *Kayhan International*, 17 January 1973. Its editorial called the holding of the POWs to bring political pressure on Pakistan as unethical.

³⁸⁰ Ramazani, n. 4, 434.

³⁸¹ Chubin, n. 6, 175.

Probably his visits had paved the way for the formal visit of Swaran Singh.

Besides political and diplomatic support Iran offered military aid to Pakistan to enable it to regain its lost strength and also to contain the revolt in Baluchistan. Sardar Ataullah Khan Mengal, former chief minister of Baluchistan, reportedly told a public meeting on 5 June 1973 that Iran was helping Pakistan to build three military bases in Baluchistan.³⁸² Ahmed Nawaz Bugti, another Baluchi leader and an ex-minister, told the Lahore Urdu weekly, *Zindagi*, that Iran was bearing the expenses of five divisions of the Pakistani army operating in Baluchistan.³⁸³ There were also allegations of direct Iranian participation in Baluchistan. The pro-National Awami Party's Urdu daily, *Shabaz* of Peshawar, said that a large number of Iranian soldiers had been sent to Baluchistan via Zahedan to fight the Baluchi rebels.³⁸⁴ Air Marshal Asghar Khan, an important opposition leader in Pakistan, told a news conference on 25 September 1973 that Iranian helicopters were operating in Baluchistan.³⁸⁵ The Shah, in an interview to *Le Monde* on 24 June 1974, however, denied that Iranian troops were ever sent to Baluchistan to help fight against the rebels there.³⁸⁶

Iran also offered direct military help to Pakistan. It was reported that Iran was going to transfer 50 old F-5 supersonic jet planes to Pakistan³⁸⁷ when it obtained the new F-5 planes that it had ordered. These Iranian planes would help replace the aging Sabre jets of Pakistan. There were also reports that several Patton tanks (M-47) were sent from Pakistan to Iran where they were not only upgunned with a new 105 mm gun but also old patrol engines were replaced by more powerful diesel engines. It is interesting to note that these developments followed the normalization of Indo-Iranian relations and were probably directed at strengthening Pakistan to enable it to play its traditional role of a buffer and a balancer.

Attempts were also made to integrate the defence of Iran and

³⁸²*The Times of India*, 7 June 1973.

³⁸³*Ibid.*, 21 September 1973.

³⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 15 September 1973.

³⁸⁵*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, November 1973, 6.

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*, August 1974, 963.

³⁸⁷*Ibid.*, April 1975, 388.

Pakistan. It was reported that Iran and Pakistan had agreed to cooperate with each other in the field of defence. This understanding was reached during President Bhutto's visit to Iran in May 1973 though no overt announcement to that effect was made. The Shah had also promised, during Bhutto's visit, Iranian support against any secessionist movement in Pakistan. The semi-official paper *Ittilaat* of Tehran characterized the Shah's informal comment as a "defensive agreement" (*ahdenamihye defai*) between Iran and Pakistan.³⁸⁸ Ramazani compared Iran's Baluchistan and Pakistan policy with the Dhofar policy. "Like Iran's military aid to Oman, this was another example of Iran's use of its newly acquired military capability toward the achievement of its basic objectives in the Persian Gulf area."³⁸⁹ Both Iran and Pakistan too began to develop a new interest in reviving the CENTO as a means to strengthen regional cooperation, especially between Iran and Pakistan, and also to justify more arms from the USA.

Iran also supported Pakistan financially and part of this economic support was supposed to be invested in Baluchistan. Bhutto announced in Quetta on 4 August 1974 that Iran had offered \$63 million loan to Pakistan to boost the economy of Baluchistan. He added that it was in addition to the interest-free loan of \$580 million that had been offered earlier to set up textile and cement plants in Baluchistan. It was also reported that the Iranian and Pakistani participation in these projects was 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. Iranian and Pakistani Baluchistan were also linked by railroad. It was announced on 10 March 1973 that a new passenger train service had linked Quetta and Zahedan.

Undoubtedly all these developments helped Iran to safeguard its security interests in its eastern frontier, at least in the short run. But in that process it strengthened the powers of Bhutto and further weakened the democratic structure of Pakistan that had been shocked by the events of 1971. The result was that the Bhutto regime was overthrown by a military *coup d'état* in 1977. An internally divided and politically weak Pakistan could never protect Iran's eastern flank. But that logic could probably have

³⁸⁸Ramazani, n. 4., 434-35.

³⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 435.

never appealed to the Shah and his advisers who looked at security from a short-term and basically military point of view.

As seen earlier, Pakistan's initial reaction to the events of 1971 had brought Iran and Pakistan too close for comfort. It had also put Iran into a conflictual relationship with India which the former had always tried to avoid. Thus, if Iran had to revert back to its traditional policy in South Asia, and play the role of a mediator, it had to work out a detente with India and Afghanistan. Such a thing was difficult because of the belief in the encirclement theory. It, however, took time for India to convince Iran about the wrong hypothesis on which that theory was based, especially as far as it concerned South Asia, that India (and Afghanistan) had a vested interest in the break-up of Pakistan and that they were working in cooperation with Iraq and the USSR to bring about an independent Baluchistan. Quiet diplomacy on the part of India finally convinced Iran about the wrong hypothesis on which that theory was based. There were also several other factors that helped in this Indo-Iranian detente. By the middle of 1973 this trend towards Indo-Iranian detente had become visible and by 1974 their relations had reverted to the pre-1971 level.

By 1973 both Iran and India had started the process of reassessment of their bilateral relations. It was probably India that took the initiative when P.N. Haksar visited Iran to sound the Iranians on a detente. The process of normalization began officially with the visit of Indian Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh to Tehran in 1973. The Simla Agreement of 2 July 1972 between Mrs Gandhi and Bhutto had paved the way for the lessening of tension in South Asia. Among other things that accord emphasized respect for each other's national unity, territorial integrity, political independence and sovereign equality. This declaration showed that India was not interested in the so-called dismemberment of West Pakistan. The Indian government also officially described as baseless the report that India was trying to seek a foothold in the Persian Gulf area and West Asia.³⁹⁰ Iran, it seems, took some interest in suggesting an acceptable formula that led to the Indo-Pak agreement of 28 August 1973. The formula was reported by the British press on

³⁹⁰*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, August 1973, 47.

24 July after the discussion between the Shah and Edward Heath, the British prime minister. Bhutto, who was in London around that period, was informed about the formula.³⁹¹ The formula envisaged the postponement of the trials of 195 POWs, Pakistani recognition of Bangladesh, and the exchange of population between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

There were also other considerations of realpolitik that led to an Indo-Iranian detente. India was not interested in building up a conflictual relationship with Iran. Iran too would not gain anything by forcing that relationship on India. In fact Iran's long-term policy and also interests necessitated detente with India. "The most important state with which Iran will need to coordinate her interests in the Indian Ocean is India."³⁹² India was too big a neighbour to be made a permanent enemy, especially for the sake of Pakistan, which was proving more of a burden than an asset to Iran.

Moreover, Pakistan, in searching for multiple options in its confrontation with India, had pursued a policy that could be construed to be antagonistic to Iran's security interest. In the sixties Pakistan's close friendships with the USSR and especially with China were not in the best interest of Iran. In the seventies Iran took serious objection to Pakistan's close ties with the Arab countries in the Gulf and with Libya.³⁹³ Despite the common policies like membership of the CENTO, RCD, Islamic Bloc etc., Pakistan could not create a binding link between itself and Iran. "Pakistani emphasis upon friendly relations with Iran is only perfunctorily noticed by the latter."³⁹⁴ The growing rift between Iran and Pakistan was noted by some Pakistani experts. "Iran's tense relations with its Arab neighbours on the Gulf until 1975 caused it to adopt a cautious attitude towards Pakistan's policy of systematically cultivating these Arab states, especially the UAE and Saudi Arabia."³⁹⁵ Thus, the fact that Pakistan could not remain a dependent variable also influenced Iran to respond favourably to India's friendly overtures in 1973. These factors

³⁹¹*The Indian Express*, 1 September 1973.

³⁹²Chubin, Shahram, "Iran's foreign policy, 1960-1976", in Hossein Amirsadeghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, New York, 1977, 209.

³⁹³Chubin, n. 6, 177.

³⁹⁴Binder, n. 12, 331.

³⁹⁵Zubeida, Mustafa, "Recent trends in Pakistan's policy towards

initiated a process of detente in Indo-Iranian relations that was finally converted into an entente subsequently.

There were several hints that Iran was modifying its stand *vis-a-vis* India. Prime Minister Hoveyda of Iran, in an interview to the correspondent of the influential Pakistan daily, *Dawn*, in February 1973 said that peace between India and Pakistan was of extreme importance to his country since Pakistan was its brother and India its friend.³⁹⁶ Another major hint on Iran's South Asia policy was the statement to Girilal Jain of the *Times of India* that India must be completely reassured that, unless it attacked Pakistan, it would not face, either directly or indirectly, the arms Iran was acquiring.³⁹⁷ The assurance was crucial because it showed that Iran was only protecting Pakistan from further disintegration but was not willing to align itself with it in its armed confrontation with India. It was important for India because it was seriously concerned with the inflow of new and sophisticated arms into Pakistan and feared that some of them might, directly or indirectly, be used to buttress Pakistan's military capability.

Diplomatic moves leading towards the easing of tension were initiated by the unofficial visits of P.N. Haksar in January 1973,³⁹⁸ which paved the way for the official visit of the Indian Foreign Minister to Tehran in July 1973. Iran reciprocated by sending Princess Ashraf to India in September 1973, who said, "We are very keen to have peace in the subcontinent and cordial relations between India and Pakistan."³⁹⁹ The final confirmation of the change in Iran's attitude came during the visit of Khalatbari, Iranian Foreign Minister, to India in December 1973. In an exclusive interview to Dilip Mukherji, he said, "I now know that your government does not consider it to be in

the Middle East", *Pakistan Horizon* 28(4), 1975. Also see Ali Mehrunnissa, "Changing pattern of India-Iran relations", *ibid.*, 28(4), 1975, 53-66. It gives an impression that Pakistan was let down by Iran.

³⁹⁶The *Statesman* (New Delhi), 16 February 1973. It is interesting to note the emphasis on the words brother and friend. Pakistan was a brother because of common Islamic bonds, whereas India could only be a friend.

³⁹⁷*Times of India*, 29 June 1973.

³⁹⁸Burrell, n. 30, 14 and Mehrunnissa, n. 54, 57.

³⁹⁹*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, October 1973, 9.

India's interest that Pakistan should fall apart." Referring to his meeting with Mrs Gandhi and Swaran Singh he said that he saw an identity of interests between India and Iran in the integrity of Pakistan.⁴⁰⁰ That identity signified the end of Iran's threat perception *vis-a-vis* India that had coloured its South Asian perspective since the Bangladesh crisis.

According to Ann Schulz, the USA had encouraged and facilitated the rapprochement between Prime Minister Gandhi and the Shah of Iran in 1974.⁴⁰¹ As seen before, the process had started even earlier. It is possible that the USA might have encouraged this trend hoping thereby to gradually detach India from the USSR. Any further increase in tension between India and Iran, which would also have indirectly encouraged Indo-Pakistani confrontation, would have led to a greater Indo-Soviet collaboration, which in turn would be against US interests in the Indian Ocean. Hence it is possible that the USA might have, directly or indirectly, promoted the Indo-Iranian rapprochement. The events following the October 1973 war, like the oil embargo, cutback in oil production by Arab states and the steep rise in oil prices also compelled India to come closer to Iran. The end result of these developments was that in 1974 the Indo-Iranian detente was converted into an entente. It led to exchange of visits at the highest level and also a very close economic cooperation between the two countries.

Mrs Gandhi visited Iran in April 1974 for a period of four days. In a speech at the state dinner on 29 April she said that friendship with one group of countries should not mean hostility towards another. The Shah of Iran returned the visit in October the same year. The Shah, in his press conference on 3 October in New Delhi, said that the question of arms transfer from Iran to Pakistan was no longer relevant because of two factors: Iran's firm friendship with India and its unvarying policy of promoting peace and friendship between the two neighbours of the subcontinent. He also reiterated his earlier stand that Iran would not assist Pakistan if it started an aggression against India.

⁴⁰⁰*Times of India*, 14 December 1974.

⁴⁰¹Schulz, Ann, "The Gulf, South Asia and the Indian Ocean", in Mohammad Mughisuddin, ed., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf*, Praeger, New York, 1977, 21.

The growing friendship between Iran and India was naturally reflected in the economic field. India and Iran were traditional trading partners. The oil wealth had opened yet another door for bilateral economic cooperation. Before the phenomenal rise in oil prices since October 1973, Iran was under some economic constraints and did not have the same economic power to buy the best from the west. Thus, a degree of bilateralism had evolved in Indo-Iranian economic cooperation under which Iran, in return for modest oil money, could get Indian technical know-how and finished goods. The bilateral commissions set up in 1969 were already working out details of greater economic cooperation before the close friendship between the two countries was disturbed by the events following the 1971 crisis. It was of vital importance for India that this economic cooperation should be promoted. Swaran Singh did use the need for expanding commercial and economic contacts with Iran as one of the arguments to convince the Consultative Committee of the Indian Parliament in August 1973 of the need to encourage a detente with Iran.⁴⁰² It should be noted that this preceded the October crisis.

Indo-Iranian relations after 1974 were marked by a conscious effort by both sides to evolve a formula for maximum economic benefit to both parties in a bipartisan spirit. The political detente coincided with the new events unfolded by the October crisis. The Arab policy of oil embargo and the phased 5 per cent cutback in oil production posed a problem of ensuring adequate oil supply for India in the wake of world-wide scramble for the limited oil available in the Gulf. Also, the manifold increase in oil prices posed the problem of payment for oil obtained because of limited hard currency available with India at that time. Thus assured supply of oil at a reasonable mode of oil payment dominated India's policy immediately after the October crisis. Somehow, India's constraints dovetailed with Iran's political and economic planning. Iran wanted to demonstrate its friendship for India and helping India to acquire the required oil was one way of doing so. Besides, Iran, free from economic constraints, could plan its industrial development at a level which could not be envisaged earlier. Since the petro-dollars had enhanced its capa-

⁴⁰²*The Times of India*, 23 August 1973.

city for economic investment and accelerated the pace of industrialization its requirement, not only for industrial goods but also for raw material and related infrastructure, increased rapidly. This facilitated Indo-Iranian economic cooperation. Iran wanted iron ore for its steel factory. India opened up a mountain of iron ore to fulfil that need. With the rapid pace of industrialization the original demand of 3.5 million tons was increased to 7.5 million tons of pelletized iron ore per year. If that quota had to be fulfilled it meant that 40,000 tons of pellets would have to be shipped every alternate day from India to Iran. To ease the transport problem a joint shipping company with a total tonnage of 500,000 tons per year was planned. India also agreed to supply Iran with 300,000 tons of alumina, thousands of tons of cement, hundreds of railway wagons, power lines etc. Also thousands of Indians were employed in Iran. Iran also offered India about one billion dollars in long-term loan that eased India's foreign exchange situation to some extent.

The Shah, in his desire to further cement Indo-Iranian economic relations suggested that India (along with Afghanistan and Iraq) should join the RCD. The Shah was commenting in an interview to *Hurriyat*, a Turkish daily, on 18 November 1975.⁴⁰³ The question of enlarging the RCD was discussed at the RCD Heads of State meeting at Izmir in April 1976.⁴⁰⁴ The Shah wanted to integrate South Asia and West Asia into a complementary economic union that would have a desired political spin-off. It should be noted that this suggestion followed the Iran-Iraq detente of March 1975. Bhutto stalled on this plan. He had no objection to Iraq joining the RCD but was not prepared for Afghanistan or India joining the RCD till the Pakhtoon and the Kashmir questions were resolved to his satisfaction.⁴⁰⁵ The Shah had wanted India to join the RCD even in 1954. Pakistan had prevented it at that time also. Pakistani intransigence on the question of regional economic integration, a pet idea of the Shah, added one more cause for friction between Iran and Pakistan.

Iran's relations with Afghanistan also improved in 1973. The

⁴⁰³Ibid., 19 November 1975.

⁴⁰⁴*Journal de Teheran*, 24 April 1976.

⁴⁰⁵Ibid., 12 July 1976.

major indication of this detente was the signing of the agreement on the use of the waters of the Helmund river. The accord was signed on 14 March 1973 by Premier Musa Shafiq of Afghanistan and Premier Hoveyda of Iran.⁴⁰⁶ It put an end to almost a century-old water dispute between the two neighbouring states. The July 1973 coup in Afghanistan that brought into power the so-called radical regime of Daud Khan, disturbed the trend towards the detente only for a short period. Iran soon won its way into the hearts of the new Afghan regime by its sweet reasonableness on Pakistan-Afghan relations and also by the promise of generous economic cooperation.

Kayhan, in an editorial on 14 July 1974, shortly after Bhutto accused Afghanistan of massing troops on Pakistani borders, remonstrated both Kabul and Islamabad. It argued that military encounters would never solve political problems, and urged for a peaceful settlement of the same. In May 1975, the Shah once again showed his willingness to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He hinted at it in an interview to *Rastakhiz*, following Daud Khan's Tehran visit at the end of April 1975.

Iran also increased the level of its economic cooperation with Afghanistan. The acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Wahid Abdollah, said in a press conference on 11 May 1974 that the Helmund River project would be unimportant in comparison to the scale of anticipated cooperation between Kabul and Tehran.⁴⁰⁷ Abdollah had come to Tehran to meet the Shah. Under a protocol signed on 22 July 1974, Iran agreed to offer in the form of loan a sum of \$700 million to finance projects in the lower region of the Helmund river. The new cooperation also envisaged plans for dams for power generation and irrigation, irrigation networks, related industries, joint industrial and agricultural ventures, export-import banks, cultivation of beetroot and sugarcane for sugar production and for the paper industry, fruit canning, meat processing plants, weaving mills and also access from Afghanistan to the port facilities in Iran.⁴⁰⁸ In short this "anticipated" help, possible in the context of the newly gained oil wealth, was sufficient to ensure smooth relations not only

⁴⁰⁶Ramazani, n. 4, 266-69.

⁴⁰⁷*Kahyan International*, 12 May 1974.

⁴⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 28 July 1974.

between Iran and Afghanistan, but also between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

By 1974-75 the Iranian threat perception and response *vis-à-vis* South Asia was no longer influenced by the theory of encirclement. In fact, that theory was being denounced by an important section of the Iranian elite:

Attempts to pitch Iran against India or against Iraq as latter-day gladiators fighting the battles of the super powers have failed. The scaremongers' scenario based on a Moscow-Baghdad-Delhi axis was rejected out of hand while a counter-scenario in which a Peking-Islamabad-Tehran-Bucharest-Tirana axis would supposedly help irritate the Soviet Union was proved equally ridiculous. The application of Palmerstonian rules of the game to the Persian Gulf-Gulf of Oman region cannot but be an indication of a black nostalgia.⁴⁰⁹

Contrary to Indo-Iranian relations, which by and large were based on a cooperative rather than a conflictual relationship, the Iraq-Iran relationship was primarily based upon long-drawn conflicts that could be traced back to the pre-World War I era. The enforced friendliness under the umbrella of the Baghdad Pact gave way to an open confrontation after the July 1958 coup in Iraq. On the eve of the British departure from the Gulf, Iraq alone was the major Arab power in the region that was openly opposing the growth of Iran's dominant position in the Gulf. Thus, when the pro-Iranian elite sought to project Iran's threat perception and response in terms of their theory of encirclement, Iraq's outright antagonism of Iran, its friendship with the USSR and its growing economic cooperation with India, fitted very well in the scheme of things that were projected as facts. The Iraq-USSR friendship treaty of May 1972 and the further intensification of Iraq-Iran rivalry seemed to add weight to the encirclement theory.

The 1958 coup in Iraq and its subsequent breakaway from the Baghdad Pact was not only a crack through the northern tier, but a potential wedge of Soviet power extending through

⁴⁰⁹Americ, Abbas, ed., *The Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean*, Tehran, 1975, 268.

the very centre of the Middle East. The sixties was one unending record of so-called Soviet penetration of the Middle East and South Asia. Its politico-military and economic position was very strong in Egypt, Iraq and India. By 1971 it had signed friendship treaties with Egypt and India. Thus the Iraq-USSR treaty of 1972 was seen as yet another chain in the Soviet advances in this vital region. Articles 8 and 9 of the 1972 treaty were interpreted as providing some sort of politico-military linkage between Iraq and the USSR:

Article 8: In the event of the development of situations endangering the peace of either party or creating a threat to peace or a violation of peace, the High Contracting Parties shall contact each other without delay in order to agree their positions with a view to removing the threat that has arisen or re-establishing peace.

Article 9: In the interests of the security of both countries, the High Contracting parties will continue to develop cooperation in strengthening their defence capacity.

The 1972 treaty accentuated the Soviet alignment with Iraq and in a way, strengthened the Iraqi position *vis-a-vis* Iran. The immediate consequence of this, for the two local powers, was the outbreak of the most serious clash between Iran and Iraq. Border clashes broke out on 10 April 1972 in the Qasr-i-Shirin Khanaqin region and by 13 May sniping incidents were almost daily occurrence.⁴¹⁰

The post-1971 period saw a further intensification of the Iraq-Iran conflict. The Iraqi stand in terms of Arabism became tougher. It also began to increase its support to "radicalism" in the Gulf like in Oman, Baluchistan, Khuzistan and even to those Iranians who were opposed to the Shah. Iran too was trying out all means to counter the Iraqi moves. It was even alleged by the Iraqi government that Iranians were behind the abortive coup by Nazim Kazzar, the Director General of Iraqi Internal Security, in August 1973.⁴¹¹ Three men were executed for acting as spies for Iran. But the real Iraq-Iran confrontation was in Kurdistan

⁴¹⁰Ramazani, n. 4, 437.

⁴¹¹Burrell, n. 5, 12.

where the Iranians, in their bid to undermine Iraqi capability, were helping the Kurds against the Iraqi regime.

The Kurdish movement had posed a serious problem to the internal stability of Iraq. An effort was made in 1970 to bring about some settlement of this long-drawn struggle. An armistice agreement was reached between the Iraqi government and the leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) on 11 March 1970, under which the Kurds were to be granted internal autonomy. The armistice agreement could not be implemented because of serious differences between the Iraqi government and the KDP on three major issues: control over Kirkuk, sharing of national income and the limits of Kurdish territory. The long delay in the negotiations was building up tension. A final attempt at a negotiated settlement failed in December 1973 and large-scale fighting broke out between the Iraqi forces and the Kurds. Iraq used heavy equipment to crush the Kurds—armour and heavy artillery, air-strikes, helicopter-borne commando units etc.. Ultimately six divisions, 1,000 tanks and 12 artillery battalions were committed to that front.⁴¹² There were about 40 to 50 air-sorties per day. Western newspapers even accused the Indian pilots, who were in Iraq on a training mission, of flying sorties against the Kurds.⁴¹³ Soviet pilots were also implicated on a similar charge.⁴¹⁴ Iraq was supposed to have used heavy bombers like *Tu-22* in these air-strikes and it was alleged that these bombers were manned by Soviet pilots.⁴¹⁵

The Kurdish question, at one time, had posed a threat to Iran's systemic security. But after 1958 the Iranian regime converted it into an option to be used against Iraq. As early as 1959 Iran was accused of sponsoring Kurdish revolt against Iraq.⁴¹⁶ Iranian support to the Kurds was both military and non-military in nature. Iran gave the Kurdish insurgents not only sanctuary in Iran but also equipment for propaganda warfare like radio

⁴¹²Catudal Jr., Honore M., "The war in Kurdistan: end of a nationalist struggle"? *International Relations*, 5(3), May 1976, 1034.

⁴¹³*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, April 1975, 392.

⁴¹⁴*Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵*Ibid.*, October 1974, 1204.

⁴¹⁶Chubin and Zabih, n. 26, 179 and *Economist*, 218 (6368), 15 January 1966, 190.

equipment for a broadcasting station.⁴¹⁷ The Red Lion Sun and Society of Iran launched a mass relief programme to support thousands of Kurdish refugees who had flocked to Iran following the fresh outbreak of hostilities after 1973.

Iran also provided the KDP with substantial military equipment, especially after 1974, when the Kurds were suffering from repeated setbacks thanks to the all-out Iraqi offensive. Whereas before 1974 Iranian aid to the Kurds had been of a limited nature, consisting mainly of small arms, some anti-aircraft weapons and other logistic help, after September 1974 Iran began to supply them artillery, sophisticated anti-tank weapons and ammunition.⁴¹⁸ It also facilitated the flow of foreign aid to the KDP, which began to reach the Kurds via Iranian territory. It is reported that among the other supporters of KDP were Israel, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria.⁴¹⁹ The CIA, as usual, was also implicated in supporting the KDP against pro-Soviet Iraq.

This type of massive foreign aid would not have been possible but for its acceptance, at a price, by a section of the top echelons of the KDP. In fact, Mulla Mustafa Barazani, who at one time was reportedly to Soviet pawn in Kurdistan, had turned around and started welcoming the western help to the Kurds against Iraq. In an interview to *Newsweek* on 22 July 1974, Barazani appealed to the west for help and promised to offer oil and other mineral resources of the Kurdish area in return for that help. He also tried to use the pro-Soviet position of Iraq as a point in asking for western support to the Kurds. Not all the Kurdish leaders supported this stand of Barazani. He was criticized by many of his supporters, including one of his sons, for following a pro-western line.⁴²⁰ *Pravda* of 26 April 1974 also criticized Barazani.

The net result of the Iranian involvement on behalf of the Kurds was that Iran was indirectly dragged into an undeclared but potentially dangerous armed confrontation with Iraq. Iran

⁴¹⁷*Al-Thawya* (Baghdad), quoted in *Baghdad Observer*, 27 July 1972.

⁴¹⁸Catudal, n. 71, 1036. Mr Khalatbari of Iran, however, denied that Iran had supplied arms to the Kurds, *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, March 1975, 279.

⁴¹⁹Catudal, n. 71, 1037.

⁴²⁰*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, June 1974, 743.

accused Iraq of repeated ground and air attacks on the border areas. The Iranian artillery fire across the border had also inflicted serious casualties on the Iraqis.⁴²¹ The Iranian HAWK surface-to-air missiles and 175 mm and 130 mm long-range heavy guns provided the Kurdish guerrillas with a good defensive support.⁴²² The result was that Iran and Iraq were on the brink of an undeclared war and the Kurdish question proper was relegated as a side issue.

The situation became so tense in February-March 1974 that the Secretary-General of the UN had to intervene to reduce the tension. Iraq moved the UN and the Arab League in this matter.⁴²³ The Iranian prime minister told newsmen that the Iraqis had attacked first.⁴²⁴ The UN Security Council meeting held on 15 February was adjourned till 20 February after Iraqi and Iranian delegates traded charges and counter-charges. Libya gave strong support to Iraq. UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim named a Mexican diplomat, Luis Wechmann Munoz, to investigate the border clashes and to report by 28 May. In his report to the UN on 21 May 1974, Waldheim informed the Security Council of the accord obtained by Munoz, who had talked to both the parties.⁴²⁵ The good offices, however, failed to settle the border troubles since they were a part of the broader Iraq-Iran confrontation.

Iran began to strengthen the options in its struggle against Iraq. Since the Iraqi strength depended upon "radicalism" and "Arabism," Iran, during the period 1971-75, drew closer to the USSR also so as to counter-balance the Iraqi influence there. The task before Iran was to get the USSR to recognize the validity of Iran's Gulf policy, to build up personal contacts between the Shah and the top leadership in Moscow and to strengthen the bonds of economic cooperation on the basis of mutuality of interest, so as to increase the Soviet stakes in Iran too.

The period 1971-75 witnessed brisk exchange of visits between

⁴²¹Griffith, William E., "Iran's foreign policy", in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1978, 381.

⁴²²Catudal, n. 71,1038.

⁴²³*Egyptian Gazette*, 14 February 1974.

⁴²⁴*Kayhan International*, 14 February 1974.

⁴²⁵*Egyptian Gazette*, 22 May 1974.

the top elite of Iran and the USSR. The Shah himself visited the USSR in October 1972 and again in November 1974. There were also visits at the levels of Prime Ministers and Ministers of Economy. The Soviets reciprocated the visits. Thus an atmosphere of personal diplomacy, which found favour with the Shah, was created which helped to demonstrate growing Soviet-Iranian ties. The Soviets gave guarded support to Iran's Gulf policy while Iran offered its conditional support to the Soviet policy of Asian collective security. Iran had insisted that the matters concerning the Gulf should be settled by the littoral states themselves without outside interference. This policy was incorporated in the joint *communiqué* issued on 21 October 1972 following the visit of the Shah to the Soviet Union.⁴²⁶ It is interesting to note that the Shah's visit followed the signing of the Soviet-Iraqi friendship treaty of 1972. This point was reiterated in the communiques issued on 17 March 1973 following the visit of Kosygin,⁴²⁷ and the Shah's Moscow visit in November 1974.⁴²⁸

The question of Asian collective security also came up in several joint communiques signed between Iran and the USSR in October 1972.⁴²⁹ It was reiterated in the communique issued on 17 March 1973 during Kosygin's visit,⁴³⁰ on 13 August 1973 following the visit of Premier Hoveyda⁴³¹ and on 21 November 1974 following the visit of the Shah to Moscow.⁴³² While Iran accepted the framework of Asian collective security as propounded by the USSR it added emphasis upon the need to have the cooperation of all Asian states. This stand should be seen in the light of the Sino-Iranian detente since 1971. Iran did not want to give China any cause for misunderstanding.

Iran also developed close economic and technical cooperation with the USSR. It had already taken an initiative in this matter when it began its detente with the USSR in the sixties. This policy was pursued more vigorously in the seventies. Following the signing of the Iraq-USSR friendship treaty, Iran sent its

⁴²⁶*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 24(42), 15 November 1972, 7.

⁴²⁷*Ibid.*, 25 (11), 11 April 1973, 26.

⁴²⁸*Ibid.*, 26 (47), 18 December 1974, 26.

⁴²⁹*Ibid.*, 24 (42), 15 November 1972, 7.

⁴³⁰*Ibid.*, 25 (11), 11 April 1973, 26.

⁴³¹*Ibid.*, 25 (32), 5 September 1973, 11.

⁴³²*Ibid.*, 26 (47), 18 December 1974, 26.

Minister of Economy, Hushang Ansari, to Moscow. An agreement was signed on 10 August 1972 which paved the way for increased Soviet-Iranian cooperation in the petrochemical and textile industries. The USSR agreed to help increase the production of the steel mill at Isfahan and to that end the USSR promised to grant credit worth about \$300 million to Iran.⁴³³

The real big deal was, however, signed during the Shah's visit to Moscow in October. While he was there, the Iranian Foreign Minister, Abbas Ali Khalatbari and Andrei Gromyko, his Soviet counterpart, signed on 12 October 1972 a fifteen-year economic and technical cooperation treaty.⁴³⁴ A five-year agreement on cultural and scientific exchanges was also signed at that time. Under the fifteen-year treaty the Soviet Union agreed to balance its trade with Iran by increasing its purchases of Iranian manufactured goods. A Soviet-Iranian Commission for Economic Cooperation was set up. The economic and technical cooperation agreement envisaged, among other things, the development of metallurgy, oil and gas, petrochemical and chemical industries, joint prospecting for oil and other minerals, training of Iranian technicians and other experts. This agreement was followed subsequently by the tripartite, multi-billion dollar natural gas deal between Iran, the USSR and the European countries in 1975.

Thus, between 1972 and 1975, Iran got the USSR deeply involved in Iran with the result that it was able to use the Soviet diplomatic leverage to put constraints on Iraq in its confrontation with Iran. "The Russians may also have had a hand in restraining Iran and Iraq in their dispute over the Straits and the Kurdish question as well as in Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait."⁴³⁵ According to Sepehr Zabih, it is possible that "ever since the revival of the Kurdish insurgency the Soviets have been persistently lobbying for an accommodation between the two countries in each of which the Russians have a different but nonetheless overriding interest."⁴³⁶ During the Shah's Moscow

⁴³³*Kayhan International*, 12 and 13 August 1972.

⁴³⁴*Ibid.*, 15 October 1972 and *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 24 (42), 15 November 1972, 7-8.

⁴³⁵*The Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf States*, n. 8, 15.

⁴³⁶Zabih, Sepehr, "Iran's policy towards the Persian Gulf", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.7, 1976, 356.

visit in November 1974, President Podgorny, while giving a dinner speech, said that Iran-Iraq relations did not correspond to the interests of the cause of peace.

We have advocated and continue to advocate the settlement of Iranian-Iraqi differences by these countries themselves at the negotiating table, a settlement based on the principles of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourliness. We shall welcome constructive steps, which we hope the two sides will take to find paths to the peaceful resolution of disputed questions.⁴³⁷

Thus the top Soviet leadership made an almost public display of its neutrality in the dispute between Iraq and Iran, which strengthened the Iranian position diplomatically and finally contributed to the March 1975 agreement between Iran and Iraq.

Iran also tried to isolate Iraq in the Arab World. Iraq was trying to act as the champion of Arabism in the Gulf and was seeking to take over that role from Nasser. Iraq thus hoped to align the Arab World behind her in its confrontation with Iran. Iran, however, refused to fall into that trap. All along, during its confrontation with Egypt, Syria, Iraq or Libya, Iran did not criticize Arabism but only these Arab states by name, and thus retained its options to cultivate "conservative and Islamic" Arab countries. It did come close to them as can be seen from its membership of the Islamic Alliance of 1965. But in the seventies, Iran began to enlarge its influence in the Arab World by seeking detente with the so-called radical Arab states, especially with Egypt, Syria and Algeria, which further eroded Iraq's political support in the Arab World.

Egypt had already normalized its relations with Iran as early as 1970. These relations were further cemented after the October 1973 conflict. Iran not only gave full political support to the Arabs in their confrontation with Israel but also offered substantial economic aid to Egypt to re-establish its war-shattered economy. Iran announced a 650-million dollar investment and aid packet to Egypt to rebuild the canal zone. There were also reports that Egypt would offer to Iran a "free port" in Port Said

⁴³⁷*Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 26 (47), 18 December 1974, 17.

for commercial and industrial outlet. Iran promised to invest \$ 250 million in rebuilding the harbour facilities there. There were also plans to have joint ventures in an ammonia plant, phosphate fertilizer plant etc.

Iran also offered economic assistance to Syria and Lebanon. Iraq was disturbed by this trend and its semi-official paper, *al-Thawva*, on 7 July 1974, rapped Egypt, Syria and Lebanon for entering into economic cooperation with Iran. Algeria too followed suit. On 5 February 1975 the Algerian President, Houari Boumedienne, said that there were limitless opportunities for bilateral and regional cooperation between Iran and Algeria.⁴³⁸ Iran took advantage of its petro-dollars and Syria's dispute with Iraq on the question of the waters of the Euphrates, to isolate Syria from Iraq. Thus, by 1975, Iraq had been left only with two main supporters in the Arab World, Libya and South Yemen, out of about twenty-four Arab states at that time.

Iran also took advantage of the Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute in 1973 to gain political and diplomatic advantages. Iraq had its eyes on two strategically placed islands, Bubian and Warba, which, if occupied by Iraq, would not only increase the Iraqi coastline, a matter of vital importance in negotiating for a more acceptable continental-shelf agreement in the Gulf, but would also give a greater measure of security to the new naval base at Umm al-Qasr. Iraq did use the show of force to pressurize Kuwait into acceding to Iraqi demands. Iran seized the opportunity to offer its support to Kuwait against Iraq. According to the *Daily Telegraph* (London) of 21 March 1973 the Shah was considering military action against Iraq in the event of aggression against Kuwait. On 12 April, Iranian Premier Amir Abbas Hoveyda said that Iran would seriously consider any request from Kuwait for military aid if Kuwait was faced with Iraqi aggression.⁴³⁹ Thus, Iran not only substantiated its position as the dominant power in the Gulf but also tried to emerge as a champion of an Arab state in the Gulf.

Thanks to its economic and military power and its political linkages, Iran could depend upon some Arab states in its struggle against Iraq. If an offer to mediate between Iraq and

⁴³⁸ *Kayhan International*, 8 February 1975.

⁴³⁹ *The Times of India*, 14 April 1973.

Iran could be considered as an index of support of these Arab states to Iran, then Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt and finally Algeria offered their good offices. It was reported that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were considering to mediate between Iran and Iraq. They felt that this conflict might weaken the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC). Sources in Tehran, however, dismissed these reports by saying that no approach had been made to Iran by either of these powers in that connection.⁴⁴⁰ *Al-Nahar* of Beirut reported on 6 August 1974 that Egypt was contemplating to mediate between Iran and Iraq. The climax of the Arab mediation between Iraq and Iran was reached at the Rabat summit in October 1974, where the Arab states reportedly formed a special committee to mediate on the Iraq-Iran dispute. The committee was to be composed of delegates from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. King Hasan, it was reported, raised the matter by saying that the Islamic states should not fight amongst themselves.

Compelled to invest a large part of its national resources in containing the Kurdish movement, isolated in the Arab World, and balanced by Iran's growing ties with the USSR, China and countries in South Asia, Iraq had no option but to succumb to diplomatic pressure and to sign an agreement with Iran so as to resolve all major conflicts between the two countries. Moves towards a political settlement had been made several times: in 1968 and 1972,⁴⁴¹ following the crisis of October 1973,⁴⁴² and during the mediation efforts by Munoz, the representative of Kurt Waldheim. Talks between Iraq and Iran were held in Istanbul at the end of 1974 but they too proved abortive.

Despite the overwhelming superiority in all fields, military, diplomatic, economic etc., Iran was not prepared for a military showdown with Iraq. But unless a settlement could be reached soon direct military confrontation was becoming inevitable.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴⁰*Kayhan International*, 3 July 1972.

⁴⁴¹President Bakr of Iraq, in a speech on 17 July 1972, expressed his desire for a settlement between Iraq and Iran, *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, August 1972, 18.

⁴⁴²Relations between Iraq and Iran that were ruptured in 1971 were re-established soon after the beginning of the October 1973 war. *Kayhan International*, 9 October 1973.

⁴⁴³Cottrell, Alvin J., "Iran's armed forces", in George Lenczowski,

There were several reasons why the Shah did not want a confrontation. Any Iraq-Iran war would have, in popular minds, taken on the shape of an Arab-Iranian war. Iran with its well-known linkages with Israel did not want to be linked up with Israel as an aggressor by the Arabs. It would have been exploited by Iraq and Iran's diplomatic efforts to woo the Arab World have been, to a large extent, wasted. Another reason why the Shah did not want a war was "the Near East was a power-keg and the Russians supported Iraq, and the United States suffered from the Watergate complex."⁴⁴⁴ The Shah was not personally interested in promoting Kurdish independence. He told Heikal in an interview that he used the Kurdish revolution as an instrument against Iraq. He added that Iran did not want to break up Iraq, and said: "We have a large Kurdish minority ourselves."⁴⁴⁵ Thus, the Kurdish threat could have become a double-edged weapon and the Shah was most reluctant to take that risk. Also, the Shah needed secure flanks if Iran had to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.⁴⁴⁶ Thus, not only Iraqi inability to force Iran but also Iran's larger national interests dictated a settlement with Iraq and at least an open end to their confrontation. Thus the stage was set for the dramatic "public kiss of peace" on 6 March 1975 between Saddam Hussein and the Shah at Algiers.

The final reconciliation was reached at the OPEC summit at Algiers. It is reported that President Boumedienne played the crucial role of mediator. After the public display of Iraq-Iran friendship at Algiers, the two parties quickly reached an agreement on 17 March 1975, which was signed in Tehran by the foreign ministers of the two countries. The frontier dispute was resolved. The Constantinople Protocol of 1913 became the basis for the land boundary. As far as the *Shatt al-Arab* was concerned, the *thalweg* line was accepted as the basis of the new boundary. Both parties also understood to have a strict and effective control of their common border in order to put a final end to all subversive infiltrations regardless of where they might origi-

ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1978, 415.

⁴⁴⁴*Kayhan International*, 16 September 1975.

⁴⁴⁵Cottrell, n. 102, 416.

⁴⁴⁶*Kayhan International*, 15 June 1975.

nate. Thus Iran withdrew its support from the Kurds. In return Iraq too stopped supporting the anti-Iranian groups in Khuzistan and Baluchistan.

With the Iraq-Iran detente the Kurdish revolt suffered a serious setback. Despite the proclamation of amnesty, thousands of Kurds migrated to Iran, which maintained an open border for them. Mullah Mustafa Barazani criticized the Shah and the USA but had no option but to stop all military activities. He, however, did cross over into Iran at the last moment. Details about Iraq-Iran cooperation and also of the boundaries were worked out in a comprehensive agreement signed on 13 June 1975 at Baghdad. Khalatbari, commenting on the new detente, said, "It settled everything. There are no political differences whatsoever between Iran and Iraq."⁴⁴⁷ Series of "good neighbour" agreements were signed on 26 December 1975 that covered questions like navigation in the *Shatt al-Arab*, border posts, exploitation of international river, movement of citizens etc. The final exchange of details of the treaties between Iraq and Iran were affected on 23 June 1976. Iraq-Iran disputes ended formally. Some experts, however, had their doubts about the survivability of this detente because it did not bridge the "fundamental disparity in interests between the radical Arab leaders in Baghdad and the traditional Persian ruler in Tehran."⁴⁴⁸

Since Iran's policy of extending its security perimeter beyond the Gulf was only an extension of its earlier policy of establishing a security perimeter in the Gulf, control over the sea-lanes remained the basis of Iran's security policy even in the seventies. Earlier, in the sixties, Iran had pursued a policy that gave her a dominant position in the Gulf. In the post-1971 period it tried to project that role beyond the Gulf—in the Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea as far as Bab al-Mandeb. Iran eventually planned even to control the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean. It justified its new enlarged security perimeter by arguing that its sea-lanes in those areas were

⁴⁴⁷Cottrell, n. 102, 413, and Zabih, n. 95, 356.

⁴⁴⁸Reppa, Sr., Robert B., *Israel and Iran: Bilateral Relations and Effect on the Indian Ocean Basin*, Praeger, New York, 1974, 85; Chubin and Zabih, n. 26, 223 and article by Amir Taheri, *Kayhan International*, 31 May 1972.

threatened indirectly by guerrilla attacks, through political subversion on land and also by conventional naval forces of anti-Iranian states.

The Shah had always been opposed to "radicalism" and equated that with subversion. He considered that these forces, not only in Iran but all around Iran, by challenging the *status quo*, constituted a threat to Iran's security. That explained to a large extent his concern at the trends in Oman where the regime was confronted with the Dhofar movement.

The Shah was also deeply concerned about the possibility of a guerrilla attack against shipping in the sea-lanes vital to Iran. Iran not only considered itself as the guardian of international shipping in this area but was also planning to enlarge its merchant ships. It was planning to acquire a fleet of ten tankers of about 220,000 tons each. Their safety in this area too was vital for Iran. Iran was deeply disturbed by the attack on a tanker by a speed-boat near the island of Perim in the Bal al-Mandeb area. It was reported that a 70,000-ton tanker, Coral Sea, registered in Liberia but probably chartered by Israel, with a few Israelis as crew, was carrying oil from Iran to Israel. It came under bazooka attack from a small speed-boat near the Perim island in the Bab al-Mandeb region. The tanker suffered some damage. Though the persons who had launched the attack were not captured, the Palestinian guerrilla organization, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, took credit for the act.⁴⁴⁹ Iran also took note of the official Arab blockade of Israel at Bab al-Mandeb during the October 1973 war.

The Shah was always worried about the military threat from Iraq to the Iranian oil lanes. Initially this threat was from artillery and air attack on oil installations across the *Shatt al-Arab*. Subsequently the threat was projected from torpedo boats acquired from the USSR. Finally the missile firing *Osa* boats posed a threat to shipping in the Gulf. This real or assumed threat explains repeated warnings from Iran to Iraq not to interfere with the shipping in the Gulf. The Gulf must remain open for trade in all circumstances, Abbas Hoveyda said on 10 April 1973. That, he said, was the first priority of Iranian foreign policy because the Gulf, as he put it, was the jugular

⁴⁴⁹*The Times* (London), 11 April 1973.

vein of Iran.⁴⁵⁰ If one examines this carefully it would appear that it was not so much Iran as Iraq whose shipping could be threatened. Iran had other points of access to the sea but Iraq was dependent upon a sea-lane, whether in the *Shatt al-Arab* or in the shallow waters of the northern part of the Gulf, that was dominated by Iran's superior naval and air power. But projecting a threat itself is one of the ways of gaining legitimacy for a policy that one wants to pursue.

The Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, especially in the Arabian Sea region astride the oil lanes, was also used to project a threat to Iran's security. It was argued that Soviet political and even military presence in Iraq, especially at Umm al-Qasr, especially after the Soviet-Iraqi treaty of 1972, constituted a naval threat to Iran. The Shah, in an interview in June 1972, when asked about Soviet bases in Iraq, said that one could not prevent military vessels of another country from paying visits anywhere in international waters. But if there should be a question of bases, it is obvious that that would create an entirely new situation.⁴⁵¹ Despite the fact that the Iraqis have denied that they have offered base facilities to the Soviets, the western scholars and statesmen persist in projecting that scenario to justify Iran's Gulf policy.⁴⁵² Some scholars did not stop at an indirect threat from the USSR but projected direct Soviet submarine threat to western and Iranian shipping in the area, especially outside the Gulf:

Such a threat could be mounted by the Soviet Union itself—for example, in the larger context of the Middle East crisis—but one cannot rule out actions by such Soviet client states as Somalia. It is difficult to assign any measure of probability to such a threat. . . . Nevertheless, as the guardian of his nation's ultimate security concerns, the Shah must give heed to such possible contingencies.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ *Kayhan International*, 29 June 1972.

⁴⁵¹ President Ford, at a press conference, Washington, 28 August 1974, while justifying the US naval build-up in the Indian Ocean, said that the Soviet Union had bases at Umm al-Qasr, Aden and in Somalia, *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, October 1974, 1202.

⁴⁵² Cottrell, n. 102, 430.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 410.

The contingency of a naval threat from India too was not altogether ruled out. India was growing into a major regional naval power. It operated well-balanced though somewhat out-moded weapon systems. A large part of its operational vessels like the submarines, the *Osa* missile boats and the frigates were of Soviet origin. It had effectively blockaded Pakistan during the 1971 war, not only in the Bay of Bengal but also in the Arabian Sea that washes the Iranian coast also. Pakistan was not a weak power by any means and hence India's war-time exploits did raise several security questions in Iran. This was true not only during the so-called "encirclement" era (1971-74) but also in the long-term strategic balance between India and Iran.

Iran also projected the real or potential danger from the Dhofar movement in Oman as constituting a serious threat to the freedom of navigation in the Gulf in general and to the security of Iran in particular. An American scholar, close to the Shah, maintained that the Shah deemed the rebellion in Dhofar a strategically significant conflict because he feared that a victory by the radical Arab forces of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) would be "simply a prelude to the subversion and radicalisation of all in Oman and, eventually, the Union of Arab Emirates. In other words, he faced the danger of a wildfire of radicalism in the Gulf. . . ."⁴⁵⁴ The Shah himself, in an interview to Heikal, said that he could not tolerate the emergence of a communist regime in the Gulf. "Do you think I would allow a hostile regime to emerge on the Arabian coast of the Gulf? Could I allow the emergence of a communist regime? I say it clearly I could not accept this and could not tolerate it. The Straits are the life-line of Iran."⁴⁵⁵ He said that the revolution in Dhofar was a spark and he was trying to put out the spark before the fire raged.

Undoubtedly, the Dhofar revolt was an old one and could be traced back to 1965 if not earlier. The Soviet help to the Dhofar guerrillas was also a well-known fact. Why did Iran suddenly decide to support Oman in 1973? There are several explanations for it. By the end of 1971 the British relinquished most of their

⁴⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵*Al-Anwar* (Beirut), 2 September 1975 in *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, October 1975, 981-82.

important bases in Bahrain and Sharjah. By 1972 the Dhofar movement reportedly gained momentum. Oman, on its own, was unable to control it. The British were probably unwilling to support it beyond a minimum because it would not only go against their East of Suez policy but also because it would involve them in large-scale warfare and thus leave them open to the charge of being anti-Arab. Undoubtedly the British did maintain a small but crucial presence especially in matters of air control and at command level, but somebody had to do the actual fighting. Iran thus stepped in.

Iranian troops reached Oman by February 1973. Premier Hoveyda told correspondents in London in April 1973 that Iran had lent the help on the request of the Omani Government to help it in its fight against the guerrillas in Dhofar.⁴⁵⁶ The Iranian troops increased in number from about six hundred in the beginning to between fifteen hundred and two thousand when the operations were in full swing. Subsequently, after 1976-77 the number was once again reduced to less than one thousand. These forces were rotated every three months. Thus about forty thousand Iranian troops had participated in the Dhofar war and gained valuable anti-insurgency combat experience.

The Iranians reportedly maintained their independence of action within the framework of the larger British strategic plan.⁴⁵⁷ They maintained their own logistics. Iranian C-130 transport planes operated from a base allotted to them. The Iranian troops reportedly helped to clear the line of communication and to contain the guerrillas near the Omani territory adjacent to the South Yemen border. A barbed wire and electronically guarded line, the Demavand line, was reportedly built by them. Iranian naval vessels also took part in shore bombardments on the Arabian Sea coast of Oman.

The tempo of anti-insurgency operations in Oman increased substantially after 1973. The increase in oil prices allowed the Omani regime to buy more arms, recruit more men in the army and buy up more guerrillas. Arab help both in terms of men and material increased. Saudi Arabia and UAR supplied armoured vehicles and Jordan supplied the Hunters as well as

⁴⁵⁶*Kayhan International*, 12 April 1973.

⁴⁵⁷Cottrell, n. 102, 411.

airmen to fight the guerrillas. Finally the major offensive was launched between October and December 1975 which not only pushed the guerrillas right up to the borders of South Yemen but also reduced their strength to about 600-800. By the end of December 1975 it was claimed that the revolt had been suppressed. Sultan Qaboos of Oman declared in July 1976 that Oman was "completely cleansed of the Communist pestilence."⁴⁵⁸

Iran benefited militarily from its involvement in Oman. It offered the Iranian troops, who had had no actual combat experience, a valuable practical lesson of fighting a war. Though the total number of Iranian troops committed at any one time was small, the fact that the troops were rotated every three months meant that within a short time thousands of Iranians were offered combat experience in Oman. It is true that an anti-insurgency operation alone is not the right type of training for an army equipped with the latest types of equipment for conventional war but since the Shah saw insurgency as a main threat to systemic security, maybe from his point of view the Oman experience was invaluable. Besides that the Shah also demonstrated his ability to project Iranian military power far from its shores. The troops were deployed in Oman both on the Arabian Sea coast and also the Persian Gulf coast, which was important in view of Iran's expanding security perimeter. He had also demonstrated to the Arabs that he was a force to be reckoned with in the region. Finally, "he had from his own point of view, as well as that of the United States, contributed significantly to containing and pushing back a Soviet armed, anti-western radical guerrilla movement."⁴⁵⁹

Iran's involvement in Oman also brought the two states, which had been traditional enemies, closer. This was made possible due to a timely *coup d'état* launched by the then Crown-Prince Qaboos against his father, Said ibn-Taimur, who was such an introvert that the Shah's dialogue with him was very limited. In contrast, as soon as the new Sultan came to power in 1970, talks immediately began on the security of the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, and the region in general. Official messages were exchanged for the first time between Oman and

⁴⁵⁸*Kayhan International*, 24 July 1976.

⁴⁵⁹Griffith, n. 80, 380.

Iran since the nineteenth century only after Sultan Qaboos came to power. Contacts between the two countries were further strengthened following the visit of Sultan Qaboos to Iran in March 1974. The communique issued on 14 March 1974 mentioned the desire of the two states for a joint action against saboteurs and infiltrators who threatened the security of either of their countries, for cooperation to ensure stability and security in the region and the necessity for ensuring freedom of passage through the Strait of Hormuz.⁴⁶⁰ Relations between Iran and Oman became so close that "should the British eventually decide to end their military role in Oman, Iran might be asked by the sultan to supply the personnel to direct the Omani armed forces and thus *protect the sultan against possible disloyalty from his troops.*"⁴⁶¹

There was also speculation about joint efforts by Iran and Oman to control shipping in the Gulf. It was suggested that this could be done under the framework of pollution control. It was reported as early as March 1973 that Iran had asked Oman to jointly inspect all ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz.⁴⁶² The strait is about 25 miles wide and anti-pollution measures could be enforced only through the active collaboration of the two countries which border the narrowest channel. The pollution control bill in fact got the preliminary approval of the Iranian *Majlis* on 11 May 1974.⁴⁶³ It was reported in October 1972 by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf that Iran had occupied the Omani island of Abu Ghanam at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz. The report was denied officially by the Omani Foreign Ministry. But *at-Talia* of Kuwait on 24 November 1973 raised the issue again and added that Oman had ceded rights in its territorial waters and on certain islands in the Gulf of Oman to Iran, in return for an Iranian pledge to station more troops in Oman.⁴⁶⁴

Iranian presence in Oman directly or indirectly helped Iran and Oman to have a common policy on the security of the Gulf and beyond. In fact the Shah had started discussion on that

⁴⁶⁰*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, April 1974, 474.

⁴⁶¹Cottrell, n. 102, 409 (Emphasis added).

⁴⁶²*The Indian Express*, 24 March 1973.

⁴⁶³*Kayhan International*, 12 May 1974.

⁴⁶⁴*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, January 1974, 20.

policy as early as 1971 when the Shah told Cottrell that he was discussing with the Sultan of Oman the need for joint naval defence of the area.⁴⁶⁵ The subsequent developments like the Iranian occupation of three Arab islands by the end of 1971 and its reported use of Omani islands; army, air and naval presence in Oman proper; maritime patrol over the whole area and legal measures like pollution control were all designed to enable Iran, in collaboration with Oman, to extend its sphere of influence beyond the Persian Gulf into the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and the Bab al-Mandeb region. Sultan Qaboos, however, denied this involvement in a meeting with Arab ambassadors during his Washington visit in January 1975. When he was told that his own Foreign Minister Qaiss al-Zawawi had disclosed the existence of such an agreement, he was reported to have replied, "This is not true and al-Zawawi never made such a statement."⁴⁶⁶ Whether Oman cooperated or not Iran had reportedly chalked out its policy. "Contingency plans for the virtual takeover of the Musandam peninsula in case of sabotage of the tanker traffic in the Strait or in response to the deterioration of Sultan Qaboos" hold on domestic political control have been drawn up, and appropriate military exercises testing the army's capability for amphibious landing operations have been undertaken."⁴⁶⁷

Another factor that needs to be noted in this context is the role of three CENTO powers, and of Jordan, which was always very close to them, in the anti-insurgency drive in Dhofar. It was reported as early as 1972 that the Baluchi regiment of Pakistan had been a part of the forces of the Sultanate of Oman.⁴⁶⁸ It was also said that Pakistani officers would start replacing the British officers. It is possible that regular Baluchi soldiers in the active service of Pakistan might not have been employed in anti-insurgency operations in Oman but there were reports that large number of Baluchis and Pakistani officers did join the forces of the Sultanate of Oman. Maybe the Pakistanis were try-

⁴⁶⁵Cottrell, Alvin J., "Concern over Saudi Arabia's viability. An exclusive interview with the Shah of Iran", *New Middle East*, (31), April 1971, 22.

⁴⁶⁶*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, February 1975, 169-70.

⁴⁶⁷Zabih, n. 95, 358.

⁴⁶⁸*The Times of India*, 2 June 1972.

ing to go along with the Shah in his drive for control of the Gulf and beyond in return for Iran's support in South Asia. Iran had got Jordan involved in an anti-insurgency movement in Oman. Jordanian troops were fighting in Oman. Also Jordan had transferred about 31 of its *Hawker Hunter* planes, used for ground support role, to Oman.⁴⁶⁹ The British were already there and had chalked out the broad strategy that was accepted by Pakistan, Iran and Jordan, who were either members of the CENTO or very close to the CENTO powers. No wonder Aden Radio, on 26 January 1974, said that the Iranian invasion of Dhofar had its beginnings in the meetings of the CENTO foreign ministers held at Tehran on 24 April 1973. There is no doubt that the direct involvement of Britain, Pakistan, Iran and Jordan in Oman did project the image that Iran's role in Oman was indeed part of a larger scenario.

Many Arab countries were not happy about the role Iran was playing in Oman which was an Arab state. There was an attempt to resolve the Dhofar problem peacefully. Kuwait, for some time, took a lead in this matter. It tried to come closer to South Yemen so as to open a channel of communication with it. It also offered in May 1974, a four million dinar loan to South Yemen from the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development. This led to a diplomatic rift between Oman and Kuwait and diplomats were recalled in July 1974.

The Arab League also tried to mediate in the Dhofar issue. The Foreign Minister's Conference in Tunis, March 1974, established a five-state committee composed of members from Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Kuwait and Syria. It was headed by General Riad, the Arab League Secretary-General. The committee visited Oman in May but did not meet the guerrilla leaders. Subsequently it was reported that one of the PFLO conditions for the Arab League mediation was the withdrawal of Iranian troops from Oman. It was suggested that Iranian troops be replaced by Arab troops from Egypt, Sudan, Kuwait and the UAE.⁴⁷⁰ Jordanian troops equipped with light arms and mortars were already operating in Oman. Sudan was approached by

⁴⁶⁹Cottrell, n. 102, 410 and *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, April 1975, 403.

⁴⁷⁰*Ibid.*, October 1974, 1212.

Saudi Arabia but these mediation efforts proved abortive and the Iranian troops continued to operate in Oman.

Saudi Arabia too tried to mediate in that dispute. The Saudis were interested in the settlement of that dispute in the context of their broader strategic interest in the Bab al-Mandeb area that included not only the Horn of Africa but also the Arabian and the Red Sea littoral of the Arabian Peninsula. Thus Saudi Arabia was interested not only in solving the Dhofar problem but also the problem posed by the radical movement based in South Yemen which was linked at that time to Somalia and the USSR. But Saudi Arabia could not mediate in the Dhofar question between Oman and South Yemen without first arranging a detente between itself and South Yemen. The Kuwaiti and Egyptian efforts brought about that detente by September 1975. By January 1976, Saudi Crown Prince Fahd could say that Saudi Arabia was trying to end the Dhofar rebellion through mediation between Oman and South Yemen.⁴⁷¹ The Saudi-negotiated ceasefire between South Yemen and Oman came into force in March 1976. That allowed the Omani troops to complete their mopping up operations in Oman. The Dhofar rebellion was effectively suppressed at least for the time being. The Iranian forces in Oman were gradually reduced but not totally removed, because while the Dhofar movement had ended in Oman the new Cuban threat became evident in the Bab al-Mandeb area, thereby giving Iran one more reason to feel concerned about the safety of its security perimeter.

After having acquired a dominant position in the Gulf, Iran began planning to expand its so-called security perimeter beyond, into the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Efforts were made by Iran to increase its diplomatic, political, economic and military options so as to strengthen its hands *vis-a-vis* its opponents. Iran, therefore, increased its political options by neutralizing the possible opposition from the Arab World, India and even China, by extending its presence into Oman, by strengthening its links with the CENTO, by initiating a move for the Gulf security pact, and by strengthening its military capability. In all these moves,

⁴⁷¹Interview, *al-Anwar* (Beirut), 28 November 1975, quoted in *Kayhan International*, 29 November 1975.

the “energy crisis,” that had dominated the first half of the seventies was very adroitly used by Iran to strengthen its options.

The energy crisis has to be looked into in two phases. The first phase, up to the October 1973 war, was concerned with the possible pressure on the western world due to rising consumption and levelling off of production of the fossile fuel. The use of oil as a political weapon, especially by the Arabs, was also a potential threat. In the post-October period, old factors like the political demonstration of oil embargo and cutback in oil production were buttressed by new factors like the multiple implications of the manyfold price rise of crude oil. Iran used both these aspects of the energy crisis to strengthen itself politically, economically and militarily.

The developed countries of the west and Japan had developed an over-dependence on oil as the chief source of their energy and fuel. Oil was cheap and in plenty. New fields were being discovered and exploited. Oil companies had full control over the price of oil. Thus more oil, at cheap prices, was being produced than could be consumed. This almost happy state of affairs lasted up to the mid-sixties. After that production began to level off while consumption continued to increase at the previous rate. Even the USA, that had not been affected by the oil shortage in the past, began to have doubts about the assured supply of oil in the future. By the turn of the decade the problem had assumed such alarming proportions that experts began to refer to it as the energy crisis. There were plans to tap different sources of energy like nuclear fuel, solar, geothermal, tidal and wind energy etc. Others planned to tap existing oil in the continental shelf and the deep seas or to extract it from shale and coal. Some even advocated “radical” suggestions like controlling the consumption of oil itself. But none was found practical at that time and the dependence on oil continued to grow.

It was reported that in 1971 world oil production was about 44 million barrels per day (mbd), of which the USA produced 12 mbd, and the Arab World and Iran 20.4 mbd. It was estimated that by 1980 total world production would increase to about 80 mbd. Of that the USA would produce only 13 mbd

while the Arab World and Iran would produce about 47 mbd.⁴⁷² Thus while world production would almost double, the USA would contribute to it only marginally. On the other hand, of the total world consumption of 44 mbd in 1971, the USA consumed 15.6, Western Europe 13.4 and Japan 4.8 mbd: a total of 33.8 mbd. This was supposed to increase by 1980 to 24 mbd for the USA, 27 for Western Europe and 13 for Japan, thus raising the total to 64 mbd out of a total world consumption of 80 mbd. Thus while the western world's oil production would not increase substantially its consumption would almost double. Even the USA, which had retained its independence *vis-a-vis* oil till recently, was expected to depend more and more on Middle-Eastern oil for its future energy requirements. In 1970 the total demand for oil in the USA was 14.8 mbd. Of that the USA produced 13.3 mbd. Thus it depended only marginally on imports. It was estimated that by 1980 the US demand might increase to 24 mbd and it would have to import about 12 mbd, of which 8 mbd would be imported from the countries of the Eastern Hemisphere.⁴⁷³ Thus by 1980 the USA was expected to import about 33 per cent of its oil, mainly from the Gulf countries.

The Gulf is destined to emerge as the major producer of oil and, unlike the USA, which also is a major producer, the bulk of Gulf oil will be exported. In 1971 the Gulf produced about 15.6 mbd (Iran's share 4.6 mbd) out of the world's total of 44 mbd. By 1980 it was expected to produce 41 mbd (Iran's share 9 mbd).⁴⁷⁴ It also has the bulk of the known reserves of oil in the world. It is estimated that more than 130 billion barrels are available in Saudi Arabia alone. If it is assumed that even half of the proven oil reserves of the Middle East are in the Gulf then they amount to more than 230 billion barrels, compared to only 80 billion barrels in the whole of the Western Hemisphere. The Gulf oil is also important from another angle. It is valued at something over 4.5 trillion dollars at the 1974-75 price

⁴⁷²*United States and the Persian Gulf*, Report of the Sub-committee on the Near East, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 92 Congress, 2 Session, 29 September 1972, GPO, Washington, 1972, 2.

⁴⁷³*Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴*Ibid.*

of oil and natural gas;⁴⁷⁵ a very tempting piece of real estate worth controlling for its economic potential alone.

TABLE 2
*World's Proven Oil Reserve (in billions of barrels)*⁴⁷⁶

<i>Western Hemisphere</i>		<i>Eastern Hemisphere</i>	
USA	40	Arab World (underestimated)	350
Canada	10	Iran	55
Venezuela	15	Indonesia	10
Other Latin-American states	15	Non-Arab Africa	10
		Others	5
Total	80	Total	430

*Barrels per day multiplied by five gives an approximate figure of tons per year.

The growing energy crisis also coincided with two political and economic developments that further complicated the issue. The Arabs began to argue about the use of oil as a political weapon to coerce the west into taking a more pro-Arab line in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Also several oil-producing states began to demand not only an increased share in the oil revenue but also in the management of the oil business itself. Thus the OPEC began to demand better economic terms and also participation. Some radical states like Iraq, using the political situation like the British inactivity during the Iranian occupation of the three islands in the Gulf, nationalized the British-owned Iraqi Petroleum Company on 1 June 1972. Thus there was always the fear that through the process of participation (and nationalization) the control over oil might pass from the hands of the western oil companies into those of the oil-producing countries, thereby further reducing the hold of the west over oil.

The Arabs had indeed tried to use oil as a political weapon in 1956 and 1967 by trying to stop oil supplies to the west. In 1956, and also in 1967, the real reason for the shortage of oil in Western Europe was the closure of the Suez Canal and the

⁴⁷⁵*The Persian Gulf 1975*, Hearings, Special Session on Investigations of the House Committee on International Relations, 194 Congress, 1 Session, June-July 1975, GPO, Washington, 1975, 9.

⁴⁷⁶*Ibid.*

inability of the existing tanker fleet to supply adequate oil via the longer Cape of Good Hope route. Those were the days of surplus oil production and deficit was easily made up by extra delivery from the Americas. In 1967 Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq did boycott the USA and the UK but the boycott was lifted within weeks. Arab countries did not have surplus revenue to permit the stoppage of oil export for any considerable length of time. In fact, Saudi Arabia used the argument that the Arabs should, instead of using oil as a political weapon, use the oil money to strengthen the Arab World in its conflict with Israel. But as the negotiations dragged on and a state of "no war, no peace" became a quasi-permanent feature, even pro-American Arab leaders like King Faisal began to hint by 1972-73 about the possible use of oil as a political weapon. The change in the stand was not only the result of political frustration but also the result of a substantial foreign exchange that had been accumulated by some of these states over the last few years thanks to increased oil production and also increased oil prices.

TABLE 3
*Foreign Exchange Assets of the Gulf States*⁴⁷⁷
(in \$ billion)

<i>Country</i>	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974 <i>projected</i>
Saudi Arabia	0.9	1.7	2.9	4.5	22.0
Kuwait	1.9	2.5	3.5	4.5	10.1
Iraq	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.6	7.0
Iran	0.2	0.6	1.0	1.3	9.0

Though the foreign exchange assets before the October price rise were not spectacular, yet they gave, at least to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, a substantial assurance about financial viability at least for a few months. But those months could have caused a great deal of economic chaos in the west. Thus, whereas in 1956 and 1967 the threat to use oil as a political weapon was not

⁴⁷⁷*The Persian Gulf 1974. Money, Politics, Arms and Power, Hearings, Sub-committee on the Near East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 93 Congress, 2 Session, July-August 1974, GPO, Washington, 1975, 78.*

practical for the Arabs, it could be put into practice by 1972-73 by countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and Libya, countries with limited population and almost unlimited oil money.

Iran too tried to bluff its way. The Shah, in an interview in May 1973 with Borchgrave of *Newsweek* said, "We can simply close the wells. We can survive without oil money and live on goats' milk as we did for centuries. But the industrialized world would die without oil." But Iran too could not survive without the oil money. It had negligible foreign exchange assets. Its massive industrialization programme as well as the military programme depended upon the oil money. Oil money had become a part of the Iranian system which would have collapsed without it. The Shah's regime could not survive on "goats' milk". According to Cottrell, "the Arab states in the Gulf might black-mail the USA, but Iran is one who could find it difficult to black-mail us. Remember they are a country of 30 million people, rapidly developing and with a new work-force of a quarter of a million needing jobs each year. They have to spend every bit of money they can from oil."⁴⁷⁸

Iran had by and large assured the west that it would not stop oil production or use oil as a political weapon. More important than that, it guaranteed an increase in oil production to keep pace with the increased consumption in the west and thus help to mitigate the effect of the so-called energy crisis.⁴⁷⁹ According to the *Washington Post* of 23 April 1973, Iran was presenting itself to the USA as the key Middle East source of much needed oil imports in the event of the Arab states reducing their shipments because of Washington's pro-Israeli policy. On 3 October 1973, on the eve of the Arab-Israeli war, the Shah reportedly told the *Egyptian Gazette* that if the Arabs decided to use oil as a political weapon, "that's their business but we will not intervene."⁴⁸⁰

While the west was busy trying to find alternatives to the

⁴⁷⁸*New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf*, Hearings, Sub-committee on the Near East and South Asia of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 93 Congress, 1 Session, June-July and November 1973, GPO, Washington, 1973, 127.

⁴⁷⁹*United States and the Persian Gulf*, 1972, n. 131, 4.

⁴⁸⁰*The Times of India*, 4 October 1973.

impending energy crisis and the Arabs were busy threatening to use oil as a political weapon the Shah was busy in manipulating to gain more oil money and also greater control over the oil firms. Undoubtedly Iran, despite its image as a pro-western state, was a hawk in the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries (OPEC) and used its membership of that body to gain political and economic advantages. In fact it was Iran more than the Arabs who, using the fear in the west of an energy crisis, managed to use its oil not only as a political but also as a strategic weapon in a more comprehensive sense.

The Iranian drive to obtain more money for its oil was finally successful. The Shah called upon the Gulf countries to unite in their efforts to demand more money and also hinted that embargo be placed on those oil companies that refused to comply with that demand. The first major agreement in the series was signed on 14 February 1971, following the Tehran conference. The oil price was increased by about 35 cents per barrel and hiked up to an average of \$2.15 per barrel. Other taxes were also raised. It was agreed that a fixed increase in the oil price would be allowed for the next five years. It was estimated that the Gulf countries would get an additional \$1.2 billion in 1972 under that formula and it would increase to about \$3 billion by 1975. Though the new agreement was supposed to establish a security of supply and stability in financial arrangements for at least the next five years, the urge for more money led to further negotiations. The Tehran agreement became the first step in the ladder that, in 1973, led to the steep rise in oil prices. The OPEC members met in Vienna in July 1971, and Beirut in September 1971, to demand compensation for the loss of value of their oil revenue due to devaluation of the dollar. Negotiations continued and an agreement was reached in Geneva in January 1972 whereby the oil companies agreed for an 8.5 per cent immediate increase in the posted price of crude oil from the Gulf. Further adjustments were to be made in the next five years. Another agreement was reached on 1 June 1973 between OPEC and the oil companies to raise the oil price further by 11 per cent to compensate for the dollar devaluation in February 1973.

Another question that was discussed by the OPEC was about participation of the oil-producing countries in the overall

management of the oil business. This question had been raised in the Beirut conference of the OPEC in September 1971, and also in the Geneva conference in January 1972. The Saudi Arabian Minister of Petroleum hinted at 20 per cent participation as the minimum. Dr Pachachi of Iraq said that 20 per cent was only the first step, but 51 per cent should be the ultimate objective. The participation agreement was reached in New York on 5 October 1972 between the Gulf states and the oil firms. Sheikh Yamani, the Saudi Arabian Oil Minister, explaining the spirit behind participation, said at a press conference in London on 19 September 1972, that it was a substitute for nationalization. He said that the oil companies would get compensation for the participation right that might be acquired by the state.

Iran was not satisfied with participation alone. It wanted total *de jure* control over all its oil resources. It was seeking a new agreement between Iran and the consortium of oil companies. Iran, in return for this virtual nationalization of oil companies, offered to increase oil production in Iran and to let the oil companies handle the marketing of a large part of that oil. It said that the oil companies were not prepared to double the oil production but Iran would do it by exploiting all the thirty known oil fields instead of only seventeen fields that were being exploited by the consortium at that time.

The decision to formally take over the oil industry from the consortium was taken on 20 March 1973 by the Shah. All its assets and liabilities as well as the employees were absorbed by the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). The formal agreement was signed between Iran and the oil companies on 23 May 1973.⁴⁸¹ It gave Iran full control over its oil industry. It was projected as if Iran had gained complete sovereignty over its national resources. The new oil bill was presented to the *Majlis* by Premier Hoveyda on 19 July and by 31 July 1973 the Shah had signed the new bill. In Iran 31 July is celebrated as Oil Day. The new oil deal included a twenty-year-long agreement on the sale of 29 billion barrels of crude by Iran to the consortium members. Iran also requested the consortium to offer technical assistance to NIOC. Thus, the Shah gained full control over

⁴⁸¹*Kayhan International*, 24 May 1973.

the oil resources in Iran and the oil companies of the consortium were reduced to the level of consultants and salesmen with an assured supply of oil for the next twenty years. Iran also planned to increase oil production by four times by 1980.⁴⁸²

Thus Iran, by using the scare of the so-called "energy crisis" even before the October war, succeeded in using its oil resources as a strategic weapon to increase its options in pursuit of its national policy. By offering to increase the oil production to meet the growing requirements of the west it succeeded in acquiring control over its national resources. It used the OPEC as a lever to raise the oil price to get more money for economic development and also to buy more arms. By projecting oil as the life-blood not only of Iran but also of the west, it legitimized its self-appointed role as the guardian of the sea-lanes and also of the overall security of the Gulf, and to that end acquired a *carte blanche* as far as the arms transfer from the west to Iran was concerned.

Iran knew that it could not impose an oil embargo or afford a cutback in oil production. According to Professor Marvin Zonis, "Iran is most desperately committed to as rapid a sale of oil as possible because it now finds itself in a situation where oil revenues are absolutely essential to maintaining the power of the regime."⁴⁸³ In other words, the systemic security in Iran was linked up with the continuous flow of oil money and hence Iran could not afford a cutback in oil production or reduction in its oil revenue. Its oil revenue, \$1.94 and \$3.74 billion in 1971 and 1973 respectively, was not even sufficient for the Shah's grand plans of industrialization of Iran, nor had Iran any foreign exchange surplus that could act as a shock absorber. Its foreign exchange reserves were \$0.2 bn in 1970, \$0.6 bn in 1971, \$1.0 bn in 1972 and \$1.3 bn in 1973, i.e., a small sum compared to \$2.9 bn in 1972 and \$4.5 bn in 1973 for Saudi Arabia and \$3.5 bn in 1972 and \$4.5 bn in 1973 for Kuwait.⁴⁸⁴ Thus despite its inability to effectively threaten the west with oil sanctions, Iran made a diplomatic capital out of its constraints. It made loud

⁴⁸²Ibid., 25 July 1973.

⁴⁸³Testimony of Professor Marvin Zonis, *New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf*, 1973, n. 137, 92.

⁴⁸⁴*The Persian Gulf*, 1974, n. 136, 78.

pronouncements that it would not use oil as a political weapon. By promising that Iran would not put an oil embargo it gained a diplomatic leverage with the west *vis-a-vis* even the pro-western Arab states in the Gulf. It is interesting to note that Iranian diplomacy succeeded in using oil as a strategic weapon even before the October crisis. The turn of events after October 1973 gave Iran more opportunities to strengthen the advantages gained earlier.

The oil crisis following the October war had two main facets: political and economic. The political facet was concerned with the use of oil as a political weapon by the members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) and the economic facet dealt with the steep rise in oil prices and the problems created by the need to recycle the petro-dollars. The political facet of the OAPEC's action began on 13 October 1973 when Kuwait initiated the action that finally led to the imposition of oil embargo on 17 October. Total ban on export of Arab oil was imposed on USA, the Netherlands and South Africa. It was also decided to reduce the oil production by five per cent per month and to regulate the flow of Arab oil only to those countries whom the Arabs considered as their friends or whose policy *vis-a-vis* the Arab-Israeli dispute was approved by them.

In fact the USA imported hardly 0.8 million barrels daily (mbd), out of its net requirement of 6.2 mbd from the Arab World, and the Arab oil weapon did not hurt her seriously. It hurt the West European states like UK and France, and Japan. Western Europe was importing about 10.4 mbd out of its total requirement of 15.3 mbd from West Asia while Japan imported 4.4 mbd out of its total of 5.8 mbd from that area.⁴⁸⁵ In fact, not all Arab states were sincere in their cutback in oil production as can be seen from the table of oil exports from the Gulf states.⁴⁸⁶

It is thus interesting to note that Saudi Arabia and the UAE in fact increased their oil export substantially. Their growth

⁴⁸⁵Magnus, Ralph H., "Middle East Oil", *Current History*, 68(402), February 1975, 50.

⁴⁸⁶*The Petroleum Economist*, 42 (3), March 1975, 42.

TABLE 4
Gulf Oil Exports (in million barrels)

<i>Country</i>	<i>1973</i>	<i>1974</i>	<i>% change 1973-74</i>
Saudi Arabia	2,850	3,060	+ 7.4
Kuwait	1,078	905	-16.0
Iraq	705	670	- 5.0
UAE	555	614	+10.6
Qatar	208	189	- 9.1
Iran	2,037	2,072	+ 1.7

rate was much more than that of Iran which was condemning the oil embargo.

The second facet of the oil crisis, the increase in oil price, which was the OPEC decision and not of OAPEC alone, had far-reaching consequences. In October 1973 the oil price was almost doubled to \$5.11 per barrel and by January 1974 the price had skyrocketed to \$11.65 per barrel.⁴⁸⁷ The result was that despite the cutback in oil production, oil revenues, even of the Arab oil-producing states, increased by about 300 per cent between 1973 and 1974. The steep rise in oil prices not only created problems of balance of payment unthought of before but the increased price of oil was expected to have an adverse effect on world economy, especially of those countries which depended upon oil as a major source of fuel.

The western states, affected both by the political and economic impact of the oil crisis, reacted in different manners. Europe and Japan, which depended upon the oil imports from the Arab World, swallowed their pride and projected a low profile *vis-a-vis* the Arabs. The USA, which was not directly affected at that time, took a radical position. Henry Kissinger, in a press conference in Washington on 21 November 1973, said that if the pressure were to continue unreasonably and indefinitely the USA would have to consider what counter-measures it might have to take. On 6 January 1974, James Schlesinger, the US Secretary of Defence, in a TV interview in Washington warned the Arabs that they were running the risk of having force used against them if they continued their oil embargo. Several blue-

⁴⁸⁷Magnus, n. 144, 50-1.

prints were suggested about possible US occupation of Gulf oil fields, particularly in Kuwait, by the use of US military forces. The US task-force began patrolling the Arabian Sea area after October 1973 to lend diplomatic weight to this threat. The USA also tried to organize the West European states and Japan into forming a group to fight the oil powers. This effort too failed because Japan, France and the UK could not afford to antagonize oil-producing states, at least at that time. The USA, therefore, had no option but to defuse the political impact of this crisis by bringing about Arab-Israeli disengagements in 1974-75. It also tried to mitigate its economic impact by working out various formulas for recycling of petro-dollars.

Iran took full advantage of the oil crisis of October 1973 to increase its political and economic options still further. It completely dissociated itself from the Arab oil boycott and the cutback in oil production. The Shah also hinted that Iran might even increase its oil production to offset the result of the cutback in oil production in the Arab World. This public demonstration of open solidarity with the west paid valuable dividends and Iran became even more important in the eyes of the oil-consuming nations. While assuring its political solidarity with the west, Iran missed no opportunity of gaining maximum advantage out of the increased oil price. Iran's oil revenue increased from \$4.1 bn to \$17.4 bn from 1973 to 1974, an increase of about 325 per cent.⁴⁸⁸ The increased oil money came as a windfall to Iran which invested the new revenue in economic development schemes and for the purchase of yet more weapons.

Iran used its petro-dollars to enter into close economic and technical cooperation with European powers. The UK agreed in November 1973 to help construct a cold-rolling steel plant in Isfahan, a tractor factory and an investment bank.⁴⁸⁹ Iran and West German firms agreed to invest about \$2.5 bn on a 50-50 basis in 24 joint projects including a \$1 bn oil refinery and petrochemical complex at Busheir.⁴⁹⁰ Iran also acquired a 25.4 per cent share in the Krupp. The agreement, entered into on 17 July 1974, provided for transfer of technical know-how to Iran and

⁴⁸⁸*The Petroleum Economist*, n.145, 42.

⁴⁸⁹*Kayhan International*, 29 November 1973.

⁴⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 2 May 1974.

also joint ventures in Switzerland. The biggest deal that Iran signed was with France. It was announced on 8 February 1974 that the two states had concluded a \$5 bn deal under which France would build factories, pipelines, nuclear power plants and help in oil and gas exploration in Iran. Undoubtedly, if honestly implemented, these investments would have benefited Iran immensely.

The new oil money increased Iran's GNP to \$27.3 bn and boosted, in terms of statistics, its growth rate by about 40 per cent. One of the results of the newly acquired petro-dollars was that the target of the five-year plan (1973-78) was boosted by 90 per cent from \$36 bn to \$68 bn. The future seemed so bright that the Shah, on 14 November 1973, while inspecting Iran's iron-ore mines in Choqart, is reported to have expressed the hope that Iran would catch up with advanced European nations within the next ten years.⁴⁹¹ The Shah, in his interview to *Der Spiegel* in January 1974, expressed the hope that Iran would emerge within a decade as one of the five most advanced and powerful countries in the world.⁴⁹² All this seemed possible in the first flush of excitement when Iran thought that it could go on using its oil weapon forever and hold even the west to ransom. But it soon found out that it had overreached itself.

Iran's use of oil as a strategic weapon had hurt the west at its most vulnerable point: at its economy. Not only was the Shah one of the main forces behind the steep rise in oil price in 1972-74 but Iran had continued to press for a further rise in oil price even after 1974. In January 1974, at the OPEC meeting at Geneva, Iran proposed a link between the price of oil and the price of imported manufactured goods. In April 1975 the Shah, in an interview to UPI, indicated that Iran might de-link the dollar from oil payments and demand payments in other currencies or in the Special Drawing Rights (SDR). He also talked of further price rise in view of the inflation that was affecting Iran's capacity to buy manufactured goods from the west. In January 1974 the Shah had asked the USA to guarantee delivery of a long list of vital commodities in exchange for increasing oil production for the west. It was reported that most of the fifteen

⁴⁹¹Ibid., 15 November 1973.

⁴⁹²*Dawn* (Karachi), 16 January 1974.

items listed already were, or shortly would be, in short supply even in the USA. The US officials felt that Tehran was definitely using oil as a lever to protect its long-term supplies of finished and semi-finished products. Iran's demand came at a time when Dr Henry Kissinger was publicly opposing bilateral deals between oil-producing and consuming countries. These frictions sowed the seeds of subsequent discord between the USA and Iran and forced the USA to search for alternatives among the Arab states in the Gulf for its future energy requirements and for the recycling of petro-dollars. In the meanwhile, Iran made the most of the energy crisis to gain political and economic capital and to further enhance its military capability.

Iran's support to the west during the energy crisis helped it to strengthen its military capability so as to enable it to fulfil its self-appointed task as the guardian of the sea-lanes and of security in the Gulf. Not only did Iran get a *carte blanche* for the purchase of sophisticated arms that were being introduced in the armed forces of the west but Iran was also given financial help through the Export-Import Bank to help it to acquire those weapons.

TABLE 5
Export-Import Bank Loan to Iran for Military Purchase
1971-74 (\$ million)⁴⁹³

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Exim credit authorized</i>	<i>Financial guarantee</i>	<i>Interest rate%</i>	<i>Repayment terms</i>
1971	61.9	58.1	6	14 semi-annual
1972	70.0	70.0	„	7 „
	30.0	30.0	„	„ „
1973	100.0	100.0	„	„ „
	100.0	100.0	„	„ „
1974	200.0	200.0	„	„ „
[through November]				
Total	561.9	558.1		

Iran had two-fold military objectives during this period—land/air confrontation mainly with Iraq on the Kurdish question, and its sea/air role as the guardian of the sea-lanes in the Gulf

⁴⁹³ *New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf*, 1973, n. 137, 199.

and beyond it. To meet the requirements, Iran acquired new and powerful Chieftain tanks from Britain, heavy guns, radar-controlled self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, mobile SAMs and about 300 helicopters. Air support was provided by new F-5E, F-4E and F-14 aircraft. As far as its naval development was concerned Iran, during this period, not only absorbed the weapons that it had already acquired but also strengthened itself by acquiring more weapons like missile-armed helicopters and hovercraft, that enabled it to patrol the Gulf more effectively, and submarines, landing ship and supply ships that would enable the Iranian navy to project its presence beyond the Gulf into the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. P-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft were ordered to enable Iran to keep the Arabian Sea under surveillance. The Boeing jet tankers helped to increase the range of F-4 and F-14 planes so as to double the radius of air support for the Iranian navy. Iranian naval capability would have substantially increased in the eighties when it would have operated the Spruance-class destroyer, Italian frigates and German submarines that it planned to acquire.

The October war also had its impact upon Iranian strategic thinking. The initial Arab success was primarily due to the element of surprise and massive attack that enabled the Arabs to confront Israel with tactical superiority at the points of armed confrontation. Iran responded in two ways. It sought to acquire a superior electronic surveillance system and the Blindfire anti-aircraft defence system. Also, it increased its army from 160,000 in 1973-74 to 220,000 in 1977-78. This increase also meant updating of and increase in weapon systems employed by the army. Another lesson of the October war for Iran was the high rate of attrition of the weapons and the fear that they might not be replenished during the war. The USA had found it very difficult to supply Israel with new arms during the combat. Iran felt that a similar constraint might affect it militarily during the war. Hence, to safeguard against attrition rate and lack of delivery of weapons during the war, Iran began to order weapons in bulk to have a stock-pile on hand, so that it did not have to depend upon outside help if a war broke out. Iran was able to take care of these things because of the surplus petro-dollars. It increased the standing army and placed orders

for a large number of tanks, guns, aircraft etc., so as to stock-pile them.

Apart from augmenting its military capability Iran also increased its political and diplomatic options by manipulating the international environment to suit its end. Beside consolidating its ties with the USSR and enhancing its position in the Arab World and South Asia Iran also tried successfully to gain advantages in four other fields. It sought a detente with China, strengthened the CENTO solidarity, evolved an Indian Ocean policy and attempted to develop, with the help of Arab states in the Gulf, a formula for the joint security of the Gulf.

China was too big a country to be ignored for long. One could be hostile to it but one could not operate in an international environment that would *de jure* refuse to recognize the existence of Red China and pretend that Taiwan alone represented China. Iran, while recognizing this fact, could not take the steps in the right direction because of the lack of a green signal from the USA. By 1971, the USA was modifying its position *vis-a-vis* China. Iranian recognition of China was thus influenced, among other things, by the newly developed rapprochement between the USA and China.⁴⁹⁴ It should also be noted that 1971 saw the end of the British presence in the Gulf and the beginning of a new development called the encirclement in which not only the USSR, Iraq, Dhofar movement but also India and Afghanistan were supposed to encircle and crush Iran. Possibly Iran's detente with China at that time might be an Iranian counter-measure to break this encirclement. China was seen as a potential balancer of the USSR.⁴⁹⁵ In the light of the British withdrawal from the Gulf and the growing Soviet naval presence in the area, "establishment of friendly relations with Moscow's arch-enemy seemed desirable."⁴⁹⁶ It is also possible that Iran also hoped to detach China from supporting the radical movements not only in Dhofar but also the Maoist group in Iran or

⁴⁹⁴Nabavi, Jamshid, "A commentary on the relations between Iran and the People's Republic of China", *International Relations*, Centre for International Studies, Tehran University, Tehran, (2), Winter 1974-75, 130.

⁴⁹⁵Chubin, Shahram, *Iran and International Organization*, Tehran Papers, No. 4, Tehran, 1976, 20.

⁴⁹⁶Ramazani, n. 4, 430.

Total armed forces	211,500 + 70,000 Gendarmerie with armed cars, light aircraft and helicopters, 1 Naval bn and 40 patrol boats	250,000 + 70 000 Gendarmerie with lt ac, hel, 40 patrol boats (1500 deployed in Oman with 1 hel sq)	342,000 + 70,000 Gendarmerie armed with lt ac, hel, 40 patrol boats (Deployment 1000 Oman with 1 hel sq and 388 Syria—UNDOF)
Budget	\$2,010 mn	\$10,405 mn	\$7,900 mn
Army	160,000 (Reserve 300,000) 3 armd divs, 2 inf divs, 2 inf bdes	175,000 (Reserve 300,000) 3 armd divs, 4 inf divs 2 indep bdes (1 armd bde, 1 Sp Force)	220,000 (Reserves 300,000) 3 armd divs, 4 inf divs, 4 indep bdes (2 inf 1 armed bde. 1 Sp Force)
	1 armed bde, 1 special force bde		
	1 SAM HAWK bn	1 SAM HAWK bn	1 SAM HAWK bn
	60 Chieftain, 400 M-47, 400 M-60A med tks.	300 Chieftain, 400 M-47/48, 460 M-60A med tks	760 Chieftain, 400 M-47/48, 460 M-60A1 med tks
	2000 M-113, BTR-50/60 APC heavy guns, how.	2000 M-113, BTR 50/60 APCs 650 guns (mostly heavy and also SP)	SS-11/12, TOW, Dragon ATGWs, ZSU-23-4, ZSU-57-2 SP AA guns
	SS-11/12, TOW ATGWs and a few helicopters	SS-11/12, TOW ATGWs 20 23mm and 80 57mm SP AA guns	Army Aviation Command, about 70 lt ac and 330 hel
		Army Aviation Command with about 70 lt ac and 110 hel	
		15,000 (3 Marine bns)	22,000 (3 Marine bns)
Navy	3 destroyers, 4 SAAM-class frigates 4 corvettes	3 destroyers, 4 SAAM frigates 4 corvettes	3 destroyers, 4 SAAM frigates, 4 corvettes
	10 patrol boats	25 patrol boats (9 under 100 tons)	20 patrol boats (9 under 100 tons)
	6 minesweepers, 4 landing crafts	6 minesweepers	5 minesweepers, 2 landing ships

10 hovercraft, 1 sq hel	2 landing craft and 12 hovercraft Naval Air Tpt bn, 35 hel	2 landing craft Naval Air
		1 MR sq with 16 P-3E Orion ASW sq, 6-S-65A hel, 1 tpt sq, 6 Strike Commander and 4 F-27s 48 hel
Air Force		
40,000 (159 Combat aircraft)	60,000 (238 combat aircraft)	100,000 (341 Combat aircraft)
64 F-4D/E with Sidewinder and Sparrow AAM	F-4D, 64 F-4E (with Side winder & Sparrow AAM and Maverick ASM)	32 F-4D, 141 F-4E (AAM and ASM)
80 F-5A	80 F-5A, 45 F-5E	12 F-5A, 100 F-5E (12 F5A transferred to Jordan and 56 to Pakistan)
1 recon/sq with 15 RT-33	recon sqs with 4RF-4E, 13 RF-5A	40 F-14
1 tpt sq with 35 C-130E	med. tpt. sqs with	1 Recon sq with 16 RF-4E
2 lt tpt sq with 12 F-27, 6 Bever and about 26 hel	56 C-130E14	1 tanker sq with 10 Boeing 707-320L
	28 lt tpt ac, 71 hel including 16 Super Frelon	4 med tpt sq with 57 C-130, 5 Boeing 747, 23 F-27 ek.
	Rapier and Tigercat SAMs	48 hel (16 Super Frelon)
		5 SAM sqs with Rapier and Tigercat

1973-74

1975-76

1977-78

Army

740 Chieftain, 175 mm SP guns and
155 mm/203 mm how
46 AB-205A helo

Army

1680 Chieftain med tks
250 Scorpion lt tks
ZSU-23-4 SP AA

Army

1220 Chieftain med tks, 110 Scorpion
BMP MICV, ASU-85 SP ATK
ZSU-23-4 SP AA
Rapiet, Improved HAWK and SA-7/9
SAMs

Navy

6 P-3C Orion (MR)
202 AH-1J helo
4 BH-7 hovercraft

Navy

3 Tang-class subs
6 Spruance-class destroyers
12 FBB (with Exocet SSM)
2 BH-7 hovercraft
6 S-65 helo

Navy

3 Tang-class subs
4 Spruance-class destroyers
12 FFB (with Harpoon SSMs)
2 landing craft
3 P-3C (MR)
3 RH-53 D helo

Air Force

70 F-4E
141 F-5E
20 C-130, 4 F-28
6 Boeing 707-320 (tanker)
287 UH-1H

Air Force

80 F-14, 190 F-4
179 F-5E 16 RF-4E Rce
6 P-3 Orion MR, 6 KC-135 (tanker)
26 C-130E, 30 C-130H
4 F-27, 22 CH-47 C helo

Air Force

69 F-5E/F, 40F-14
160 F-16
4 Boeing 747, 2F-27
1 Boeing 707 320C (tanker)
19 Bonanza trainer

214 A Huey Plus utility helo	Blindfire SAM radar	50 CH-47 and 38 Bell 214C helos Blindfire SAM radar Phoenix, Sparrow and Sidewinder AAMs

<i>Type of vessel</i>	<i>Acquired or ordered before 1971</i>	<i>Acquired or ordered in 1970s</i>	<i>Ordered in 1970s but planned for 1980s</i>
Submarine		3 Tang-class (ex-US)	Several German subs
Destroyer	3 (1 ex-British and 2 ex-US)		6 Spruance-class (number reduced to 4)
Frigate	4 (SAAM-class)		Several Italian frigates
Corvette	4 (ex-US)		
Minesweeper	6 (ex-US)		
Light Force			
FPB (Missile)			12 Combattante-class (armed earlier with Exocet but changed to Harpoon)
PGM large	3		
small	10		
Hovercraft		(can operate	
heavy	2	4 Harpoon SSMs)	
light	6		
Auxiliary ships			
Landing ship			
craft	1	2	
Fleet supply ship			
Fleet tanker		2	
Harbour tanker	1	2	

Water boat	1	
Repair ship		1
Floating dock		1
Survey vessel	3	

among the Iranians outside.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, in the light of the encirclement threat, "Iran's Peking connection, based on mutual distrust of Soviet intentions, makes Iran and China logical allies in South Asia."⁴⁹⁸

One of the hindrances in the way of improvement in Sino-Iranian relations, was Iran's close political and economic ties with Taiwan. Despite the fact that Tehran wanted to improve relations with Peking, it failed because of its two-China policy. This policy can be seen in its approach to the question of Peking's membership of the United Nations, which Iran had been advocating as early as 1967, if not earlier. The Shah, in an interview with a German news agency in 1967, said that the Peking regime should be represented in the UN and "If the time comes when the admission of China does not necessitate the expulsion of Formosa from the United Nations, we would vote in favour of the membership. Since there is also in Formosa an independent Government, we were obliged to abstain from voting. If the admission of Communist China were the only subject for consideration, we would vote for its membership."⁴⁹⁹ This position of Iran on the two Chinas was repeated by the Shah in his interview in New Delhi in 1969. The Iranians gave up that theory by 1971. It helped in promoting Sino-Iranian detente and the subsequent recognition of Peking.

The first hint about Tehran's recognition of Peking was leaked out by *L'Express* on 3 January 1971. Just before the visit of the Shah's sister, Princess Ashraf, to China the Shah told the correspondent of the Middle East News Agency on 11 April 1971, that Iran was studying the question of recognizing China "just as it studies all world affairs." But he also hinted about the rights of 16 million people in Formosa. The ten-day visit of Princess Ashraf, at the initiative of the Chinese government, was the first concrete evidence of Sino-Iranian detente. Princess Ashraf, in a news conference on 26 April, said that she was optimistic about recognition of Peking. Her visit was followed by that of her younger sister, Princess Fatemeh, who was accompanied by the

⁴⁹⁷Chubin, n.154, 20.

⁴⁹⁸Chubin, n. 6, 178.

⁴⁹⁹Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information and Press Department, *Iran's Foreign Policy* (no place, no date,) 134.

wife of Premier Hoveyda and the wife of the chief of the Pakistani Air Force. This party too was welcomed by Mao Tse-tung, Premier Chou En-lai and Defence Minister Lin Piao. These high-level but unofficial visits were followed on 17 August by the announcement about Tehran's recognition of Peking as the sole legal government of China. Pakistan had played a crucial role in bringing about this Sino-Iranian detente.

Sino-Iranian relations were strengthened with the appointment of a top Iranian, Abbas Aram, as the ambassador in March 1972. His Chinese counterpart was appointed the next month. The third royal person to visit China was Empress Farah, who made a ten-day trip to China. Her visit was also routed via Islamabad. She was accompanied by Premier Hoveyda, Hushang Ansari, the Minister of Economy, and Dr Eghbal, the Head of the NIOC. This trip laid down the foundations of economic links between the two countries. Premier Chou En-lai and Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei returned the visit in June 1973 and publicly endorsed Iran's Indian Ocean and Gulf policy.

The detente with China was useful to Iran in more than one way. It strengthened its position *vis-a-vis* three crucial questions: nuclear weapon free zone, Gulf policy and the super-power position in the Indian Ocean. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Chi Peng-fei, in a banquet speech in Tehran on 15 June 1973 said that Iran was right in strengthening its forces in the fight against subversion in the Persian Gulf. He defended Iran's massive arms build-up and described it as essential, necessary and understandable. He urged Iran to do everything in its power to stop the influence of some of the big powers in the Gulf. He also supported Iran's policy of turning the Indian Ocean into a peace zone free of foreign interference.⁵⁰⁰ These sentiments were repeated in subsequent statements by other Chinese leaders such as the Chinese Vice-Premier, Li Hsien-nien.⁵⁰¹

Improvement in Sino-Iranian relations also helped to decrease the Iranian threat perception *vis-a-vis* the radical threat within Iran and also in the Gulf. It was reported that the *Tudeh* party of Iran had split into a Moscow faction and a Peking faction.

⁵⁰⁰Chubin, no. 6, 179.

⁵⁰¹*Kayhan International*, 6 April 1975.

By 1970 Maoism had replaced the Soviet brand of communism among the regime's most adamant opponents engaged in a protest movement.⁵⁰² A detente with China and Peking's support to the Shah and his policies probably gave legitimacy to the Iranian system and thus undermined the so-called Maoist group in Iran. The detente also led to the Chinese gradually withdrawing their support from the guerrillas in Dhofar. Till 1970, China was actively encouraging the PFLOAG by supplying it with arms and with ideological and military training. There was even a Mao Tse-tung guerrilla company operating in Dhofar.⁵⁰³ By 1972-73 the Chinese support had ended completely.

Sino-Iranian detente also led to the prospects of an improvement of bilateral economic ties. On 31 October 1971 the Iranian government authorized a direct trade between the two countries on a barter basis.⁵⁰⁴ A trade and marketing mission, composed of about eleven Iranian businessmen and industrialists, visited China in November 1971. The first official Chinese trade mission reached Tehran in April 1972. Further talks took place during the visit of Empress Farah in October 1972. Iran offered China its help in petroleum technology and sugar plantations etc. The Chinese offered their help in tea and rice cultivation in the Caspian Sea area. *Iran Air* was allowed to operate passenger flights to China and the flights began by March 1973. A trade and payment agreement was signed between the two countries on 8 April 1973 in Peking during the visit of Iranian Minister of Economy, Hushang Ansari.⁵⁰⁵

The Sino-Iranian detente began with great fanfare but subsequent developments did not match the great expectations of a grand alliance between Peking-Islamabad-Tehran axis to counter the Moscow-Baghdad-New Delhi axis. The turmoil in China, following the death of its top leaders, was partly responsible for this. Also, the fear of encirclement ceased to dominate Iran's foreign policy following its detente with India in 1973 and with Iraq in 1975. Moreover Iran and China had nothing in common in religion, language, culture, political and ideological frame-

⁵⁰² Chubin and Zabih, n. 26, 75.

⁵⁰³ *Kayhan International*, 27 December 1970.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 November 1971.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 9 April 1972.

work or even in the economic field. The only thing common between them at that time was a negative approach to the USSR which could not be the basis of a long-term cooperation. "China's main interest in the region is to act as a spoiler of previously existing Soviet interests and ambitions . . . the major thrust of Chinese policy since 1971 has been to counter Soviet influence in Iran through the development of relations of the state-to-state level."⁵⁰⁶ Iran's policy was more positive than the Chinese one. Also, the USSR was the next-door neighbour whereas China was far away. It is, therefore, not illogical that while the Shahbanou was visiting Peking in October 1972 the Shah was visiting Moscow to sign a 15-year economic pact.

Three factors influenced Iran's Indian Ocean policy: desire to be accepted as the guardian of the oil lanes in the Indian Ocean, the impact of growing super-power and big-power presence in the area, and the Shah's idea of evolving an Indian Ocean community including as many littoral states as possible, especially Australia and South Africa. Iran, with economic and naval power, was expected to be the cornerstone of this Indian Ocean community. All these three factors were interconnected and formed the basis of Iran's expanding security perimeter theory.

Assured supply of Gulf oil was the basis of Iran's political, economic and military bargain with the west. By 1971, theoretically Iran had been able to assure the control of the oil lanes in the Gulf. In the following years Iran tried to ensure a safe sea-lane beyond the Gulf as well. Till then it did not have the foundation of a blue-water navy. After 1972 it began to order heavy vessels like the Spruance-class destroyers, submarines, supply vessels, fleet tanker etc., that would enable the Iranian navy, at least on paper, to patrol the sea-lanes leading out of the Gulf to the Strait of Malacca and to the Cape of Good Hope. Iran's acquisition of port facilities in Mauritius was a part of that scenario. According to Cottrell, who had a series of meetings with the Shah in the seventies, the Shah was pessimistic about the capability of Japan, the UK and even the USA, especially after the Vietnam withdrawal, to ensure the safety of the sea-routes in the Indian Ocean. "He was thus led to the hard con-

⁵⁰⁶*The Arabian Peninsula, Iran and the Gulf*, n. 8, 21.

clusion that Iran would have to assume a significant role in protecting the sea-routes and maintaining security and stability for a considerable portion of the area to the east and south of the Strait of Hormuz—the area frequently referred to as the north-western quadrant of the Ocean.”⁵⁰⁷

The growing super-power presence, especially the Soviet naval presence, was used by Iran to project itself as an Indian Ocean power. Claiming that the British withdrawal had left a vacuum in the area, he told Heikal in September 1975, “I do not claim that I can fill it alone, but I think that it is necessary for the states of the region to have a naval presence in the Ocean.”⁵⁰⁸ Iran’s sympathies naturally were with the west and, therefore, while supporting the UN General Assembly’s resolution on the question of creating a peace zone in the Indian Ocean, Iran invariably supported the stand that it could not ask the USA to leave the area as long as there was a Soviet presence there.⁵⁰⁹ Thus Iran went along in the UN with the Afro-Asian stand on the question of creating a peace zone in the Indian Ocean but retained its option to support the western line of action in the area.

Iran also sponsored another idea that could link its policies in the Indian Ocean area with those of other like-minded states. Iran advocated the creation of an Indian Ocean community. The philosophy behind this idea was elaborated by the Shah in an interview given to R.K. Karanjia of the *Blitz* (Bombay). He outlined the scenario of his project for an Indian Ocean economic community to enable these states to mobilize their economic potential and power in a cooperative manner for their speedy mutual development, as well as the security of their lands and waters against hostile threat.⁵¹⁰ He said that the proposed economic union must, to begin with, cover all the northern nations of the Indian Ocean, and subsequently all the countries around the rim of its waters. He added that if there could be such a cooperation and collaboration amongst the littoral states, no external power would dare to intrude into the Indian Ocean

⁵⁰⁷Cottrell, n. 102, 406.

⁵⁰⁸*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, October 1975, 980.

⁵⁰⁹Press Conference, New Delhi, *Statesman* (New Delhi), 4 October 1974. Also see *Kayhan International*, 21 July 1976.

⁵¹⁰*Blitz* (Bombay), 23 March 1974.

region. The Shah elucidated this concept during his trip to South East Asia in September, and to India in October 1974. Iran's growing links with Australia and South Africa should, therefore, be seen in the context of Iran's Indian Ocean policy.

Iran could not successfully pursue its Indian Ocean policy, both political and military, without developing closer contacts with the west. Hence the CENTO, that had been passed off earlier as a charming but rather useless club, had to be revamped. Other variables that influenced Iran's foreign policy in the post-1972 period, like the fear of encirclement, Iran's new interests in South Asia and links with Pakistan, dangers of "subversion" in the region and the fear of super-power detente, made it imperative for Iran to strengthen its western umbrella which meant not only strengthening its bilateral links with the USA but also projecting and demonstrating the framework of Iran's solidarity with the west—CENTO.

Both Pakistan and Iran renewed their interest in the CENTO in the first half of 1973 before the Indo-Iranian detente and also the October war. Pakistan, that had withdrawn from the SEATO in November 1972 because of lack of support from the west on the Bangladesh question showed interest in the CENTO possibly to get Iran involved on its behalf in South Asia. It was reported that it upgraded its representation at various conferences of the CENTO. General Tikka Khan, who was largely responsible for the events in Bangladesh in 1971, attended the CENTO meetings in June 1973. Pakistan benefited from its renewed interests in CENTO. It began to receive political and military support not only from the USA but also from Iran, especially for reasserting its position in Baluchistan.

Iran was also afraid of the growing detente between the super powers. Nixon and Kissinger had been doing their best in 1972-73 not only to reach the agreement on SALT but also to initiate a process whereby the USA and the USSR could reduce the intensity of their conflictual relationship as a first step towards evolving a new formula for a super-power understanding on problems of mutual interest. There was a lurking doubt in the Iranian mind that the west, and especially the USA, in its quest for detente, might reach a degree of understanding with the Soviet Union that would preclude smaller states like Iran from using super-power antagonism, tension and mutual suspicion to

their advantage. Of course the Iranians put it in a more sophisticated manner. Premier Hoveyda is reported to have told the CENTO Ministerial Council in June 1973, "Detente in one part of the world should not be achieved at the cost of a free hand for disruption and subversion in other parts."⁵¹¹

Fear of subversion was also used as another reason for strengthening the CENTO. Undoubtedly the anti-subversion committee of the CENTO, of which the USA was an active member, had always played an important part in that organization. In the first half of the seventies, subversion was considered the major threat, whether it be in South Asia (Bangladesh, Baluchistan, Pakhtoonistan) or in the Gulf (Dhofar and Khuzistan). The threat from subversion was linked to the threat of encirclement, finally to the danger from the USSR itself. The question of dangers of subversion was widely discussed at the meeting of the Ministerial Council of the CENTO in Tehran in June 1972.⁵¹² But while the Americans supported the Iranian fear of threat from subversion, they refused to broaden the frame of reference beyond the Soviet-sponsored subversion to cover, as Iran wanted, Arab-sponsored movements also. Iran was not happy with it.

Reactivising the CENTO was meaningless without creating a framework for a strong US military presence in the area. Iran thus gave full diplomatic support to maintain US military presence not only in the Gulf but also in the Indian Ocean. But Iran was caught in a dilemma. Not only did the Shah need an active US presence in the area but publicly Iran had to fall in line with the Afro-Asian resolution on declaring the Indian Ocean a peace zone. Thus while Iran did everything it could to prolong the US presence in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean it publicly asked both the super-powers to leave the area and to let the local powers fill the vacuum. Iran, in short, wanted to lean on the USA till it was strong enough to take over fully.

As discussed earlier Iran, while endorsing the General Assembly resolutions, declaring the Indian Ocean as a peace zone, argued for continuing US military presence in the Indian Ocean area as a counter to the Soviet presence. Iran also actively

⁵¹¹*Kayhan International*, 16 June 1973.

⁵¹²*Department of State Bulletin*, 49 (1777), 16 July 1973, 83-4. Also see *ibid.*, 84-7.

participated in the annual naval exercises of the CENTO—the *Midlink*. Nearer home too, Iran had been supporting the continuation of American presence, whether in Masirah or in Bahrain. The strategic island of Masirah had a major British air base that was often used by the CENTO members and the USA during the CENTO exercises. By 1975 it was reported that the British, which had leased the island in 1958, wanted to withdraw from it. The USA showed interest in retaining the use of the base facilities there.⁵¹³ Iran was reportedly backing the US policy in Masirah. Base facilities there would be useful not only to the USA but also to Iran under the framework of Iran-Oman cooperation in Dhofar.

In the Gulf proper, there were reports that Iran had let the USA establish a key tracking station in Abu Musa. This was reported by the Iraqi delegate to the UN Security Council on 16 February 1974. It is possible that the facilities established in Abu Musa might have been installed with American help but operated by the Iranians. The Iranians probably would not let the Americans occupy Abu Musa, especially when the Americans already had a naval base at Juffair in Bahrain. Iran had gone out of its way to see that the USA retained the base there. It was reported that after the October war Bahrain requested the USA to leave the Bahrain base. The notice was withdrawn by October 1974. Again in September 1975 the USA was threatened with a quit notice but pressure was brought upon Bahrain to let the USA continue to use that base. According to Sepehr Zabih, the Bahrain government was pressurized by Iran to permit the US to continue to stay on in Bahrain⁵¹⁴ and hence in the Gulf. Iran was thus biding for time and wished to retain the US presence in the area till Iran was strong enough to replace the USA in the eighties just as it had replaced the British in the seventies.

The Iranians not only desired to emerge as the dominant power in the region but also sought an international acceptance and legitimacy to play that role. Premier Hoveyda had made a statement as early as April 1973 that Iran was strong enough to

⁵¹³Cottrell, Alvin J., "Soviet-US naval competition in the Indian Ocean", *Orbis*, 18(4), Winter 1975.

⁵¹⁴Zabih, n. 95, 351 (footnote 13).

deal with any trouble in the region of the Persian Gulf.⁵¹⁵ Given its military capability and linkages with the west, this was not far from true. However, Iran, hoping to acquire legitimacy for its proposed role as the guardian of the Persian Gulf, decided to promote two interconnected policies: offer to help any state in the Gulf that asked for Iranian support, and a regional security pact.

As early as 12 May 1971, Iranian Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi made a statement to the effect that though Iran did not plan to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms, it was ready to give them assistance.⁵¹⁶ This statement was made even before the British departure and the emergence of these sheikhdoms as the new independent states of Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE. By 1972 Iran had begun helping Oman in Dhofar. On 21 October 1975 Hoveyda made a very categorical statement to the effect that Iran would consider requests for assistance to fight new international intrigues anywhere in the Persian Gulf. He added that the Shahanshah had clearly declared Iran's readiness to consider pleas for help from regional countries thus threatened.⁵¹⁷ This point was specifically stressed by the Shah in his interview with Sami Hashem of *al-Ahram*.⁵¹⁸ Iran's offer was accepted by Oman and Iran did render considerable assistance to Oman in its efforts to suppress the insurgency in Dhofar. Iran also offered its help to Kuwait in 1973 when Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations were worsening but Kuwait did not respond positively.

During that period Iran also tried its best to form some form of regional security pact. The Shah, in an interview with the Kuwaiti paper, *al-Rai al-Aam* following the announcement of the British East of Suez policy, said that the regional powers could cooperate to fill the vacuum that might be created by the British withdrawal. He also specifically mentioned that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran would have to play a key role in that regard.⁵¹⁹ He referred to the idea of a regional defence alliance again in

⁵¹⁵ *Dawn*, 23 April 1973.

⁵¹⁶ *News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, June 1971, 1'.

⁵¹⁷ *Kayhan International*, 22 October 1975.

⁵¹⁸ *Tehran Journal*, 12 June 1976.

⁵¹⁹ *India's Foreign Policy*, n. 158, 91.

1969 in an interview to the *Washington Post*.⁵²⁰ The idea was mooted again in March 1970.⁵²¹ These efforts did not succeed because of the Arab-Iranian dispute concerning the three islands.

The idea was floated again in 1973 by the Shah who suggested the creation of a NATO-style pact for the Gulf.⁵²² He repeated his plea in an interview with *Spiegel* on 7 June 1974 but said that there was no positive response from the Arab side. Probably the Iraq-Iran rivalry was inhibiting even the pro-western Arab states from openly joining with Iran in a pact. The policy of non-alignment that was openly professed by the Arabs also acted as an inhibiting factor. Iraq-Iran detente of March 1975, however, removed one irritant, with the result that both Iran and Iraq began making some tentative moves towards reaching some understanding on joint responsibility for ensuring security in the Gulf. The Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, stated that the reconciliation accord between Iraq and Iran had paved the way for a serious consideration of a collective security system in the Gulf region. Yet, he also told Amir Taheri of *Kayhan* that it was too soon to seek military alliance among the regional powers. He suggested that initiative in that direction could be taken after all countries in the area had settled their differences.⁵²³

The Shah also showed signs of making concessions. Instead of a NATO-like pact as demanded earlier, the Shah, in an interview with the *Observer* of 4 May 1975, was prepared to negotiate for some sort of council or even conference of Gulf states to cope with the regional problems. Thus the emphasis shifted from regional security *per se* to regional cooperation. He was also prepared for an end to the US military presence in Bahrain in return for the end to the Soviet military presence in Iraq.⁵²⁴

Iraqi willingness to negotiate conditions that would ensure security in the Gulf was also clear from a proposal made by Saddam Hussein in an interview to *al-Destour* of Beirut. He disclosed that he had suggested to the Shah that the Gulf states should issue a joint declaration guaranteeing freedom of naviga-

⁵²⁰Ibid., 92.

⁵²¹Chubin, n.6, 92.

⁵²²*Kayhan International*, 16 May 1973.

⁵²³Ibid., 27 April 1975.

⁵²⁴*News Review, West Asia*, n. 20, June 1975, 599-600.

tion in the Gulf. He said that that declaration should state that no power had the right to interfere with that freedom and if that happened then all states of the region, with a spirit of joint responsibility, should cooperate in removing that obstruction.⁵²⁵ He said that such a joint declaration would allay Iran's fear about the freedom of navigation in the Gulf. He also added that, in return, Iran should end all those measures which infringed on Arab sovereignty, and particularly withdraw its troops from Oman. President Bakr of Iraq also reiterated the Iraqi support for the collective declaration on freedom of navigation in the Gulf.⁵²⁶

The question of Gulf security was being widely discussed during 1975-76. It came up during the meeting between the foreign ministers of the Gulf states who had met in Jeddah in July 1975 during the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference. The foreign ministers of the Gulf states not only endorsed in principle the need for a summit meeting on this subject but also drew up a 6-point provisional agenda as a term of reference for the same. It discussed the ways and means to resolve conflicts in the region and to keep the foreign powers out of the Gulf. It also sought to include the topic of military cooperation among the Gulf states to guarantee free navigation through the Gulf. The question of Gulf security was discussed during the visits of Prince Fahd to Tehran in July 1975 and Premier Hoveyda and Saddam Hussein to Saudi Arabia in April 1976. All these developments paved the way for the Muscat conference.

It was the first formal conference held at foreign-ministers level in which all the Gulf states participated. It failed to achieve any result and broke off after two days without even a declaration. The proceedings were not officially disclosed but the unconfirmed reports dealt in detail about the conference. According to *Economist's Foreign Report* of 1 December 1976, Iran offered a plan for a unified army, navy and air force under a joint command, which would be responsible for the defence of the member states and the Gulf waters. That joint army was also to be used if any regime was threatened internally. The navy, whose backbone would have to be the powerful Iranian fleet, would

⁵²⁵Ibid., October 1975, 988-89.

⁵²⁶Ibid., August 1975, 539.

not only have ensured the coastal security of the Gulf states, but would have closed the Gulf to outside shipping, except when permission for navigation was given by the Gulf grouping. In other words, the Gulf would have become a closed sea. Iraq, on the other hand, proposed a treaty under which each Gulf state would retain its littoral rights but would ensure free navigation to international shipping. Thus not only would the USA enjoy its naval base in Bahrain, but the Umm al-Qasr port facilities would remain open for Soviet vessels.

The Saudis were not happy with either of the proposals. Saudi Arabia had resented the Shah's ambitions in the Gulf and his predilection for proclaiming himself as the sole protector of the Gulf. The Saudis were also not very happy about Soviet-Iraqi relations. Thus the Saudis, for the time being, preferred the *status quo* or the policy of inaction. Attention was also drawn, in connection with Gulf security, to a tripartite understanding between Egypt, Sudan and Saudi Arabia about the defence of the Red Sea. It was reported that Egypt had advocated that the defence and security of the Gulf and the Red Sea be interlinked. The Egyptians had toured the Gulf, just before the Muscat conference, in an attempt to sell this line. Such an arrangement would help to project the large Egyptian navy, since the Suez Canal was operational, into the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandeb and the Gulf. The Arabs too would have an Arab navy to balance the Iranian navy, at least till such time as their efforts to have a functional navy were successful. Also, since Egypt was coming closer to conservative Arab oil-producing countries of the Gulf, the Egyptian presence might reassure them not only *vis-a-vis* Iran but also Iraq. Needless to say, neither Iran nor Iraq supported the Egyptian plan.

The Iranians took the failure of the Muscat conference rather seriously. Not even the shooting down of an Iranian Phantom plane by the rebels in Dhofar just near the frontiers of South Yemen helped to distract the attention. In an article the *Kayhan* commentator, Amir Taheri, not only criticized Iraq and the USSR, but also the USA for the failure of that conference. He said that the "United States is not especially keen on collective security in the Persian Gulf A regional grouping would mean a further strengthening of OPEC which is not particularly

popular in Washington.”⁵²⁷ He also added that with an alliance like that the grand designs, like the invasion of the oil fields by the west, would also become difficult. The article also accused the USA of playing the divide and rule policy in the Gulf. Thus the break-up of the Muscat conference cannot be ascribed to Iraq alone as some would want it to be. The Saudi-Egyptian-US policy too had a say in it.

Iranian efforts to evolve a Gulf security pact have not succeeded for several reasons. Two of them are important. The Arabs have a lingering distrust of Iran because of its size, population and military potential. For many of the smaller states in the southern littoral, Iran's advocacy of collective defence of the Gulf is tantamount to seeking formal acceptance of her political and military predominance. As they see it, the existing military and political disparity among the littoral states is bound to transform any form of collective defence arrangement into an instrument of military hegemony of the predominant power within the proposed grouping. They are also resentful of the “Big Brother” attitude of the Shah about the guardianship of the Gulf. According to Chubin, Iran's concept of a regional security system “embraces the concept of ‘peace zone’ in which the strongest regional actors would assume responsibility for the area's defence.”⁵²⁸ According to him, Iran, because of its military capability, could extend a protective umbrella over the whole of the Gulf and thus ensure security under the formula of the regional security system.

This attitude persisted despite the Shah's efforts to remove that image. In an interview, he said that Iran's readiness to provide military assistance to other countries in the region in no way represented a kind of big brother policy.⁵²⁹ Many also saw Iran's insistence upon forming a Gulf security pact or organization as a means to legitimize Iranian intervention in the area. “There is at present one plausible explanation for Tehran's constant reiteration of the need for a formal Persian Gulf defence pact; the desire to have *standing* authority to intervene in the event

⁵²⁷Taheri, Amir, “Muscat meet was first act in a long drama”, *Kayhan International*, 5 December 1976.

⁵²⁸Ibid., 13 October 1975.

⁵²⁹Ibid., 18 July 1976.

of sudden disruption on the Arab littoral.”⁵³⁰ No wonder even those Arabs who are pro-western found it difficult to go along with Iran on this point. Iran was, therefore, left with no alternative but to claim that it would defend the region single-handed.⁵³¹ This left Iran open to the charge that it wanted to fill the vacuum left by the British in the Gulf.

There is no doubt that between 1971 and 1975 Iran did manage to attain most of the objectives that it had chalked out for itself. It had consolidated its position in the Gulf and had managed to expand its influence on the Indian Ocean littoral of the area, especially in Oman. Iran also acquired a huge quantity of weapons to enable it to develop a military capability that would be essential to fulfil the goal that it had set for itself. It also successfully utilized the international environment not only to strengthen its bonds with the pro-western elements but also to neutralize the potential threat from the USSR, China, India and radical Arabs. Its economy was booming and the Shah was willing to liberalize the strict political control at home which gave a hint that he felt a lessening of the threat even from internal sources. It seemed that in 1975 the Shah was firmly in saddle and that Iran was on its way to develop as a major power in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean region. But subsequent events proved that Iran had overreached itself. Thus, 1975 saw the beginning of the decline of Iran.

The Downhill Path

Probably the most important cause for the downward trend in Iran's regional position was the changing domestic and foreign policy perceptions in the USA over which Iran had no control. Several factors like the continuing energy crisis and, therefore, dependence upon reliable oil sources for a long period, need to mitigate the impact of oil-price rise, domestic and foreign policy compulsions that forced the USA, especially since 1973, to do tight-rope walking on the Arab-Israeli conflict, both because of the energy angle and also because of the powerful Zionist lobby

⁵³⁰ Chubin, n. 6, 180-81.

⁵³¹ Shah's interview to Aukaz of Saudi Arabia, *Tehran Journal*, 29 May 1976.

in the west, and finally the need to compete with the USSR in a wide and vital area covering the two oceans, the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean via the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Gulf and the Arabian Sea. The USA gradually began to realize that in all these new variables influencing US policy, Iran was to play, in future, a gradually diminishing role as compared to the role the Arab World was expected to play, and that the conservative oil-producing Arab states in the Gulf were going to dominate the Arab policy because of the petro-dollars. That realization marked the beginning of the decline of the Iranian position in the American frame of reference. Since the Shah's calculations were based primarily upon the continuing and overwhelming American support, both in domestic and foreign policy, the change in the American perception affected the Shah's position as well.

The energy crisis was a real threat to American systemic security. In the seventies the USA, which was producing surplus oil, began to import oil for its domestic needs. Its rate of oil consumption was maintained at the same level but its domestic production could not cope up with the energy requirements. More serious than that, the US proven reserves, estimated to be about 30 billion barrels, were not expected to last for more than eight years at the 1977 rate of production, which was 9.2 million barrels a day (mbd) in 1977. Even the sources nearby from where the USA could hope to draw oil, like Canada and Mexico, had limited reserves. Proven reserves of Canada amounted to 6 billion barrels. Mexico's reserves were estimated at 14 billion barrels. (New fields have been discovered in Mexico recently.) The combined reserves amounted to 20 billion barrels which would not last for more than five years at the 1977 rate of consumption for the USA. Even the Chinese with their estimated 20-billion-barrel reserve could not hope to meet the US energy requirements for long. Thus the USA is compelled to look towards the Gulf for its future energy requirements.

The US dependence on Gulf oil was already growing. By 1977 it was importing about 12 per cent of the total oil consumed from the Gulf—about 1.2 mbd from Saudi Arabia, 0.3 mbd from Iran and 0.255 mbd from UAE.⁵³² The Gulf alone, with its

⁵³² *Access to Oil—The United States Relations with Saudi Arabia and*

massive oil production and huge proven reserves, is capable of supplying the future energy requirements of the USA for any reasonable length of time. In 1977 it produced about 34 per cent of the total oil production of the world and had about 52 per cent of the world's proven oil reserves. But the country that mattered most was Saudi Arabia. It had one-fourth of the world's oil reserves, produced about one-eighth of the world's oil and its oil production was increasing every year. Saudi Arabia and other "conservative" Arab states taken together had about 37 per cent of the world's proven reserves and produced about 29.5 per cent of its total. Iran, by contrast, had only ten per cent of the world's reserves and produced about ten per cent of the world's oil. Its reserves could last only for 30 years at the 1977 rate of production while Saudi Arabian oil is expected to last for about 45 years. Undoubtedly, Saudi Arabia and the conservative Arab states in the Gulf were the best bet, if the US energy requirement had to be met in the eighties.

Saudi Arabia not only had the largest oil reservoir on earth but was also prepared to produce more and charge less than other oil-producing states. The high officials in the USA considered Saudi Arabia as a moderating influence in the OPEC. Unlike Iran, whose production level had declined by 4.3 per cent between 1976 and 1977, Saudi production had increased by 8 per cent. Alfred L. Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asia, while testifying before the Congressional Committee in 1976, commented that "Saudi Arabia has maintained production levels which are beyond its economic needs."⁵³³ The Americans also looked at the future of oil production in Iran and Saudi Arabia in the eventuality of a *coup d'état* in those countries. According to a Congressional report published in 1977 a change of regime in Iran was unlikely to affect oil production because the new regime too would need the oil money for economic development. Not so in Saudi Arabia where "a change of regime (or in the policies of the

Iran, Senate Committee on Energy and National Resources, GPO, Washington, 1977 111.

⁵³³ *Proposed Foreign Military Sale to Middle Eastern Countries 1976*, Hearing, Sub-committee on International Political and Military Affairs of the House Committee on International Relations, 94 Congress, 2 Session, February-March 1976, GPO, Washington, 1976, 2.

Country	Crude oil production (mbd)		% change 1976-77	Proven reserves (billion barrels)	Years of production (at 1977 level of production)
	1975	1976			
Saudi Arabia	697	8,525	9.2	150.0	45 years
Kuwait	1.84	1.95	1.79	67.0	103
Partition zone	0.5	0.465	0.37	6.0	46
UAE (Abu Dhabi)	1.4	1.595	1.66	31.0	53
Dubai	0.255	0.315	0.32	1.4	12
Sharjah	0.04	0.035	0.3	0.03	3
Qatar	0.435	0.485	0.435	5.6	37
Oman	0.34	0.365	0.34	5.7	46
Bahrain	0.061	0.058	0.058	0.3	14
Total	11.841	13.783	14.203	239.23	
Iraq	2.23	2.28	2.21	34.5	43
(Arab) Total	14.071	16.063	16.413	273.73	
Iran	5.395	5.92	5.67	62.0	30
(Gulf) total	19.466	21.983	22.083	335.73	
USA	9.995	9.725	9.82	29.5	8
Canada	1.735	1.605	1.45	6.0	11
Mexico	0.795	0.82	0.985	14.0 plus*	39 plus
China	1.305	1.5	1.625	20.0	34

USSR	9.74	10.315	11.045	+7.1	75.0	19
World	55.095	59.555	62.6	+1.5	645.8	

*New oil and gas fields discovered in Mexico are supposed to be very rich.

present leadership) could result in a drastic reduction in the volume of oil entering world trade such as to eliminate the present surplus altogether and/or allow for another sudden and drastic increase in price."⁵³⁴ Thus keeping the Saudis happy and in power became a matter of national importance for the USA in the light of its energy requirement and for stabilizing the oil price.

Besides ensuring a continuous flow of adequate oil, the USA was also worried about the successive increases in the price of oil and was keen to put a halt to it. Iran, a political ally of the USA, however, proved a hawk as far as the oil price was concerned. Iran wanted a higher price for oil so that it could use its dwindling resources for a rapid modernization and industrialization of Iran and thereby provide an alternate source of wealth when its oil resources were exhausted. It thought that given its large population, natural resources and available technological infrastructure, it could absorb all the oil money it could get. Most of the Arab states in the Gulf, except Iraq, did not have the necessary resources and the infrastructure to absorb the oil money that was pouring in. They, therefore, were not particularly interested in a further increase in the oil price. Thus it was Saudi Arabia that once again came to the rescue of the USA and acted as a break on the price-rise advocated by other members of the OPEC, including Iran. That led to a confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran which can be traced back to the price increase in October and December 1973. The Saudi gestures were appreciated by American official circles. Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, while testifying before a House Committee in 1975, said that the Saudi approach "is in consonance with our approach."⁵³⁵ Similar views were expressed by others.⁵³⁶ Also, the Iranian policy came under attack.⁵³⁷

The controversy over the oil price led to strong Iranian criticisms of Saudi Arabia. Commenting upon the western argu-

⁵³⁴ *Access to Oil*, n. 191, 112.

⁵³⁵ *The Persian Gulf 1974*, n. 136, 86.

⁵³⁶ *The Persian Gulf 1975*, n. 136, 200, and *Proposed Foreign Military Sales to Middle East Countries 1976*, n. 192, 3.

⁵³⁷ *The Persian Gulf 1974*, n. 136, 2.

ment that the price rise was hurting the developing countries, the influential Tehran daily *Kayhan*, in its editorial on 28 January 1974, said that the industrialized countries were shedding crocodile tears over the possible impact of price-hike on the developing countries. Commenting that in the last twenty years the cost of manufactured goods had gone up by eight times whereas that of raw material had remained constant due to depreciation of major currencies, it said “the rise in crude oil price is—and must be—a preliminary step towards the rise in prices of other raw materials and commodities which the industrialized world has been getting on the cheap for too long.” The editorial, criticizing the Saudi Arabian Oil Minister, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, said that he had become a new convert to this thesis. “The Sheikh’s sudden change of heart makes him nothing more than a mouth piece for US Secretary of Treasury, George Schultz. It was Schultz, in fact, who originally called for lower crude prices on the pretext that the welfare of the international community was being endangered. Yamani is now using the same cliches and arguments.”

In July-August 1974 when Saudi Arabia hinted that it might increase its output to lower the oil price, Iranian Finance Minister Ansari, in a TV interview, threatened to reduce the oil production of Iran and other OPEC members so as to maintain the oil price.⁵³⁸ The Saudi policy again came under attack in April 1975 when the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud bin Faisal, suggested in a speech that the price of oil and the situation in the Middle East be linked. *Kayhan*, in its editorial of 6 April 1975, commented that the linkage was incomprehensible within the framework of OPEC policy. It recalled that the OPEC had adopted two basic principles for setting oil prices: cost of producing alternative source of energy and an inflation index of industrial goods. It said that there was no OPEC document referring to a linkage between the price of oil and the Middle East crisis. It asked curtly, “Is one expected to believe that Prince Saud considers the pricing of oil a Saudi prerogative?”

The question of oil price also generated controversy at the highest level between Iran and the USA. Commenting upon American criticism that Iran was responsible for the shortage of

⁵³⁸*Economic Times*, 5 August 1974.

gas in the USA, the Shah said that it was not Iran but the oil industries that were engineering the shortages.⁵³⁹ The US Federal Energy Chief, William E. Simon, retorted the next day, "I deem the Shah's charges irresponsible and reckless."⁵⁴⁰ Premier Hoveyda joined in by his comment: "Simon must be talking through his hat" but also added, "we shall not stoop so low as to repay the gentleman in his own currency."⁵⁴¹ Finally President Nixon had to step in to repair the damage. He told the journalists on 26 February, "I would not say that the Shah was irresponsible and reckless. But his information (about US oil imports) is different from ours and we have reasons to know what we are getting."⁵⁴² Temper remained hot and Simon chipped in again by calling the Shah a "nut" and by ignoring Iran during his West Asia tour in 1974.

Apart from controlling the oil flow the Gulf states also have a big say in the international financial position. According to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Joseph J. Sisco, "The littoral states of the Gulf are aware that they sit on what is probably the world's most valuable asset, valued at something over 4.5 trillion dollars at today's oil and gas prices."⁵⁴³ Every year the Gulf states collect huge sums as oil revenue.

A survey of Table 10 would reveal that the Arab states account for about three-fourths of the total petro-dollars of the Gulf and that conservative Arab states get more than 60 per cent of the total. Saudi Arabia gets the lion's share, 45 per cent, while Iran has to be content with about 25 per cent. Thus, in terms of petro-dollars too, Saudi Arabia and other conservative states in the Gulf are more important to the USA than Iran.

The petro-dollars are also important from another angle. Petro-dollars, like oil production and oil reserves, can bestow political and economic power upon the state that has them. Thus the west feels the need for the recycling of the petro-dollars. There are two main reasons for it. It eases the balance

⁵³⁹ *International Herald Tribune*, 25 February 1974.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 26 February 1974.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1974.

⁵⁴² *Daily Star* (Beirut), 27 February 1974.

⁵⁴³ *The Persian Gulf 1975*, n. 135, 9.

TABLE 10
Gulf Oil Revenue (in billion dollars, US)

Country	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Saudi Arabia	3.1	7.2	29.0	27.0	33.5	38.0
Kuwait	1.65	2.8	8.0	7.5	8.5	8.5
Abu Dhabi/UAE	0.55	1.2	5.5	6.0	7.0	8.0
Qatar	0.25	0.6	1.65	1.7	2.0	1.9
Total conservative Arab states	5.50	11.8	44.15	42.2	51.0	56.4
Iraq	0.575	1.9	6.0	8.0	8.5	9.5
Total Arab states of the Gulf	6.075	13.7	50.15	50.2	59.5	65.9
Iran	2.3	5.6	22.0	20.5	22.0	23.0
Total for the Gulf	8.375	19.3	72.15	70.7	81.5	88.9

of payment problems for the oil-importing country. But there is also a long-term implication of the need for recycling of petro-dollars. It would reduce the amount of petro-dollars in reserve with the oil-producing country and thereby decrease the chance of their using the surplus money as a political or economic weapon. This problem was noted even prior to the October crisis. "If the major oil exporting countries do not spend more of their large and increasing revenues in the next several years on social and economic development, most of them, except Iran and Venezuela, will have enough currency reserves to withstand any loss of income through cut-off in oil."⁵⁴⁴ This logic is more applicable now when the oil prices have increased manifold, thereby creating more oil money and reserve. Iran has little possibility of accumulating petro-dollar reserves because of its capability of absorbing the surplus money. But the conservative Arab states in the Gulf cannot, even if they wish, absorb their oil money beyond a certain limit. They are bound to accumulate currency surplus. Thus they, in course of time, would wield more economic and political power *vis-a-vis* the west than Iran. This is also another reason why the USA has to keep Saudi Arabia and Kuwait happy.

Conservative Arab states of the Gulf are important to the USA in terms of the super-power competition for spheres of influence in the Third World, especially the geopolitically and economically important oil belt in the Middle East, and also because of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Shah of Iran had been loudly proclaiming the threat from the north so as to use it as a pawn in Iran's policy *vis-a-vis* the west and especially the USA, but Iran has also been working out a successful policy of detente not only with the USSR but also with China. Since the last decade and more Iran has developed very close diplomatic, economic and technological, and even military relationships with the USSR. Its gas deal with the USSR is probably more important than any Arab oil deal with the USSR. Thus, despite the fact that the Iranians swear by their anti-westernism they are nowhere near the conservative Arab states in the Gulf who, except for Kuwait, do not even have diplomatic relations with the USSR. The Saudi regime has publicly taken an open anti-Soviet stand

⁵⁴⁴United States and the Persian Gulf, 1972, n. 131, 6.

which must be most gratifying for the Americans. "Profoundly anti-communist, and vigorously opposed to the expansion of destabilizing influences in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia looks to the United States as a nation of world stature with which it shares common principles in that regard."⁵⁴⁵

Of late a new combination of Egypt and conservative Arab oil states has emerged that would have serious ramifications in the Middle East and even Africa. It has emerged as a new counter-weight to left-wing forces as can be seen from its involvement in the Horn of Africa since 1977. The anti-Soviet policies of Sadat can also be partly traced back to Egypt's close contacts with Saudi Arabia and the USA since 1973. Egypt finally broke off its links with the USSR when it abrogated the friendship treaty between Egypt and the USSR on 15 March 1976 and withdrew military facilities that the Soviet navy was enjoying in Egypt. It was a positive gain for the USA in the context of Soviet-American naval rivalry in the Mediterranean.

American friendship with Saudi Arabia can also bring the USA other advantages. Iran is only one state. Saudi Arabia represents a sizeable bloc in the Arab World. This bloc is represented in the OAPEC and therefore in the OPEC, in the Islamic Bloc, in the Arab League and the UN. Thus Saudi Arabia, which is emerging as a dominant Arab power, has a major say in the Arab bloc. Iran, howsoever strong it may become, cannot acquire the degree of political and diplomatic leverage that Saudi Arabia can. This is also another factor that influences the US policy *vis-a-vis* Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Arab-Israeli dispute acquired a new dimension in the light of the Arab use of oil as a political weapon following the October war. It meant that the USA could not openly antagonize the Arabs. The Arabs, to a degree, understood that a strong Zionist lobby existed in the west ingeneral and in the USA in particular, that pressurized the Americans into following a pro-Israeli policy. But Iran had no such lobby. It was an Islamic state and yet it was the chief Asian supporter of Israel. It supplied the major part of Israeli oil requirements. Thus Iran openly flouted the Arab economic blockade of Israel. Also, there were military links

⁵⁴⁵*Proposed Foreign Military Sales to Middle East Countries, 1976*, n. 192, 2.

between Iran and Israel. Iran did try to modify its policy after the October crisis and started taking a more pro-Arab position in public but without cutting off its economic and military links with Israel. Thus, forging close links with Iran, and at the cost of the Arab states, was not going to give the Americans any advantage in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute.

The USA itself was not badly affected by the oil embargo or cutback in oil production because it was depending only marginally upon Gulf oil. But the USA was affected indirectly because Western Europe and Japan were badly affected by the use of oil as a political weapon by the Arabs. Thus the years of intense American diplomacy were devoted not only to bring about an Arab-Israeli disengagement of forces and an Israeli withdrawal but also to create conditions that might lead to a final detente between Israel and at least some of the Arab states. The Camp David agreement of 1978 was aimed at it.

Henry Kissinger laid the foundation of this new turn in American diplomacy when he succeeded in getting Egypt and Israel to sign a final ceasefire agreement at Km 101 on 11 November 1973, and the first disengagement agreement between them on 17 January 1974. It helped the oil-producing Arab states to lift the oil embargo and remove the cutback in oil production. The Syrian-Israeli disengagement followed on 31 May 1974. The second Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement was signed on 1 September 1975. It envisaged a further Israeli withdrawal, enlarging the buffer zone between them, a continuation of the UNEF role, and the arms limitation in the Suez and Sinai areas. Direct US presence was also ensured through about 200 US civilian technicians at the surveillance posts in the passes in Sinai. The second disengagement agreement, by allowing Egypt to regain its oil fields in Sinai and by creating a framework that would allow Israel to use the canal, laid the foundation for the subsequent Israeli-Egyptian detente.

It was a major achievement for the USA and the USA could not have been successful without the active cooperation of Saudi Arabia. US diplomacy thus not only reduced the chances of another Arab-Israeli war, led to the lifting of the oil weapon, created an atmosphere that might lead to an Arab-Israeli detente and helped to reduce the Soviet role in Egypt, but also attained the position whereby many Arab states, especially oil-producing

states, considered American friendship as indispensable for their political, economic and military development. This helped the USA to attract large quantities of oil money and thus to forge a new system of interdependence between the USA and Gulf states that the Gulf states cannot afford to change without harming themselves. Thus, the USA has entered into a type of relationship with conservative Arab states in the Gulf that has its parallel in the US-Iranian relationship of the late sixties and early seventies except that more is at stake now than it was before.

Of late while the conservative oil-producing Arab states were drawing closer to the USA, Iran was searching for more options. It retained its links with the USA to gain political and military advantages but it also followed a policy that reduced its dependence upon a single power. Ever since 1965 the Shah had lost faith in the ability of the USA to fully support Iran. That feeling grew since then and in 1976 the Shah compared the USA to a crippled giant.⁵⁴⁶ The Shah, therefore, pursued a policy that would bring Iran closer to other states like the USSR, Iraq and India. At one time Iran also toyed with the idea of looking towards Europe as a third force so as to balance the super powers in the Gulf and also to benefit from the European technology in industrial and military fields. Iran did move in that direction especially after 1973, when it could offer its oil and oil money in exchange for European support to his developmental programmes. In fact trade and petro-dollar investment patterns of Iran show a more balanced picture than of Saudi Arabia, which show a marked tilt in favour of the USA. Thus since the energy crisis, whereas Saudi Arabia was retaining its exclusive relationship with the USA, Iran was seeking to dilute it and, instead, was trying to forge multiple links to give it greater independence in the pursuit of its political, economic and military goals. The success of this policy, thus, gave Saudi Arabia a greater leverage *vis-a-vis* the USA in the Gulf, even at the cost of Iran.

The controversy between Iraq on one hand and the USA and Saudi Arabia on the other on the question of oil prices also coincided with two other developments. Iran's arms acquisition

⁵⁴⁶ *US News and World Report*, 23 March 1976, 58.

programme came under heavy attack by an influential political group in America with the result that the inflow of sophisticated weapons from the USA began to slow down under several pretexts, and simultaneously, the USA began to build up not only the military strength of Saudi Arabia but also its National Guard, the Saudi version of the gendarmerie, so as to offer better protection to the Saudi regime in the event of a threat to its systemic security. It seemed that Saudi Arabia was going to replace Iran as the US surrogate in the Middle East.

A serious attack on Iran's military build-up was launched by Edward Kennedy in his article in *Foreign Affairs*.⁵⁴⁷ Even though the Persian Gulf itself was the focus of the article, Iran came under special criticism. The critics of the arms build-up in the Gulf use several arguments to restrict the flow of arms into this area. It is argued that the inflow of arms would lead to an arms race and ultimately an armed clash that would affect the flow of oil from the Gulf. It is also suggested that the large number of American personnel that would be needed to maintain these weapons might get involved in this conflict. Some even go to the extent of suggesting that these Americans might be held as hostages. Officially, the US representatives in the various hearings of the Congress do their best to support the sale of arms to Iran but it can be noted that delivery of major weapon systems like the Spruance-class destroyer or the AWACS aircraft have either been reduced, delayed or simply refused with the result that Iran was forced to obtain some of its weapons from European countries. It planned to acquire its missile boats from France, frigates from Italy, submarines from Germany and manportable SAMs and mobile anti-aircraft guns from the USSR. It seemed that the Shah's threat to the USA, that if America closed its doors to Iran, Iran might buy arms from other sources, was almost proving true.⁵⁴⁸

While the Iranians were facing difficulties the Saudis were getting full US backing. The USA, under an agreement signed in 1974, was building the infrastructure of a modern army, navy and air force for Saudi Arabia. It was also modernizing its National

⁵⁴⁷Kennedy, Edward M., "Persian Gulf: arms race or arms control", *Foreign Affairs*, 54 (1), October 1975, 14-35.

⁵⁴⁸*Kayhan International*, 11 August 1976.

Guard. The US government succeeded in its venture despite the strong pro-Iranian and pro-Israeli lobby operating in Capitol Hill. In 1976 alone the military sale programme of the USA to Saudi Arabia amounted to about \$7.5 billion, in contrast to \$4.6 billion for the entire period of 1950-76. In 1976 alone the USA promised to supply Saudi Arabia with 150 M-60 tanks, 1000 APCs, 1000 Maverick television guided air-to-surface missiles, 4000 Dragon anti-tank guided missiles, Vulcan anti-aircraft gun (mobile), F-5 planes and HAWK surface-to-air missiles.

Ever since the controversy over the oil price an impression is being created that Saudi Arabia is now championing the cause of the Arabs and that Saudi Arabia resents Iran's pretensions about being the guardian of the Gulf. Saudi Arabia continues to call the Gulf the Arab Gulf. It has hurt Iran's policy in the Gulf which had relied upon an alliance between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Now there are serious strains on that alliance. Recent developments might not have made Iran dispensable for the USA because America is still not sure about the Arabs, but it has made a dent. One of the secret sources of the Shah's power was his ability to use the USA to attain its domestic and foreign policy objectives. Now it is no longer possible. Undoubtedly, Iran is too valuable to be lost and every effort would be made by the USA to retain it within the overall western umbrella, but the USA is also developing other options. To that extent US policy weakened the Shah's position both internally and also abroad because total and absolute support of the USA had become the basis of Iran's systemic security under the Shah.

Chapter III

IRANIAN SECURITY: MILITARY DIMENSIONS

Military preparedness has always been an important aspect of Iranian response to the multidimensional threat to its systemic security. Invariably the national leader was also the military leader, *de facto* or/and *de jure*. Military resources of the country were geared not only to protect him from the possible opposition threatening his absolute power, but were also used as an instrument to enhance his personal power and glory. This interaction between different variables like national leadership, systemic security, quest for power and glory of the leader, and the military dimensions of national politics and international diplomacy is very clearly revealed in Iranian history, more so in the case of the Pahlavi dynasty.

The foundations of the present politico-military leadership in Iran were laid down by Reza Khan, though the Qajjar rulers before him had hesitatingly initiated the process of modernization of the national military resources. There were two major reasons why these efforts failed. The one was the fact that Iran under the Qajjars lacked a leadership strong enough to control and direct its armed forces, and secondly the new Iranian army (and gendarmerie) was directed and, to some extent, controlled by outside elements like the Russians, the British and the Swedes. In other words, the Iranian armed forces were not an instrument in the hands of Iranian leaders but often proved to be checks on them: like the Russian-controlled Cossack Brigade and the British-controlled South Persia Rifles. But when a determined leader like Reza Khan rose from the ranks of the military elite

he used the existing instruments not only to overthrow the old elite but, having emerged as the new leader, used it not only to entrench himself in power but also to provide a basis for his systemic security. His son followed his footsteps.

Reza Khan had started as a member of the Cossack Brigade in 1892-93. By 1920 he had risen to the rank of a colonel after the "White" Russian officers were removed from their position following the Russian Revolution. Reza Khan had a hand in their dismissal.¹ In February 1921 he marched to Tehran with the units of the Cossack Brigade and staged a *coup d'état*. The Qajjar dynasty, with no control over the country's military power, had no chance. Reza Khan gradually emerged as the War Minister (1921), Prime Minister (1923), and finally the new king (1925) of Iran. Following the 1921 *coup d'état*, he disbanded the South Persia Rifles, a force controlled by the British, and integrated the units of the Cossack Brigade, the South Persia Rifles and the old gendarmerie, that had been trained by the Swedish officers, into one integrated Persian military force. He put his old colleagues from the Cossack Brigade in high positions in the new army. Thus the foundations of a new Persian military structure, loyal to the new ruler and controlled by him, emerged as an instrument of systemic security of the new Pahlavi dynasty.

The new army, and also the gendarmerie, was effectively used to suppress various tribal revolts that threatened the integrity of Iran in the twenties and the thirties. In 1924, Reza Khan used military force to suppress the revolt in Luristan. In 1925 the Sheikh of Muhammara was forced to acknowledge Iranian suzerainty and Khuzistan was firmly integrated in Iran. The same year powerful Bakhtiari, Qashiqai and Turcoman tribes were disarmed and their resistance was crushed. All this could not have been possible without an effective control by the Iranian leader over the country's armed forces. Iranian armed forces were also adequately enlarged and modernized so as to be able to play the desired role successfully.

It was Reza Khan who laid the foundations of a modern army in Iran. He increased the effective peace-time strength of the Iranian army to about 40,000: consisting of nine divisions and

¹Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mohammed (His Imperial Majesty), *Mission for My Country*, London, 1961, 38.

five separate brigades. Its war-time strength was probably three or four times that figure.² This was possible because of the system of conscription introduced by Reza Khan. The army was equipped with about 100 Skoda tanks. Since the army had to operate in mountains, mountain artillery formed a large part of its armament. Aircraft were attached to the army and were used to suppress the tribals, a practice followed by Britain in north-western India and by the French in Morocco. The number of aircraft reached about 200.³ Iranians were trained abroad and also in the flying schools at Meshed and Ahwaz. The air force, though created as early as 1924, remained attached to the army till 1955.⁴

Reza Khan also laid the foundations of a Persian navy. To begin with, the navy was treated as a department of the army. The first batch of Iranian students was sent to Italy in 1927 for training.⁵ Six ships ordered from that country reached Bushire on 29 October 1932.⁶ This small force was composed of two gunboats of 950 tons displacement and four sloops of 350 tons displacement. The gunboats were armed with three 4" guns and the sloops with two 2" guns and two anti-aircraft guns.⁷ They had a speed of 15 knots and were used in the Persian Gulf in anti-smuggling operations. There were no Persian naval vessels in the Caspian sea at that time and the Soviet Union had a monopoly of armament in the Caspian.⁸

Reza Khan not only tried to create the military apparatus as

²Ewell-Sutton, L.P., *Modern Iran*, London, 1941, (Reprinted 1944), 74.

³Ibid.

⁴Cottrell, Alvin J., "Iran's armed forces under the Pahlavi dynasty", in George Lenczowski, ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 1978, 392.

⁵Ramazani, R.K., *The Persian Gulf: Iran's Role*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1972, 256.

⁶Burrell, R.M., "Iran and the Persian Gulf: some aspects of the situation in the 1920s and 1930s", in Derek Hopwood, ed., *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics*, Totowa, New Jersey, 1972, 161.

⁷Ewell-Sutton, n. 2, 75. One of the gunboats was sunk on 17 August 1941 during the British occupation of Iran. Earlier, Iran had ordered two steamers from Germany in 1883 which reached Iran in 1885, Burrell, n. 6, 61.

⁸Wilson, Sir Arnold, *Persia*, London, Ernest Benn Ltd., 1932, 346.

the basis for his systemic security but also tried to use it as an instrument of social change and modernization. The system of conscription, introduced in 1925 and strengthened in 1938, forced young Iranians to pass through the military training programme that also included literacy and useful social skills. He also raised the prestige of the army in Iran and gave it a sense of pride, something it had lacked for over a century and a half.⁹ It is also true that the newly created machine collapsed without offering any resistance when the British and USSR occupied Iran and deposed Reza Khan in 1941. But it should be noted that the military machine was primarily created for suppressing the threat from internal dangers and not from two major powers of the world. However, the fact remains that a large army of about 125,000 men, equipped with tanks, guns, and aircraft, offered no resistance whatsoever. Surely it did not speak much about the professional "pride" of the Persian officer and soldier.

The Anglo-Russian occupation of Iran in 1941 had far-reaching consequences for that country. Not only was the "strongman" of Iran, Reza Khan, forced to abdicate but the country was parcelled into zones. Its armed forces were reduced and made ineffective. Both these factors had serious effects not only upon Iran's systemic security but also its national security. Reza Khan had built the Iranian armed forces primarily as a basis of power of the new dynasty, and also to suppress any threat to Iran's central authority from internal sources. Thus the Iranian armed forces and the gendarmerie, not modern by any standard, were well suited, thanks to their large number, to control the far-flung areas that had often defied the central authority in the past. The reduction in the number of the army after 1941 blunted this instrument of systemic security. Thus the Iranian army that emerged after the Second World War was inadequate to fulfil its traditional task. Its role, despite the so-called threat from the north, was still basically confined to internal security. In fact, the first few years of the new Shah's rule were devoted to bringing the army on par to what it was in 1941.

When the Second World War ended Iran was in a difficult situation. The new king was young and inexperienced. The treasury was more or less empty. Political and military control

⁹Cottrell, n. 4, 392.

was in the hands of the foreigners, some of whom were trying to use their position to undermine Iran's political and territorial integrity. The Iranian "nationalists" too had grown in power and the *Majlis*, after a long time, had assumed real power. The *Tudeh* Party too had increased its strength. The army and the gendarmerie were weak and inefficient. It was difficult for anyone to imagine whether a young man of twenty-one who did not have any political base or legitimacy except that he was the son of the deposed king, who himself had founded the new Pahlavi dynasty, would be able to manage to hold on to absolute powers of the Iranian monarchical system. Thus the task before the new king, Reza Shah, was three-fold: to re-establish the supremacy of monarchy in Iran, to remove the foreign influence from Iran, especially from the north, and to neutralize the threat posed to absolute monarchy by the new combination of "nationalists" and the *Tudeh* Party. Since the national resources available to the king were inadequate he used the prevailing international environment to strengthen his hands. The newly emerging Cold War, Iran's strategic position, its oil resources, the Soviet policy in northern Iran, the growing power of the "national front," all came very useful to influence the USA to support the young king. It was not an easy task because the USA was unwilling to take the risk. But the last obstacle was removed by Premier Mossadeq who by nationalizing the oil company and by forming a working alliance with the *Tudeh*, forced the USA to support the king and the pro-western group in Iran. Thence, the USA developed a vested interest in supporting the king politically, economically and militarily. The Shah had won his point.

As noted earlier the Shah did try to use the Cold War conditions to foster greater US involvement in Iran. The views expressed by the top US decision-maker helped him. According to President Truman, there was "a planned move on the part of the Russians to get at least northern Iran under their control. Together with the threat of a communist coup in Greece, this began to look like a giant pincer movement against the oil-rich areas in the Near East and the warm-water ports of the Mediterranean."¹⁰ This was reflected in the Truman Doctrine of March 1947 when the USA publicly declared its intention to take

¹⁰Truman, Harry S., *Years of Decision*, quoted, *ibid.*, 396.

over from Great Britain, the task of defending Greece and Turkey against the Soviet and the communist threat. The members of the State Department, while taking this decision, were "quite openly elated over the possibility that the United States might now take action on a broad enough scale to prevent the Soviet Union from breaking through the *Greece-Turkey-Iran barrier* into the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa."¹¹ This may be true. Probably the USA did offer political support to Iran at that time but the American economic and military help to Iran was very minor as compared to its help to Turkey and Greece.

During the crucial days of the Truman Doctrine when there was an actual Russian pressure on Iran (1946-48), Iran obtained an authorization for \$25.8 million as loan, not grant. There was no military aid during those two years. During the same period Greece received a total of \$723.6 million, and Turkey \$113.3 million as aid from the USA. Iran received no US aid in 1949 and 1950. The aid began to trickle in 1951, the year Premier Mossadeq nationalized the Anglo-Iranian oil company. The USA used the aid to create a political, economic and military base in Iran so as to subsequently use it against Premier Mossadeq. The efforts succeeded in 1953 when he was ousted from power. But during the period 1946-53, i.e., before the northern-tier plan of the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, could be finalized and before Mossadeq was overthrown, Iran received only \$118.1 million from the USA as compared to \$784.7 million for Turkey and \$1957.3 million for Greece. Thus it was very clear that the USA did not put Iran on par with Greece and Turkey economically and militarily and the Truman Doctrine only provided a political umbrella for Iran. The American support came only when the western interests were directly affected by the actions of Premier Mossadeq and those were not the outcome of direct or indirect Soviet threat.

The US involvement in Iran grew gradually. In 1942, i.e., soon after the occupation, the US War Department designated a high official for modernization of the Iranian armed forces

¹¹Jones, Joseph M., *The Fifteen Weeks* (February 21-June 6, 1947), New York 1955, 133-4 (Emphasis added).

TABLE 11
*US Economic and Military Help to Iran, Greece and Turkey: 1946-53 (in \$ million)*¹²

Year	Iran		Greece		Turkey	
	Economic	Military	Total	Economic	Military	Total
1946-48	25.8	—	25.8	525.2	198.4	723.6
1949	—	—	—	193.8	158.7	352.5
1950	—	—	—	177.1	22.5	199.6
1951	1.5	10.7	12.2	157.1	83.0	240.1
1952	15.0	5.9	20.9	179.8	59.3	239.1
1953	31.9	27.3	59.2	81.2	121.3	202.5
Total	74.2	43.9	118.1	1314.1	643.2	1957.3
						784.7

¹²Based on *US Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations, Obligations, Loan Authorizations*, July 1, 1945-June 30, 1961, Agency for International Development, Statistics and Reports Division, 21 March 1962, 46, 48, 57.

which had been reduced to two or three thousand.¹³ Agreement between Iran and the USA for the US military training programme was signed on 3 November 1943.¹⁴ It was for two years to begin with but was extended subsequently. Iran, by coming closer to the USA during World War II, was playing its classical game of searching for a Third Force to balance Britain and Russia. With the beginning of the Cold War Iran became strategically important for the USA. But the USA was reluctant to commit itself to support the Iranian regime, as is seen by the absence of economic or military aid to Iran during the 1949-50 period. It is suggested that the bitter experience of the USA in China was one reason why it wanted to keep its hands off from Iran too. It is also probable that the USA, after the war, withdrew from Iran and let the traditional power, Great Britain, handle that area.

Britain was unable to handle Iran. It had lost much of its power base in Iran during the reign of Reza Khan. Also, the process of general decolonization had weakened Britain. The Iranian nationalist movement was strong enough to challenge Britain. With Soviet troops out of Iran these nationalists turned their attention to Britain. Nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company brought about this confrontation. Efforts at a peaceful settlement failed and the USA intervened not to restore the *status quo ante* but to crush the nationalist movement. Mossadeq thus indirectly helped the Shah. The US military involvement was facilitated through an American Mutual Assistance Programme initiated in 1950 and extended in April 1952¹⁵ by Mossadeq who thought that the USA could still be manipulated as a Third Force. The USA committed, during 1951-52, \$16.5 million as economic aid and \$16.6 million as military aid.¹⁶ This aid programme enabled the USA to create a politico-military base that could be used even against Mossadeq. According to Cottam, the anti-Mossadeq coup that was supposed to be staged on 16 August was foiled by him. But the *Tudeh* overplayed its

¹³Ramazani, n. 5, 74-5.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁵Ramazani, R.K., *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1975, 359.

¹⁶Except for \$1.5 million as loan, the rest of the economic and military aid was in the form of grant.

hand.¹⁷ Mosques and religious places were attacked. An impression was created that the communists were taking over Iran. The mob, partly paid for by American money, was acting spontaneously as well. Anyway Mossadeq was overthrown on 19 August 1953:

The overthrow of the Mossadeq regime gave a new turn to Iran's internal and external policies. Internally, it was the beginning of the end of independent nationalists who could pose as a constitutional challenge to the Shah. It also marked the failure on the part of the politicians to control the armed forces. Gradually the Shah took control over them. Both these factors helped in the growth of absolute monarchy in Iran.

It also saw a reversal of Iran's foreign policy. What has been called the policy of "negative equilibrium," in fact provided the framework for a *de facto* non-alignment, which was accepted by several Afro-Asian states as the basis of their foreign policy. Iranian nationalists, during the post-World War II period, as Reza Khan before them, were fighting two foreign powers: Russia in the north and Britain in the south. It must be remembered that it was the group of independent nationalists led by Mossadeq who, by passing the oil law in the *Majlis*, successfully blocked the Soviet efforts, during the Second World War and afterwards, to obtain oil concessions in northern Iran. Once the Soviets were out of Iran these nationalists turned their attention towards Britain. Nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was the logical step. The US help was welcomed because it was a power respected in Iran and the nationalists hoped to use it as a Third Force. But they failed to understand the shifting international political and military balance due to the Cold War. The USA did get involved, but against them. The end of the nationalists also spelled the end of the policy of *de facto* non-alignment in Iran.¹⁸

Events following the 1953 coup paved the way for a direct US involvement in Iran. The USA developed stakes in Iran. The downfall of Mossadeq removed, for some time at least, any poli-

¹⁷Cottam, Richard M., "The United States, Iran and the Cold War", *Iranian Studies*, 3 (1), Winter 1970, 13.

¹⁸Zabih, Sepehr, "Iran's international posture: *de facto* non-alignment within a pro-Western alliance", *Middle East Journal*, 24 (3), Summer 1970, 302-4.

tical threat to systemic security in Iran. Monarchy emerged victorious and the US support ensured its continuity. The oil agreement of 1954 gave the American oil companies 40 per cent share in the new oil consortium formed in Iran, thereby giving the Americans a big economic stake in Iran. Also, the newly developed strategic interests, as reflected in the northern-tier scheme of Dulles in 1953, the US-Iranian military assistance programme of 1954, and finally Iran's membership of the Baghdad Pact in 1955, brought Iran closer to the USA. Iran, it seemed, had got hustled into the western alliance system but the Shah also obtained full US protection for his security.

The type of military and economic aid that was offered to Iran after 1954 was primarily geared to inject some vitality into the Iranian economy that was languishing for want of oil money that had stopped since 1951, and would not come till the new oil was sold and profits distributed under the new consortium agreement. Thus, new oil money was not expected till 1955. Huge economic aids (grants) were given to Iran: \$84.5 million in 1954 and \$128.2 million in 1955 to help Iran tide over till the oil money flowed in. Even then Iran was not to get the full oil royalty. About \$100 million per year were to be deducted as compensation to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

The military aid programme during that period was also limited primarily to strengthening the army and the gendarmerie to ensure systemic security from internal threats,¹⁹ and little was done to equip Iran to face the so-called threat from the north. The military aid, therefore, was also small. Iran received only \$44 million as military aid during 1954-55. The only heavy weapons transferred to Iran during that period were 15 Sherman tanks that were acquired in 1951. By 1956-57 the armed forces were equipped for internal security role. This does not mean that that field was neglected in future. Since that remained their most important task their capability in that field was constantly upgraded. After 1957 Iran began to acquire heavy weapons that helped in the creation of the infrastructure of a modern army in Iran. The process, however, remained slow till 1958 when the *coup d'état* in Iraq gave a big push to Iranian militarization.

During 1956 and 1958 Iran acquired new arms, mostly from

¹⁹SIPRI, *The Arms Trade with the Third World*, New York, 1975, 220.

the USA, under the Mutual Assistance Programme. It obtained 50 M-24 Chaffey light tanks and about 220 M-8 (Greyhound) and M-28 armoured cars. Though these weapons added to Iran's armour strength they were primarily suited for anti-insurgency operations. Lack of medium or heavy tanks made them, at that time, unfit for the role of a conventional armour force. Iranian Air Force acquired about 8T-33A jet trainers and 75 F-84G jet fighter-bombers. F-84G was reputed to be an excellent ground-support plane and not a very good fighter-interceptor. That also suited Iran's requirement at that time. The Iranian navy also acquired about 12 small patrol vessels. Nine of them were obtained from Iran's traditional supplier, Italy, the rest from UK and USA. These were small vessels and did not contribute substantially to Iran's naval power as it existed at that time.²⁰

The Iraq *coup d'état* of 14 July 1958 had a four-fold impact upon Iranian perception of threat to its security. It revealed the failure of the Baghdad Pact to offer systemic security. An internal coup was possible within the framework of a western alliance system and, therefore, the Shah had to rely upon himself to counter that threat. The new Iraqi regime reopened the traditional dispute between the two countries. The new regime in Iraq was friendly towards the USSR, which meant that not only the northern but also the western flank of Iran had become vulnerable. Lastly, it revealed the inadequate military preparation in Iran against a possible attack by a regional power. The Baghdad Pact, or the CENTO as it came to be known subsequently, was at best a political umbrella against a threat from a super-power but no guarantee against the regional power. Thus Iran had to react quickly to plug the loopholes and strengthen its security *vis-à-vis* Iraq.

Since military strength could not be built in a short time, Iran tried to extend the US military umbrella to cover regional disputes as well. The USA was technically not even a member of the CENTO and, therefore, it was difficult to get it involved in regional disputes. Some scholars hint that the Iranian regime, to get the USA and other CENTO powers involved in Iran,

²⁰Data pertaining to arms transfer is based on SIPRI, *The Arms Transfer Register, The Arms Trade with the Third World*, London, 1975.

used the pretext of negotiating a treaty with the USSR.²¹ Thus Iran used these negotiations with the USSR to break down the US resistance to a politico-military pact with Iran. Iran succeeded in its attempt and the bilateral agreement between Iran and the USA was signed on 5 March 1959.

The March 1959 agreement was considered as an inadequate protection against the combined threat from the USSR and Iraq, especially after Iraq began to acquire new and sophisticated arms from the USSR. Iran was not in a position to match them. Its efforts to acquire more arms from the USA succeeded only to a limited extent because the new US Administration under President Kennedy was taking a dim view of the Shah's repeated request for more arms. Iran did acquire more arms from the USA but it felt that they were inadequate to safeguard its security.

Iraq was more powerful militarily even before the 1958 *coup d'état*. It had about 50 jet fighters, 130 medium tanks and 40 light tanks. Its navy was, however, poor and it depended upon Britain to look after its naval interests. During that period Iran was poor in armour though it had a sufficient number of jet fighter-bombers. After the 1958 coup Iraq began to acquire more weapons from the USSR. It got about 43 new MiG fighters including 17 supersonic MiG 19s, and 20 light and medium bombers. It also obtained 145 medium tanks and 200 APCs. Above all it acquired 3 submarine chasers and 12 patrol-torpedo boats that could prove very dangerous in sea-denial tactics especially in the *Shatt al-Arab* and the Gulf. Iran managed to acquire during that period 70 Canadian Sabre jets, 400 M-47 Patton tanks, 3 small patrol boats and 4 coastal minesweepers from the USA. In all, Iran was not that badly matched against Iraq but this modest margin did not satisfy the Shah who thought that the Kennedy administration was deliberately undermining the defences of Iran. It is known that Iran was refused supersonic F-104 planes that were given to Pakistan in 1961.²²

The American reluctance to support Iran wholeheartedly in its quest for military security, the threat posed by the new

²¹Zabih, n. 18, 306-7.

²²*New York Times*, 27 August 1962.

TABLE 12
*Arms Acquired by Iran and Iraq, 1951-58 and 1958-62*²³

Iran		Iraq	
1951-1958	1958-1962	1951-58	1958-1962
Air Force 75 F-84 jet fighter-bombers	Air Force 70 Canadian Sabres	Air Force 50 jet fighter-bombers (Venom, Vampire etc.)	Air Force 43 MiG (15/17/19) 20 Il-28 and Tu-16 bombers
Army 15 Sherman med tks 50 Chaffee lt tks 120 M8/20 and cars	Army 400 M-47 Patton med tks	Army 135 med tks (Churchill and Centurion) 40 Chaffee lt tks 20 Scout cars	Army 25 JS III heavy tks 145 T-34/54 med tks 200 BTR-152-APCs
Navy 1 frigate* 1 escort minesweeper* 15 small patrol craft 1 landing	Navy 3 small patrol vessels 4 coastal minesweepers 3 landing craft	Navy A few small boats and harbour launchers	Navy 3 submarine chasers 12 patrol-torpedo boats 8 small patrol boats (from UK)

²³Table based on SIPRI, n. 20 and *Janes Fighting Ships* (London).

*Acquired 1949.

weapon systems based on long-range missiles, and the new spirit of super-power detente based on newly acquired mutual destruction capability, prompted Iran and the USSR to seek a mini detente. Iran promised that it would not permit IRBM sites on Iranian soil. The Soviet-Iranian detente also coincided with the *Baath* coup in Baghdad that led to the deterioration in Soviet-Iraqi relations between 1963 and 1967. Iran once again had to fall back upon Britain for its military needs, especially in view of the fact that the USSR was not prepared to support the Iraqi regime against the Kurds. Thus Iraq, in view of the Kurdish war, acquired from Britain 26 Hunters, 20 jet Provosts, 12 Westland Wessex helicopters and 100 Saracen APCs. Iraq also continued to get Soviet equipment. Between 1960 and 1965 it got additional 230 T-34/54 medium tanks, one small patrol boat and 30 SA-2 surface-to-air missiles in five launchers. Thus, while Iraq continued to increase its military strength Iran could get nothing substantial beyond 70 Sabre jets and 400 Patton (M-37) tanks, both of which had become old weapons by that time. Iran considered itself militarily weak and was not satisfied with the CENTO or the 1959 bilateral pact with USA as a military guarantee. Its fears were justified during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965.

The Iranians always complained that though Iran was a member of the CENTO it was not treated on par with other neighbours Turkey and Pakistan. Turkey's case could be treated separately because it was a member of the much more functional western military alliance system, the NATO, but Pakistan too was given better treatment than Iran. Iran believed that it was the kingpin of the CENTO and also the link between the NATO and the SEATO. It guarded vital oil resources of the Gulf. It was the strongest pro-western power among the Gulf states and the Shah was totally pro-western. In view of all these factors it thought that it should be given, if not a favoured treatment, at least a treatment equal to that given to the neighbouring state, Pakistan. But the USA was helping Pakistan more both in terms of economic and military aid and also in terms of arms transfer.

Table 13 reveals that Pakistan received much more economic aid than was given to Iran. It is also noteworthy that though on paper Pakistan received slightly less than Iran in terms of military aid, if one compares the arms transferred to both the count-

TABLE 13
US Economic and Military Aid to Iran and Pakistan 1953-65
 (in \$ million)²⁴

Year	Pakistan		Iran	
	Economic	Military	Economic	Military
1953-61	1661.0	491.9	617.7	410.0
1962	426.2	47.6	68.7	64.5
1963	361.6	88.9	42.7	101.3
1964	393.5	29.9	26.3	34.7
1965	347.6	11.9	40.0	82.4
Total	3189.9	670.2	795.4	702.9

ries Pakistan acquired more arms than Iran. There can be two possible reasons for it. Pakistan already possessed the infrastructure for a modern military programme and, therefore, could absorb more weapons. Also, it did not have to bear the huge cost of US personnel for military training that Iran was compelled to incur because it was completely dependent upon the USA for its training and modernization programme.

During 1956-58, Pakistani air force received, apart from several trainer planes, 120 F-86F Sabre jets and 32 Martin B-57B bombers (of them 6 were equipped for photo-reconnaissance purposes). It received 30 helicopters, 14 F-104 Starfighters (supersonic) and 4 Grumman Hu-16A Albatros maritime reconnaissance planes. The Pakistani armour force was strengthened by the addition of 400 M-48 Pattons, 200 Shermans, 150 Chaffee and 50 M-41 Bulldog tanks. Pakistani navy obtained one cruiser, six destroyers and seven minesweepers. They were either ex-US or ex-British but transferred to Pakistan under the Military Aid Programme by the USA. One Tench-class submarine, transferred in 1964, was the last major weapon given to Pakistan by the USA. After 1965 Pakistan got neither military aid nor new weapons from the USA and had to rely upon weapons transferred to it from China, USSR, France or friendly Islamic countries from the Middle East.

²⁴US Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations, Obligations, Loan Authorizations, 1 July 1945-30 June 1971. Agency for International Development, 24 May 1972, 17, 24.

Iran's quest for military security in the sixties was influenced by several factors, most important of them being the threat posed by Arabism and radicalism. This threat was posed most directly by Iraq after the 1958 *coup d'état*. The new Iraqi regime was not only "radical" but also very close to the USSR. It also revived all the old disputes with Iran which were suppressed under the previous regime. In 1960, the dispute over the *Shatt al-Arab* had led to a large-scale military alert in Iran.²⁵ Nasserism, though a political challenge to the Shah, was never a military threat to Iran. Iraq-Iran rivalry also heightened Iranian quest for security in the Gulf not only because of the question of safeguarding its sea-lanes in the *Shatt al-Arab* but also because of the potential oil resources in the continental shelf. Iran was disturbed by the long-term implications of slogans like the Arab Gulf and Arabistan (Khuzistan) being an Arab area. Moreover Iran, during those days, was militarily weaker than Iraq.

The Iranian military options were limited because of the reluctance of the USA, under the Kennedy administration, to provide Iran with what it considered to be its military requirements. During that period relations between Iran and the USA also cooled down. According to Amirsadeghi:

The coolness was above all due to President Kennedy's lack of sympathy with the Shah's desire to re-arm Iran with the most sophisticated military hardware available. Washington tried to discourage Iran's arms purchases and tried to perpetuate Iran's military reliance on the American forces, which meant making Iran's strategic aims subservient to those of the United States. But the Shah would not agree.²⁶

The USA, during the Kennedy administration, wanted Iran to put greater emphasis upon socio-economic development rather than on the question of increasing its military strength. The attitude of the Kennedy administration towards Iran's request for military aid was stated by one of the close associates of the President:

²⁵Ramazani, n. 15, 402-3.

²⁶Amirsadeghi, Hossein, "With Russia and America: the Shah's balanced alignment", *New Middle East*, (38), November 1971, 11.

In Iran, the Shah insists on our supporting an expensive army too large for border incidents and internal security and no use in an all-out war. His army, said one government adviser, resembled the proverbial man who was too heavy to do any light work and too light to do any heavy work.²⁷

Apart from introducing these arms control measures, the USA in 1962 cut down the annual payment of \$30 million budgetary support,²⁸ thereby causing financial problems for Iran.

There was a basic difference in the way the USA and Iran looked at Iran's military problems. The USA tended to look at it from the angle of a global super-power conflict. In that light, Iran was militarily very weak at that time. It must be noticed that the Kennedy period also coincided with the basic changes in weapon systems, when long-range land and sea-based missiles were introduced as new strategic weapons. Iran was not destined to play any significant role in that strategy at that time. But the Shah was not looking at Iran's military requirements from the global angle but from the limited regional angle where Iran had to face a growing confrontation from the Arab World, especially in the Gulf. Thus the US-Iranian clash over Iran's military security arose from their different perceptions of their own security problems rather than from any basic antagonism between them. But Iran needed to improve the odds. The Iran-USSR detente of 1962 has, therefore, to be seen from that angle also. It neutralized the political pressure from the north. The USSR developed a stake in Iran. Both these factors enabled Iran to devote more attention towards Iraq and the Gulf. Thus Iran, by and large, succeeded in improving its overall military position, without adding to its military capability, by shrewd diplomatic manoeuvring.

But that did not mean that Iran had given up its plan of increasing its military capability. Rationale for such a policy was not hard to find. Iraq, as seen earlier, had, thanks to Soviet help, already emerged as the more powerful of the two Gulf states. In 1965, a minor air skirmish between the Iraqi and the Iranian air-forces is believed to have revealed that the Russian

²⁷Sorenson, Theodore, *Kennedy*, New York, 1965, 628, quoted in Ramazani, n. 15, 360.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 360.

planes with Iraq were superior in type and function to the US-supplied planes that Iran possessed.²⁹ The failure of the western powers to support Pakistan, a SEATO and CENTO member, during the 1965 war was another rationale for justifying the Iranian quest for developing an independent military capability. Above all, Iran had already chalked out a Persian Gulf policy and wanted to emerge as the dominant power there not only on the littoral but on the high seas as well.

Iran, in contrast to the Arab states in the region, was always conscious of the importance of controlling the Gulf, though for various reasons Iran could not acquire that role. Nadir Shah tried it in the eighteenth century but failed. Reza Shah too attempted to build a navy during the inter-war period but succeeded only partly. Iran continued to believe in possessing a navy, howsoever small, even after 1945. It acquired two frigates from Britain in 1949. Reza Shah also decided to increase his naval capability, especially after the beginning of direct Iraq-Iran confrontation in 1958. Besides the larger threat from Arabism, Iran was also worried about its conflict with Iraq on the question of navigation in the *Shatt al-Arab* and delimitation of the oil-rich continental shelf. In the meanwhile it was becoming clear that Britain would not be able to hold on to the Gulf and would be forced to withdraw. This withdrawal was provided with a firm dateline, 1971, by the East of Suez statement of Harold Wilson. Iran had planned to emerge as the dominant power in the Gulf and these facts, more or less, provided the rationale for pursuing such a policy.

Iran was also helped by a change in the American administration, by the British and Soviet support and above all by the increasing oil revenues which enabled Iran to order more arms either against cash payment or on credit and loan. The top US administration's view also began to change after the death of President Kennedy. President Johnson was not hostile to the Shah and, therefore, though McNamara continued to harp on the need for economic development as against military aid for

²⁹Ibid., 227,

Iran,³⁰ new military aid agreement was signed.³¹ Economic and military aid began to flow into Iran and restrictions on the sale of new weapons to Iran were lifted. In 1963, Iran also received a large military aid (grant) amounting to \$101.3 mn.³² There was, however, a basic change in the so-called aid pattern. Instead of grants most of this aid after 1965 was in the form of loan or credit that Iran was expected to repay out of its oil revenue. The result was that new weapons began to flow into Iran.

Iran acquired new supersonic F-5 planes in 1965. It placed orders for F-4 planes, HAWK missiles, M-60 and Chieftain tanks, destroyers, frigates and hovercraft before 1967, well before Wilson's East of Suez declaration.

There was a new impetus to Iran's weapon acquisition programme after 1968, thanks to a combination of new factors. The election of Richard Nixon as the new American President set the stage for greater warmth and understanding.³³ Nixon was an old friend of the Shah. Their friendship dated back to the early 1950s, when Nixon had been vice-president. The change of administration in the USA coincided with two other major events that affected the Gulf: the East of Suez declaration of Harold Wilson, and the entry of the Soviet task-force in the Indian Ocean. These three factors helped the Shah when he visited the USA in June 1968 to obtain more arms. His visit was preceded by quiet diplomacy. The *New York Times* of 22 May 1968 announced that the State Department and Defence Department had agreed to the sale of arms worth \$600 million to Iran. The delivery was supposed to be spread over six years. The Shah's visit to Washington was successful, as was revealed

³⁰*Foreign Assistance Act of 1964*, Hearings, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 88 Congress, 2 Session, GPO, Washington, 1964, 90, quoted in Marvin Zonis, *Political Elite of Iran*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1971, 106.

³¹*Kayhan International*, 26 October 1964, quoted in *ibid*, 107 and E.A. Bayne, *Persian Kingship in Transition*, New York, 1968, 215.

³²*US Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations, Obligations and Loan Authorizations*, 1 July 1945-30 June 1971, AID, 24 May 1972, 17.

³³Chubin, Shahram, "Iran's foreign policy 1960-1976", in Hossein Amirsadeghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, 1977, 199.

TABLE 14
US Aid to Iran, 1965-71³⁴ (in \$ million)

Year	Economic aid		Total	Military aid		Total	Total aid
	Grant	Loan		Grant	Loan		
1965	34.8	5.6	40.4	33.6	48.8	82.4	122.8
1966	7.4	15.1	22.5	62.7	90.0	152.7	175.2
1967	3.2	103.2	107.1	34.7	161.0	195.7	302.8
1968	2.3	39.7	42.0	22.1	100.0	122.1	164.1
1969	1.4	6.5	7.9	21.9	104.3	126.2	134.1
1970	1.4	41.8	43.2	2.7	—	2.7	45.9
1971	1.2	85.8	87.0	2.3	120.0	122.3	209.3
Total	50.7	298.4	349.1	180.0	624.1	804.1	1,153.2

³⁴US Foreign Assistance and Assistance from International Organizations, Obligations and to an Authorizations, July 1945-30 June 1971, AID, 24 May 1972, 17.

by the joint communique signed on 12 June 1968.³⁵ Soon after the Shah's visit it was announced that Iran would get the F-4 Phantoms, though the USA too needed them badly in the Vietnam war.³⁶

The Nixon Doctrine of June 1969 encouraged this trend further by providing one more rationale to the USA to transfer arms to Iran. The US Under Secretary of State, Elliot L. Richardson, in a press conference in Iran, commented on 2 April 1970 that the USA was aware of threats to peace in the Persian Gulf region and would be willing to offer the necessary help in the form of military and economic aid after the British withdrawal in 1971. He added that such assistance would be in line with the Nixon Doctrine.³⁷ By the turn of the decade, these factors merged into the so-called "energy crisis" and the US dependence upon Gulf oil. Iran, by taking upon itself the task of the guardian of the sea-lanes in the Gulf, seemed to fulfil an important part in the US strategy and, therefore, was again deemed worthy of military assistance. Thus, Iran succeeded by using the variations in the international environment to gain more and more military aid.

Iran's path was not always smooth. It had to indulge in what can be called "arms diplomacy" to gain what it wanted and what the USA was not always willing to offer. Iran's detente with the USSR and the growing political and economic ties between them came very handy whenever Iran wanted to use the USSR as a lever against the USA, especially for obtaining sophisticated arms like the HAWK missiles and F-4 Phantom planes.

As early as 1964-65 Iran had asked for the HAWK SAMs and Phantom planes to have a clear edge over Iraq, which had acquired Tu-16 bombers and MiG-21 interceptors. Iran wanted the HAWK for the defence of Abadan area though F-4 was superior to MiG-21. The USA agreed in principle to supply them but hinted that the Iranians could not handle at that time

³⁵*Department of State Bulletin*, 59 (1514), 1 July 1968, 15.

³⁶*New York Times*, 12 June 1968, Ramazani, n. 15, and Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran: A Development State in a Zone of Great Power Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1974, 118.

³⁷*News Review, West Asia*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, May 1970, 10.

the sophisticated weapon system, and urged Iran to acquire more of F-5 planes. At that juncture the Shah reportedly hinted that if thwarted by the USA he might seek his weapons from the USSR. "There was no intention to wreck the alliance with the United States but rather to use the Soviet deal as a lever to acquire more modern weapons from the United States."³⁸ Probably the threat worked, or the USA really believed that Iran could absorb those weapons. The end result was that Iran got the HAWK by 1966.³⁹ Also it was announced by December 1966 that Iran would receive F-4. The sale of two squadrons of the Phantoms was made public by November 1967. Iran was the first Asian country to get the Phantoms, even before Israel. The deal with the USSR was finally reduced to \$110 million and included items like armoured personnel carriers, anti-aircraft guns and transport equipment. This was announced in February 1967. It is doubtful if the USSR would have sold sophisticated equipment like MiG-21 and SA-3 to Iran at that time because the Arab-Iranian confrontation was at its height and Iran had close linkages with Israel. USSR might not have preferred to antagonise not only Iraq but also other radical Arab states at that time. But, on the whole, the Soviet-Iranian arms deal was a good example of arm-twisting by the Shah to get more arms for Iran.

Iran, by and large, bought its new military equipment after 1964-65. Not only had its oil revenue increased but it no longer had to pay about \$100 million per year that it had to pay since 1954 as compensation to the oil company that was nationalized in 1951. Thus Iran could afford new weapons. Since it was no longer getting new arms under military grants but had to pay for them against loan or credit, Iran could diversify its source of supply. During 1965-71 Iran equipped its navy with new vessels like destroyers, frigates and hovercraft from Britain. It divided its armour between UK and USA and shopped for its aircraft exclusively among the American firms. It did threaten at one time to buy sophisticated weapons from the USSR but finally settled for troop transport equipment and anti-aircraft guns.

³⁸Ramazani, n. 15, 343.

³⁹The SIPRI source mentions that the HAWK deal was made in 1964. *Arms Trade Register*, n. 20, 48.

TABLE 15
*Iran: US Military Assistance, Credits and Loans: 1965-73*⁴⁰
 (in \$ million)

Year	US Govt credit sales (F.M.S.)	Export-import bank, military loans
1965	48.8	—
1966	90.0	—
1967	161.1	—
1968	100.0	—
1969	104.0	—
1970	—	—
1971	—	120.0
1972	—	100.0
1973	—	200.0
	455.0	420.0
Total assistance, 1965-73 = \$ 875.0 mn.		

Thus, once Iran could afford to pay, the west began to transfer new arms to Iran. The USA arranged for loans and credit worth \$875 million. Even Britain offered loans. It was reported that in 1970, when Iran wanted to buy new British SAMs (Rapier) worth \$112 million, a consortium of British bankers grouped together to raise about 30 per cent of the total cost as loans for Iran.⁴¹ According to an Iranian scholar, between 1965 and 1970 Iran bought arms worth \$1.6 billion and placed orders worth about \$1 billion in 1971-72.⁴² Undoubtedly, all this investment was reflected in the rapid growth of the armed forces of Iran.

TABLE 16
*Iran's Armed Forces, 1964-65 and 1971-72*⁴³

1964-65	1971-72
General Population: 21,800,000	General Population: 29,500,000

⁴⁰US Foreign Assistance, n. 32, 17, and US Foreign Assistance 1945-1975, AID, 1976, 16.

⁴¹News Review, West Asia, n. 37, 4 June 1970.

⁴²Ramazani, n. 15, 368.

⁴³Data collected from Military Balance 1964-1965 and 1971-1972, Institute for Strategic Studies, London, SIPRI, Arms Trade Register, n. 20, Janes Fighting Ships (London) etc.

GNP:	GNP: 1970, \$10.9 bn
Defence Estimate: 1963-64, \$195mn.	Defence Estimate: 1971-72, \$1,023 mn
Total Armed Forces: 208,000	Total Armed Forces: 181,000
Gendarmerie: 30,000	Gendarmerie: 40,000 with 30 helicopters and several light boats
Army	Army
Total strength: 200,000	Total strength: 150,000
12 infantry divisions (inf div)	3 inf divs
6 independent brigades (indep bde)	4 indep inf bdes
About 400 Sherman and M-47 medium tanks (med tks)	3 armoured divisions (amd div)
50 M-24 Chaffee light tank (lt tk)	860 M-47 and M-60 med tks
220 M-8 Greyhound and M-20 armoured cars (amd cars)	100 M-24 Chaffee (lt tks)
	240 M-8 and M-20 amd cars
	870 armoured personnel carriers (APC) M-113, BTR 50/60
	several heavy guns, anti-aircraft guns
	8 helicopters (several on order)
	1 SAM battalion (bn) HAWK
	SS-11/12 ATGW
	(800 Chieftains reportedly received)
Air force	Air force
Total strength: 7000	Total strength: 22,000, 140 combat aircraft
About 145 planes	2 Sq F-4 (32 on order)
3 fighter-bomber squadrons F-84G	5 Sqs of F-5
3 fighter-bomber squadrons of Canadian Sabres F-86	20 F-86 Canadian Sabres (being phased out)
	26 C 130 Herculese transport planes (30 more on order)
	71 helicopters
	Sidewinder and Sparrow III AAMs
Navy	Navy
Total strength: 1,000	Total strength: 9000
2 frigates	1 destroyer
2 corvettes	1 frigate
4 coastal minesweepers	4 corvettes
2 inshore minesweepers	4 coastal minesweepers
2 landing craft	2 inshore minesweepers
About 20 other vessels (small)	4 landing craft
	2 large hovercraft
	8 small hovercraft
	several small patrol boats
	(4 SAAM-class frigates being delivered)
	several helicopters (about 60-70)

While Iran was developing its armed forces it also began to reorganize and reorient them to suit the new strategy that it was planning for the future. Earlier, Iranian defence was oriented against the threat from the north. American military assistance to Iran in the fifties not only constituted the weapons modernization programme but also the "construction of a series of bases providing a defence perimeter in depth facing Russia in the northern territory of Iran."⁴⁴ The changes in the Iranian military posture reoriented its overall strategy. The Iranian armed forces were reorganized to face south instead of the north. In February 1967 "the shifts in Iran security priorities were dramatically illustrated by the report that the army stations in the north would be shifted from the Russian border to the Persian Gulf."⁴⁵ Subsequently, the First Army with its headquarters at Kermanshah was reorganized with the responsibility to guard against unforeseen events that might arise in the area approaching the low lands of Iraq. The headquarters of the Second Army were moved from Turbati-Haidari in the north-east of the country to Tehran, and the newly created Third Army was based at Shiraz in the southern part of Iran.⁴⁶

This reorganization and reorientation of the Iranian armed forces also meant that a greater degree of attention was being paid to Iranian political and military presence in the Persian Gulf. Iran's Gulf policy has to be studied from two distinct angles: the historical urge to control the waters of the adjoining sea and the response to the Arab-Iranian confrontation, especially the threat posed by Iraq after the 1958 *coup d'état*. As seen earlier, Iran had tried to acquire some naval capability and had attempted to assert Iran's claims to some Persian Gulf islands even in the thirties during the reign of Reza Khan. After the Second World War, Iran tried to rebuild its navy by acquiring two frigates, thus once again signifying Iran's desire to play a naval role in the Gulf. This was in marked contrast to the Arab policy that relied upon the British and the US presence in Bahrain to offer them maritime protection. The Shah as early

⁴⁴Bayne, n. 31, 210.

⁴⁵Chubin and Zabih, n. 36, 154 and Burrell, n. 6, 160.

⁴⁶Konry, Enver M., *Oil and Geopolitics in the Persian Gulf Area*, 1973, 44 and Burrell, R.M., "Iran's foreign policy during the last decade", *Asian Affairs*, 61 (New series vol. v), part I, February 1974, 10.

as 1961 had stated, "since we are the dominant power in the Persian Gulf, we must rapidly strengthen our navy."⁴⁷

Iran was also perturbed by the growing overall Arab-Iranian confrontation and the Iraq-Iran rivalry. On several occasions the two neighbouring states had threatened each other with armed conflict. After 1958 Iraq began to receive patrol torpedo boats from the USSR. By themselves they can be classified as coastal defence weapons but given the peculiarities of regional geography—shallow and narrow waters of the Gulf and *Shatt al-Arab*—these torpedo boats could also be very effective in sea-denial tactics, especially when Iran's oil route was dominated by them. There is no doubt that if there had been a conflict they could have effectively blockaded Iranian oil. No wonder they provided a justification for Iranian naval build-up. The Shah in an interview to the *Washington Post* correspondent said: "I was right in the past. Think what the Iraqis could do today with their torpedo boats in the Persian Gulf if we did not have the power to retaliate."⁴⁸

In the sixties, Iran's threat perception *vis-a-vis* the Gulf was influenced by three main factors: security of its oil installations and oil terminals, the possible effect of the eventual British withdrawal in the light of Iraq-Iran rivalry and the growing Soviet presence in Iraq (and the Indian Ocean region), and lastly, the possible threat to the sea-lanes by the guerrillas. Unlike Saudi Arabia and Iraq, who have oil pipelines connecting their oil fields to ports in the Mediterranean, Iran has none. Iranian offshore oil installation, refinery at Abadan and oil terminals both at Abadan and at the Kharg island, were open to naval attacks. The bulk of Iranian oil as well as other goods were being shipped through the Gulf. Not only Iran but other oil-producing states too depended upon this sea-lane. It is estimated that in 1971 every minute one ship passed through the Strait of Hormuz.⁴⁹ The Shah, always afraid of possible threat from insurgency, often referred to a possible guerrilla attack against shipping in

⁴⁷Reza Shah, n. 1, 311.

⁴⁸*Kayhan*, 14 June 1969, quoted in Ramazani, n. 15, 419.

⁴⁹Interview, Amir Taheri of *Kayhan* with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ardeshir Zahedi, 17 March 1971, Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press and Information Department, *A Decade of Dynamic Diplomacy* (no place, no date), 7.

the Gulf. In an interview on 15 January 1972, while justifying his occupation of Abu Musa and the two Tumb islands, he said that he did not want them to fall into "irresponsible" hands. "A small ship, even a motor boat, armed with bazookas, could cause trouble, as I believe was the case off the Island of Perim, in the Strait of Mandeb, where a motor boat armed with bazookas attacked a tanker—a big tanker and nearly sank it. . . ." ⁵⁰

The Iranian response was to dominate the Gulf. This decision was taken in 1965 when, in March of that year, the Shah declared that Iran's military preparations would henceforth be focused on the Persian Gulf. In the autumn of 1965 the Iranian *Majlis* passed a bill to spend \$400 million to strengthen Iranian armed forces, especially its air force and navy. ⁵¹ Initially Iran had difficulties in selling its strategy to the USA but by 1964, the perennial debate had turned slightly in the Shah's favour. The Johnson administration modified the Kennedy administration's rigid view that Iran's fears for the south were unreal, and a continuing military supply programme was developed. ⁵² This new change in the US attitude also coincided with the introduction of the new SLBM (Polaris) system and its possible use in the Indian Ocean (Arabian Sea) area. Thus Iran with the help of the USA and the UK began to acquire destroyers, frigates, corvettes, hovercraft and other vessels. This programme was initiated in 1966, well before Wilson's declaration of the East of Suez policy or the entry of the Soviet task-force in the Indian Ocean. These subsequent developments only added weight to a policy that had been chalked out earlier.

Iran's naval build-up has shown a steady improvement since the Second World War. It also reveals the threats as perceived by the Iranian regime and the efforts made to counter them. Iran's naval build-up more or less remained constant between 1949 and 1959. Only a few light patrol vessels, more in the nature of coast-guard, were acquired. Iran used some of these boats to demonstrate a naval presence in the Caspian Sea, especially during the period before the Soviet-Iranian detente. The Iraq-Iran

⁵⁰ *Iran News and Documents*, 24 January 1972, in *News Review, West Asia*, n. 37, March 1972, 10.

⁵¹ Cottrell, Alvin, J., "Iran, the Arabs and the Persian Gulf", *Orbis*, 17 (3), Fall 1973, 980.

⁵² Bayne, n. 31, 221.

conflict after 1959 on the *Shatt al-Arab* question evoked a strong response from Iran.

TABLE 17
Iran's Naval Build-up: 1940-71

1949	1 ex-British frigate (Babr)	
	2 ex-British escort minesweepers (Palang), classified as frigate	
1953	2 patrol launches (ex-air/sea rescue launches)	
1956	7 patrol vessels	
	15 small patrol boats	
1957	1 patrol boat	
	1 landing craft	
1958	9 coast-guard vessels	
1959	2 coast-guard vessels	
	2 coastal minesweepers	
	1 landing craft	
1961	1 coastal minesweeper	
	1 repairship (ex-US LST type)	
1962	1 coastal minesweeper	
1964	2 corvettes (ex-US)	
	2 inshore minesweepers	
1966	Order placed with Britain	Iran began receiving them in 1970-72
	1 destroyer	
	4 SAAM-class frigates	
	2 heavy hovercraft	
	8 light hovercraft	
1968	1 corvette (ex-US)	
1969	1 corvette (ex-US)	
1970	3 patrol boats	
1971	1 replenishment ship	

After the end of the Second World War, Iran could salvage only three small (28-30 ton) motor launches (37mm gun) among the naval vessels it had acquired from Italy in 1932. To that were added new warships. After 1958 Iran, with active help from USA, began to acquire weapons that could counter the possible Iraqi threat. Iran's oil terminal and Abadan refinery depended upon the tankers using the *Shatt al-Arab*, which, if mined, could hurt Iran. To counter that threat, Iran began receiving minesweepers from 1959 onwards. The choice of the weapon system was significant because it signified a role—of keeping the sea-lanes open. It is possible that Iran on its own could not have succeeded in fulfilling that role at that time but the trend was clear. Hence it can be said that the role that Iran

claimed it wanted to fulfil—guardian of the sea-lanes—had its beginning in 1959, a very interesting example of the continuity of national policy.

The next spurt in Iranian naval power started in 1964 when Iran began to receive active support for its Gulf policy from the USA and the UK. Iran received two corvettes in 1964 and two more in 1968-69. But they were not sophisticated enough to suit the Iranian taste. They were armed with 3" guns and had a slower speed. They were, therefore, filling in a temporary gap till Iran began receiving sophisticated vessels it had ordered from Britain in 1966. The destroyer was old but was completely updated before delivery. It carried Sea Cat SAMs. The four SAM-class frigates were the latest in the line. Besides conventional guns they were equipped with Sea Cat SAMs and Sea Killer Mk 2 anti-ship missile. They were also very fast. Hovercraft also came in handy for patrolling shallow areas and islands in the Gulf. By 1971-72 Iran received the vessels it had ordered. These vessels gave Iran a "sea-control" capability in the Gulf. Thus Britain's official withdrawal also coincided with Iran's emergence as the dominant Gulf power. The occupation of three small islands in November 1971, unopposed by any Arab littoral state, was a testimony to Iran's naval strength. The next step for Iran, in keeping with the logic of its naval expansion, was to step into the Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea and finally into the Indian Ocean. Iran tried to attempt this in the seventies.

Other states in the Gulf region were not in a position to compete with Iran in the arms acquisition programme. There were several reasons for it. Kuwait was afraid of Iraq and was building its armour and air force to pose some resistance to the possible Iraqi drive into Kuwait. Saudi Arabia was worried about the presence of the Egyptians in North Yemen and subsequently from the threat from South Yemen. Thus it acquired defensive equipment like SAMs and ATGWs and a few supersonic interceptors with limited radius and payload. Neither Kuwait nor Saudi Arabia tried to create a functional navy to protect their oil lanes. It was surprising because not only their prosperity but their very survival as a modern nation depended upon their oil.

Iraq was the only power that had a will to compete with Iran but failed to keep up with it because of several reasons. Iraq was isolated in the region. No regional Arab state supported it in its

confrontation with Iran. Iraqi resources were being drained out in the long-drawn Kurdish war. Iraq had also participated in the Arab-Israeli confrontation after 1967. Not only did it lose equipment there but maintaining Iraqi troops in Jordan was also a drain on Iraq's limited economic and manpower resources. Even the USSR after its detente with Iran was reluctant to back Iraq to the hilt in its military confrontation with Iran. Lastly, Iraq's oil revenue was not adequate for national development and a large-scale arms purchase programme. Thus the Arabs remained suspicious of each other and Iran emerged as the strongest regional power as is seen from the arms purchase programme of the important Gulf states between 1965 and 1971.

It is almost a truism of international politics to say that as soon as a state gains interest in an area, threats to these states, either real or mythical, tend to grow at a rapid rate. This was certainly true of Iran's expanding interests in the Persian Gulf.⁵³

Once Iran had emerged as the dominant power in the Gulf by the end of 1971, which coincided with the British withdrawal, the Iranian regime began to think of enlarging its so-called security perimeter. The Shah, in an interview as early as 15 January 1972,⁵⁴ told the journalists that Iran would carry out its defence build-up into the Gulf of Oman in view of the developments in the Indian Ocean. He added that such a move would be only natural as the waterway was to the east of Bandar Abbas. The official Iranian position on its new and enlarged security frontier (*harim-i-amniyat*) was stated by the Shah in November 1972, on the 40th anniversary of the Iranian navy.⁵⁵ The increase in Iranian naval capability, and the construction of bases on the Gulf of Oman-Arabian Sea-Indian Ocean complex was decided in 1972, long before the oil price-hike following October 1973. Thus Iran's desire to be counted as an Indian Ocean power, and the US support for that policy, predated the October crisis.

⁵³Cottrell, n. 51, 979-80.

⁵⁴*Kayhan*, 29 January 1972, quoted in *News Review, West Asia*, n. 37, February 1972, 7.

⁵⁵*Kayhan*, 11 November 1972, quoted in Ramazani, n. 15, 427-8.

TABLE 18
Heavy Weapons Acquired by Gulf Powers: 1965-71

<i>Iran</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	<i>Kuwait</i>
Armour 1260 med tks (M-60, and Chieftain) C00 APC (M-113, BTR 5/60) ATGW 1000 SS-11/12 Aircraft 139 F-5 31 F-4 56 C-130 tp. 152 helicopters (32 F-4 on order)	Armour 100 med tks (T-34/54) 45 lt tks (PT-76) 50 and cars (Panhard AML 60/90) ATGW None Aircraft 86 MiG-21 50 Su-7 53 helicopters	Armour 220 and cars (Panhard AML-90) Probably to equip the National Guard ATGW Vigilant and SS-11 Aircraft 46 Lightning (6 of them trainers) 8 Hawker Hunter 25 Strikemaster (COIN) & trainer) 46 helicopters	Armour 75 med tks (Centurion and Vickers medium 37 tons) 50 APC (Saladin) ATGW 350 Vigilant (SS-11 on order) Aircraft 14 Lightning 5 Hunter 12 Strikemaster (32 Mirage F-1 on order)

AAM	AAM	AAM	AAM
768 Sidewinder	588 K. 13 Atoll	204 Firestreak and Red Top	72 Firestreak and Red Top
768 Sparrow III			
SAM	SAM	SAM	SMA
20 Seacat	12 SA-2 launchers	37 Thunderbird Mk 1	None
25 Tigercat		150 HAWK and Improved HAWK	
(Rapier on order)		(cortale on order)	
SSM			
Sea-killer Mk-II			
Naval Vessels	Naval Vessels	Naval Vessels	Naval Vessels
1 destroyer	none of any significance	3 patrol boats	18 small boats
2 corvettes		8 light hovercraft (Coast Guard)	
3 patrol vessels		20 small patrol boats	
2 heavy hovercraft		(30 small boats on order)	
8 light hovercraft			
1 replenishment ship			
4 SAAM-class frigates			

It was important that Iran in order to carry out this newly chalked out policy, must continue to develop its military capability, and to that extent, draw the USA closer to it so as to get full economic, political and military backing from it so as to attain its objectives. The oil price-hike after October 1973 removed the economic constraint but other factors continued to dominate Iranian policy. It was also important for Iran to draw closer to Oman and have some politico-military presence there. Cape Musandam dominates the sea-lanes from the south and it was vital that it continue to remain in "friendly" hands. This factor partly explains the full Iranian backing to the Sultan of Oman in his fight against the guerrillas in Dhofar and for the stationing of Iranian troops in Oman. Iran and Oman, over a number of years, developed an identical interest in this vital region and coordinated their political and military policies to protect them.

Various reasons were put forward to rationalize and legitimize Iranian policy by the Iranian ruling elite and its supporters outside Iran. Many of these arguments were old, like the Iran-Iraq rivalry and the threat from radicalism, especially from the Dhofar movement, which had served in the past to justify Iranian policy in the Gulf in the sixties. However, new developments in and around the Gulf, like the impact of the Indo-Pakistani conflict of 1971, the October war of 1973, the growing Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean area⁵⁶ were also used as new justifications for improving Iranian military capability and expanding the Iranian security perimeter beyond the Gulf.

As discussed earlier, the Iranian policy after 1971 was governed by a scenario called the "threat of encirclement" that was worked out by interlinking politico-military developments around Iran. One of them was the Bangladesh crisis of 1971. The Pakistani role in Bangladesh, the Indo-Soviet treaty, the Indo-Pakistani war of December 1971 and the so-called danger of further dismemberment of Pakistan—all were treated as a potential threat to Iran. The Shah of Iran, in an interview to Arnaud de Borchgrave of *Newsweek*, said:

⁵⁶*Kayhan*, 18 November 1972, discusses some of those arguments, except the October crisis which was a subsequent development.

Don't misunderstand me. I was against the intervention of the Pakistani Army in East Pakistan. But this does not detract from the fact that India invaded and dismembered the country. It may even be better this way, but we're talking about a dangerous precedent for the future that convinced me we could only rely on ourselves.⁵⁷

Coupled with the "threat from the east" was also the new threat arising from the Iraq-Soviet treaty of 1972—the growing Soviet presence in the Bab al-Mandeb region. The greater involvement of the Cubans in South Yemen after 1972⁵⁸ and in Ethiopia after 1977-78 added more substance to the Iranian hypothesis that its security was endangered by hostile elements surrounding Iran. Even the Iraq-Iran detente of 1975 failed to assure Iran. The Shah of Iran is reported to have told *Business Week* that Iraq had more tanks and planes than Iran, and that Iran had no equivalent to the Soviet Scud surface-to-surface missile in Iraq.⁵⁹

The October crisis also had its impact upon Iran's politico-military thinking. The success of the initial Arab attack caused Iran to take measures against a similar attack from Iraq. Also, Iran was afraid that like Israel it too might, because of the high attrition rate of sophisticated weapons in modern battlefield conditions become dependent upon the USA for the continued flow of arms in the pipeline during the war, and to that extent it might be subjected to diplomatic pressure.⁶⁰ To avoid such an eventuality, Iran not only tried to diversify its source of arms supply, but also placed large orders for arms that it could not even absorb at that time. They could be its reserves. Also, it tried to get a firm commitment from the USA for a continuing political and military support. To that end Iran used the old argument that it would act as the guardian of the oil lanes. This time it was not content to remain within the confines of the Persian Gulf but also tried to guard that lane upto the Bab al-Mandeb region, the

⁵⁷Borchgrave, Arnaud de, "Colossus of the oil lanes", *Newsweek*, 21 May 1973, 44.

⁵⁸*Washington Post*, 25 June 1973, in Ramazani, n. 15, 437. There were about 100 Cubans training South Yemenis in the use of MiG-21.

⁵⁹*Business Week*, 17 November 1975, 57.

⁶⁰For an analysis see Chubin, n. 34, 201-4.

Arabian Sea and even the Indian Ocean.⁶¹ It therefore tried to use that argument to acquire more heavy destroyers, maritime reconnaissance aircraft, base in Chahbahr and port facilities in Mauritius. Thus, Iran tried to dovetail its military requirements with the overall US strategy in the region and thereby get full US support to its new policy.

Yet another argument used to justify the Iranian military programme was that Iran was an element of stability in the Gulf which was a crisis area. The argument touched upon two aspects: radicalism as it existed in Iraq and in Dhofar, and the possibility of latent radicalism leading to a coup in the conservative pro-western, oil-producing Arab states in the Gulf. Iran argued that its military power would help stabilize the sensitive area and preserve *status quo*. Probably Iran's military help to Oman and offer of military help to Kuwait in case of Iraqi attack were examples of Iran's effort to stabilize the Gulf. The Shah even used the far-fetched argument of trying to pre-empt pollution in the Gulf. In an interview to *Kayhan International* upon the dangers of a big oil tanker being blown up or sunk in the narrow Gulf, he said:

The whole of the Gulf will be lost, completely lost, because the pollution that could thus result will be on a scale unimaginable. Then clearing that pollution would be as harmful as the oil itself, bearing in mind the huge quantities of detergent one would have to use. All marine life as well as life along the coast would be destroyed. This is very important matter—a very important matter—because the Gulf is neither very wide nor very deep. It is almost like a closed sea.⁶²

The Shah succeeded in convincing his supporters because they were keen to be convinced. The American administration not only gave full backing to the Shah in his politico-military plans but almost echoed the arguments that were used by the Shah to rationalize Iranian policy. Iran was considered important *vis-a-vis* the USSR in the context of global strategy. Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Joseph Sisco, in a

⁶¹The Shah, in an interview said, "We have not only national and regional responsibilities but also a world role as guardian and protector of 60 per cent of world's oil reserves", *Newsweek*, 21 May 1973.

⁶²*Kayhan International*, 29 January 1972.

testimony before the House Sub-committee on Investigations on 10 June 1975 discussed that angle. When questioned specifically by Mr Hamilton, the chairman of that sub-committee, if the USA supported Iran with arms in the context of global strategic considerations, Sisco replied, "I don't know if it is a factor in our sales of arms. It is a factor in our overall relationship, and the answer to your question is affirmative."⁶³ When pushed further on the issue of Rockwell intelligence network (IBEX) as a "possible indication of the defence services that Iran can furnish to the United States", Mr Amos A. Jordan, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for International Security Affairs, refused to give an answer in public and submitted the data for the classified record.⁶⁴

The second major reason for American support to Iran was the growing need in the USA for Gulf oil, the so-called instability in the Gulf and the willingness and the military capability of Iran to ensure stability in the area and to safeguard the oil resources and oil lanes there, especially after the British withdrawal in 1971. Joseph Sisco, in a statement before the House Sub-committee on the Near East (of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs), said on 8 August 1972, "Iran by virtue of its population, its economic and military strength, and its geographic position along the northern shore of the Persian Gulf, is destined to play a major role in providing for stability in the Gulf and the continued flow of oil to consumer countries. Fortunately, Iran has both the will and the capability to do so."⁶⁵ Iran's role in that regard became more crucial after October 1973. Sisco, in his prepared statement before the House Sub-committee on Investigation (of the Committee on International Relations), said that the United States welcomed Iran's taking on greater security responsibilities. The US decision to sell Iran sophisticated arms and the progress made by Iran in improving its military capability had given Iran a "credible deterrent" which had enabled it to play a more active role in protecting the vital trade routes of the

⁶³*The Persian Gulf, 1975*, Hearings, special House Sub-committee on Investigations of the Committee on International Relations, 94 Congress, 1 Session, June-July 1975, GPO, Washington, 1975, 40.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 115.

⁶⁵Sisco, Joseph J., "United States policy towards the Persian Gulf region", *Department of State Bulletin* 67 (1732), 4 September 1972, 244.

Gulf.⁶⁶ US arms supplied to Iran after 1973 were justified both in terms of an attempt to use them as a lever to ensure continuing oil supplies in view of the potential threat of energy crises,⁶⁷ and also as a means of recycling petro-dollars. There was also the fear that if the USA did not supply arms to Iran, it would shop elsewhere.⁶⁸ The Shah had publicly warned the USA on that issue in an interview to American journalists.⁶⁹ Thus the US administration, instead of calling the bluff, accepted the Shah's threat and continued to justify its sale of arms to Iran.

There were other economic and technological reasons for the sale of US arms to Iran. It is suggested by some experts that the Iranian weapons programme supported the American companies "notably in times of declining US purchase of military equipment."⁷⁰ This was especially true about the post-Vietnam war period. Companies like the Litton Industries (Spruance-class destroyers), Grumman (F-14), Lockheed (P-3 and C-130), Hughes (Phoenix AAM) etc., are key US defence contractors "whose production and development capabilities have benefited through Iranian procurement programmes."⁷¹

It is also reported that these companies not only sell their products to Iran but sell them at a price higher than they charge the US defence services. According to a dispatch by Andrew Hamilton in *Washington Post* of 11 August 1974, the Iranians were paying approximately \$2 billion for 80 F-14 (including spares and training). "This represents a 40 per cent premium over the Navy's price."⁷² Sale of arms to Iran helped the USA in yet another way. Iran, by preparing to share part of the cost

⁶⁶*The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 10-11.

⁶⁷House, *New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf*, Hearings, Sub-committee on Foreign Affairs, 93 Congress, 1 Session, June-November 1973, GPO, Washington, 1973, 131 (Statement by Alvin J. Cottrell).

⁶⁸Statement by Joseph J. Sisco, 10 June 1975, *The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 34.

⁶⁹*Kayhan International*, 10 August 1976.

⁷⁰Cottrell, n. 4, 427.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²Hamilton, Andrew, "Uncle Sam, arms dealer", *Washington Post*, 11 August 1974. Text in *The Persian Gulf*, 1974, *Money, Politics, Arms and Power*, House Hearings, Sub committee on the Near East and South Asia, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 93 Congress, 2 Session, July-August, 1974, GPO, Washington, 1975, Appendix 3, 174-75.

of production of these highly sophisticated weapon systems was not only helping in the research and development of these weapons but also helping to reduce their unit cost for the US buyers.⁷³ This was especially true about the Shah's offer to support continuing production of huge C-5 transport planes,⁷⁴ F-14 jet fighters and several other weapon systems like the Spruance-class destroyer, Harpoon SSM, and Phoenix AAM.

Iran had obtained full US support in the past. In the seventies this support was explained under the Nixon Doctrine of 1969. It was spelled out in 1970 by David Packard, the Deputy Secretary of Defence. According to him the best hope of reducing the US overseas involvements and expenditures was in getting allied and friendly nations to do even more in their own defence. To realize that hope, he advocated that the USA must continue, if requested, to give or sell them the tools they needed for the bigger load the USA was urging them to assume.⁷⁵ The major landmark in US-Iran relations was the visit of President Nixon to Tehran in May 1972. That visit was preceded by the visits of John Chaffee, the Navy Secretary, in January 1973 and Robert Seamans, the Air Force Secretary, in April 1972. It was reported that following that meeting, President Nixon agreed to sell virtually any conventional weapon that the Shah wanted.⁷⁶ "Whatever the full rationale for the decision, Iran was clearly an ideal power to be cast in the role of regional guardian within the concepts of the Nixon Doctrine."⁷⁷

The net result was that Iran was able to place orders for the

⁷³Klare, Michael T., "The political economy of arms sales, the American Empire at bay", *Society*, September-October 1974. Text in *The Persian Gulf*, 1974, n. 72, 226.

⁷⁴The Shah reportedly offered to finance the Lockheed Corporation with 165 million so as to reopen the C-5 cargo-jet production line which had been closed since May 1973. Iran offered to buy six of these planes at an estimated cost of \$185 million, the purchase price being in addition to the finances offered to restart the production. *Jerusalem Post*, 9 May 1974.

⁷⁵Klare, n. 73, 226.

⁷⁶Kubal, Robert, "US Policies in the Persian Gulf", in Mohammad Mughisuddin, ed., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf*, Praeger, New York, 1969. For joint communique issued after Nixon's Tehran visit, *Department of State Bulletin*, 16 (1722), 26 June 1972, 903-9.

⁷⁷Martin, Laurance, "The future strategic role of Iran", in Hossein Amiradeghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, New York, 1977, 230.

latest weapons produced in the USA. It was reported that the USA would supply Iran with laser-guided bombs and new F-14 jets. F-14 was not yet introduced in the US armed forces. This decision was reportedly taken during Nixon's Tehran visit.⁷⁸ It was reported in August 1973 that firm orders were placed for those planes. In May 1973, Iran placed orders for about 700 helicopters and the USA agreed to build a large helicopter base at Isfahan. It should be emphasized that these purchases were made even before the October crisis, and, therefore, reflected long-term US-Iranian understanding on the Iranian role in the region, than the often quoted response of an American attempt to recycle the surplus petro-dollars.

TABLE 19
*US Military Sales to Iran, 1970-77*⁷⁹
(in \$ million)

1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	Total
							(estimated)	
113.1	397.5	522.1	2,138.1	4,270.6	2,570.6	1,301.3	5,000	16,313.0

If one analyses the US arms sales to Iran in the seventies it becomes evident that the USA sold about \$ 1 billion worth of arms between 1970 and 1972 but about \$15 billion between 1973 and 1977. Admittedly, Iran did not receive all these weapons all at once and there is a long lead time but Iran did receive very sophisticated weapons in quantities large enough to pose serious problems regarding their training programme and even routine maintenance. Thus Iran was faced with the crucial problem of the need for foreign-trained personnel to enable it to maintain its military programme. Five different types of identifiable American groups participate in the Iranian military training programme: the ARMISH-MAAG, TAFT, DEFREP Operating Military Units and the civilian and ex-military personnel contracted by various US companies associated with the Iranian military programme.

Iran had been dependent upon US personnel for the military assistance programme of this type since the Second World War

⁷⁸ *Jerusalem Post*, 13 July 1972.

⁷⁹ *United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Area*:

when the US Military Mission to the Iranian Gendarmerie (GENMISH) was first established in October 1942. In 1943, the US Advisory Mission to the Iranian Army was established. Following the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the USA and Iran signed an agreement in October 1947 to establish the US Army Mission (ARMISH) to enhance the efficiency of the Iranian army. It also continued to advise the Iranian gendarmerie. The USA also agreed to sell to Iran surplus equipment from the US military stock. In May 1950 the US-Iran Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement was signed under which the USA agreed to provide technical personnel for the grant assistance programme. The Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) was established to fulfil that requirement. In 1962 ARMISH and MAAG were coordinated into one organization (ARMISH-MAAG).

It operated under the direct military command of the US commander-in-chief, in Europe, and under the supervision of the US ambassador in Iran. The Iranian government paid for the major part of the cost of this programme. The primary function of this organization was to supervise "US military security assistance matters required to foster Iran's military competence and further US national policies and interests, advising the Iranian Armed Forces on weapons procurement, processing government-to-government (FMS) arms sales, and assisting the Iranian Armed Forces to assimilate purchases from the United States."⁸⁰ It had done useful work before the phasing out of MAP aid to Iran but its influence declined after 1972. The MAP for Iran stopped in 1969 though earlier MAP commitments continued till 1972. Also the number of MAAG personnel had been progressively reduced since 1961. There was a further cut in 1972. The number of personnel associated with the ARMISH-MAAG programme in Iran remained constant at 209 since 1973. The bulk of this emphasis was on MAAG and only 14-16 personnel were attached to ARMISH. The whole programme

Past, Present and Future, report of a staff Survey Mission to Ethiopia, Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, pursuant to H. Resolution 313, December 1977, printed for the use of the House, Committee on International Relations, 95 Congress, 1 Session, Committee print, US GPO, Washington, 1977, 5. (The figures for 1977 seem to have been over-estimated).

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 140.

was split up as: 109 in army section, 34 in navy section and 66 in air force section.⁸¹ The US MAAG Mission in Iran was the largest in the world.⁸²

The reduction in the ARMISH-MAAG programme coincided with increased purchases of highly sophisticated weapons by Iran, thus creating an urgent need for more trained US personnel to assist in the Iranian military programme. Technical Assistance Field Team (TAFT) agreement was signed between the USA and Iran in January 1973 to fill that gap. "The TAFT concept, therefore, has been the principal means for providing the US military personnel to assist the Iranian Armed Forces in in-country training, management, maintenance and utilization of the US equipment weapons and supporting systems."⁸³ Initially the TAFT personnel totalled 552 in 1973 but their number increased to 1573 in 1978.⁸⁴ Since the TAFT programme emphasized in-country training, about half of its total personnel was spread out in more than fifteen bases throughout Iran where the new US weapons were located. It was incharge of the training programme for jet fighters (F-5/4/14), P-3 Orion, HAWK, helicopters, logistics, signals, electronics etc. These functions were provided on an interim basis until the Iranians themselves developed their independent capability. It was unlikely that the aim could be achieved in the short time and the Iranian reliance on TAFT would have continued well into the 1980s. Iranians paid for the TAFT programme. The cost increased from \$16.6 million in 1973 to \$93.4 million in 1976.⁸⁵

The DEFREP (US Defence Representative) programme was initiated in September 1975 to provide advice and information on defence matters to the US ambassador, to inform the office of the Secretary of Defence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of ARMISH-MAAG of the activities of the Defence Department. One of its major functions was to smoothen the

⁸¹Ibid., 141, *The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 133.

⁸²*The Persian Gulf*, 1974, n. 72, 1.

⁸³*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 141.

⁸⁴Ibid. Another source gave the authorised strength as 863 with 599 assigned. *The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 133.

⁸⁵*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 143.

difficulties in the way of transfer of large quantities of weapons ordered by Iran after the increase in the oil price. Though the concept was apt, it could not be effectively put into practice and the experiment with DEFREP was not a success. It was allowed to subliminate after March 1977 when Mr Von Marbod, its chief, had returned to the USA after completing his term.⁸⁶ Operating Military Units were another official US military mission in Iran. Their task was to provide logistical-technical support to DOD (Department of Defence) activities in Iran. Their total strength was 1510 but only 1355 were assigned.⁸⁷

Besides the US personnel directly connected with the American government's military assistance programme there were thousands of Americans employed by the US firms who were responsible for the supply, training and maintenance of new weapon systems ordered by Iran. It was estimated that in 1976-77 there were more than 40 US firms engaged in military contracts in Iran. An estimated number of 2728 US personnel were employed by these firms in Iran.⁸⁸ The biggest of these firms was the Bell Helicopter International which employed about 2400 persons, more than half of whom were retired US military personnel with experience in Vietnam. The Grumman employed 460 men and it was anticipated that their number would reach to 1000 by 1981. It was estimated that there were about 3200 US retired military personnel serving with US firms in Iran.⁸⁹ These figures do not include their dependents, if any, in Iran.

The number of US citizens in Iran had been increasing since 1970. In 1972 it was estimated that there were approximately 15,000 US citizens in Iran.⁹⁰ It increased to 16,700 by 1975,⁹¹

⁸⁶Ibid., 144.

⁸⁷*The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 134.

⁸⁸*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 145.

⁸⁹Ibid., 146.

⁹⁰Ibid., 139.

⁹¹*The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 33. The breakup was—DOD civilians, 2,200; US military, 1,100; other US Government employees, 400; private 13,000, of whom 531 were working under military contract licences.

and 31,000 by 1976.⁹² Of these about 6,263 were directly connected with the implementation of sales and commercial exports of weapons from USA to Iran. Of these 1,304 were US government personnel and 4,959 were US civilian contract personnel.⁹³ It was estimated by the ARMISH-MAAG that the total number of US citizens in Iran might increase to 34,000 by 1981.⁹⁴ Others, however, quote a higher figure—40,000 to 50,000. The large number of US personnel in Iran also gave rise to the so-called hostage theory, according to which if Iran did decide to use these weapons it might hold these persons as hostage for enhanced military capability. The Shah, when asked about it by *US News and World Report*, said:

First of all, I don't know what the concern is all about. We are paying for the arms and the experts. I also don't see what you mean by "involvement" because the contracts state that these people will not be involved in any war between my country and any other country. These are the terms of the contract.⁹⁵

There is no doubt that Iran, over a period of almost three decades, had depended upon the USA for its military requirements. Also Iran's military programme was closely tied to that of America. This state of affairs had given rise to the so-called "surrogate" theory. Those who believed it felt that Iran had been purposely groomed by the USA to fulfil certain functions in the context of the domestic, regional and global policies of the USA. The Iran-US linkage was supposed to offer to the USA three major advantages in the field of global strategy. Iranian military policy dovetailed with that of the USA in terms of the naval requirements in the Indian Ocean, the electronic surveillance and communication network at the soft under-belly of the USSR,

⁹²*The United States Arms Sales Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 139. Other source gives it as 24,000: Hossein Amirsa-deghi, ed., *Twentieth Century Iran*, New York, 1977, Appendix II, 285. According to that table half the skilled foreign population in Iran was from the USA.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 145.

⁹⁵*US News and World Report*, 22 March 1967, 57.

and in the context of the ALCM (air-launched cruise missile) system of the next decade. It was reported in February 1979 that two of these surveillance bases were rendered non-operational after the overthrow of the Shah in Iran.

In the seventies, Iran was supplied by the USA sophisticated naval equipment like destroyers, submarines, Harpoon ship-to-ship missiles and P-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft. Of course these weapons were given to Iran because Iran agreed to guard the oil lanes in the Indian Ocean. Alone, Iran was incapable of doing so because it could never have the capability of controlling the sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean. But if the Iranian role could be dovetailed with the US role in Diego Garcia and with the Australian and South African roles, then the pattern became much more clear. Under that scenario Iran could play a role, limited in scope, in the overall US strategy in the Indian Ocean: the strategy based upon SLBM as well as for controlling the oil lanes.

Sophisticated communication and electronic equipments installed in Iran too were beyond Iranian capacity to absorb. In fact, the US Air Force ran the show in that field.⁹⁶ Project IBEX, an electronic intelligence network to be installed in Iran by the Rockwell company at the cost of \$500 million, was not only criticized by the USSR but also came under fire among certain circles in the USA. The project was so sensitive that it was treated as "classified" during Congressional hearings.⁹⁷ It was reported that IBEX would be able to gather intelligence not only from the Gulf region but even from the Soviet Central Asian region. If that was correct it implied not only a clearance from the US administration but also a close cooperation between Iran and the USA. Iran had also asked for the AWACS. If these planes had been transferred to Iran they would have been able to cover the whole area much more effectively.

These complex electronic systems were also provided with deadly teeth. The most sophisticated US planes, F-14, armed with the long-range Phoenix AAM, and Boeing 707 and 747 jet tankers, were transferred to Iran during the last few years. F-5

⁹⁶*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 139.

⁹⁷*The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 115.

and F-4 operational with Iran were more than sufficient to match the jets available with Iraq. Even MiG-23 is not superior to F-4. Thus, one can presume that the triad of F-14, Phoenix and Boeing 707/747 air tanker, associated with electronic systems like IBEX and AWACS, was destined for something more important than Iraqi MiGs. Could it be a defence against Soviet attacks or was it dovetailed with the new US strategy based upon ALCM (air-launched cruise missile)?

Iran also found a place in the Middle-Eastern policy of the USA. In that role, it was teamed with Israel, another regional power almost totally dependent upon US political, economic and military support. Undoubtedly Saudi Arabia was also very close to the USA but it is only recently that the USA has started building up Saudi Arabia to play the role of a regional power. It will take at least a decade before Saudi Arabia can fulfil that function. During the sixties and even up to 1973 Iran and Israel were the twin-pillars of US Middle-Eastern policy. Both were against the Arab radicals and, therefore, balanced the pro-Soviet elements in the region, Israel in the Arab East and Iran in the Gulf and South Asia. Israel depended upon Iranian oil. There was close military (and "intelligence") cooperation between Iran and Israel⁹⁸ and the USA was the "silent partner" in that relationship.⁹⁹ Much of the interchange had come under the auspices and cover of the US military assistance programmes.¹⁰⁰ This relationship was underplayed since 1973-74 partly because the USA had itself opened direct channels of communication with the erstwhile pro-Soviet states like Egypt. It, however, did not mean that the Iran-Israel links were broken. Israel continued to get Iranian oil, and military and "intelligence" links were kept intact.

Iran has openly played a role in the Gulf that was very useful to the USA. It assumed upon itself the role of the guardian of the sea-lanes and of stability in the Gulf. In turn Iran demanded that the USA should give it economic, political and military help

⁹⁸Reppa, (Sri) Robert B., *Israel and Iran: Bilateral Relationship and Effect on the Indian Ocean Basin*, Praeger, New York, 1974, 96.

⁹⁹Binder, Leonard, "Iran, potential as a regional power", in Paul Hammond and Sidney S. Alexander, ed., *Political Dynamics in the Middle East*, New York, 1972, 388-89.

¹⁰⁰Weinbaum, Marvin G., "Iran and Israel: the discrete entente", *Orbis*, 18 (4), Winter 1975, 1976.

to enable it to fulfil that role.¹⁰¹ Iran was furnished with weapon systems like destroyers, corvettes, fast patrol boats, landing craft, minesweepers, helicopters etc., that not only allowed Iran to keep the sea-lanes "safe" but also allowed it a Gulf-wide, quick-reaction, interventionist capability sufficient to overawe small sheikhdoms in the region. Thus Iran could even "maintain stability" in the region if and when it became necessary.

Though the possibility of US intervention in the Gulf to ensure the uninterrupted oil supply was openly discussed after the October crisis, Senator Fulbright had hinted at it even early, in May 1973. Fulbright feared that because of the energy crisis and the growing US dependence on Arab oil, the United States or its military surrogates such as Israel and Iran might occupy the oil-producing area.¹⁰² Though the Shah publicly ridiculed such an idea,¹⁰³ some Iranian scholars did consider it as possible. According to Zabih,

It is probable that in a critical situation where the industrialized West might face actual strangulation, Iran might acquiesce to US military intervention provided it was limited to the Arab states of the Gulf and it was undertaken under some guise of collective security arrangement giving Iran the appearance if not reality of playing a major part in such a venture.¹⁰⁴

It is difficult to say what role Iran would have ultimately played but it is clear that the US-Iranian mutuality of interest and interdependence did go far beyond the normal ties of bilateral friendship or even military agreement.

Iran's Arms Policy in the Seventies

"Governments are always tempted to design defence policies

¹⁰¹Croizat, Victor J., "Stability in the Persian Gulf", *Proceedings*, US Naval Institute, 99 (7), July 1973, 58-9. The author discusses the concept of Gulf security through surveillance and feels that Iran, with US support, could play that role.

¹⁰²*News Review, West Asia*, n. 37, July 1973, 38.

¹⁰³*The Times of India*, 4 October 1973, and 13 November 1974.

¹⁰⁴Zabih, Sepehr, "Iran's policy towards the Persian Gulf", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 7, 1967, 350.

to counter threats which they can afford rather than those which may actually exist."¹⁰⁵ Iran's arms procurement programme amply proves this point. Iran signed an agreement for new arms between the period 1973 to 1977 to the tune of \$16.399 billion. It is true that there was a gap between the amount denoting the agreement and the delivery of weapons. One reason for this discrepancy was the time factor involved in placing the order for a given weapon system and its delivery training and final absorption in the armed forces of the country concerned.

TABLE 20
*United States-Iranian Foreign Military Sales Agreements and Deliveries*¹⁰⁶ (in thousands of dollars)

<i>Fiscal year</i>	<i>Agreements</i>	<i>Deliveries</i>
1950-66	292,494	47,292
1967	143,873	38,866
1968	69,038	56,717
1969	251,573	94,881
1970	113,154	127,717
1 st 71	396,341	79,352
1972	519,110	214,807
1973	2,157,355	238,633
1974	4,373,225	510,347
1975	3,020,979	956,372
1976	1,382,062	1,231,600
Total 1950-71*	12,796,327	4,050,103
1977**	5,465,600	2,433,000

*Includes transitional quarter (fiscal year 1971).

**Estimated figures.

A study of the above table reveals that Iran signed an agreement with the USA for arms worth approximately \$81.3 bn. between 1950 and 1977. Of that, 17.98 bn. was for the period 1967-77, which marked the period when Iran began to pay for its arms

¹⁰⁵Booth, K., *Navies and Foreign Policy*, London 1977, 198.

¹⁰⁶*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Area*, n. 79, 135. In other sources, there are minor variations. Iran signed an agreement with the USA for arms worth \$520.0 mn in 1972, \$2540 mn in 1973; \$3,917.0 mn in 1974 and \$2567.0 mn in 1975. *The Persian Gulf 1975, the Continuing Debate on Arms Sales*, Hearings, House, GPO, Washington, 1976.

out of its oil money. After the increase of oil prices Iran ordered arms worth \$16.4 billion between 1973 and 1977. In other words, 90 per cent of the new arms were ordered after the oil price hike. Iran did not receive all that it had ordered. Between 1950 and 1977 it received arms worth \$6.483 bn. Of them, \$1.493 bn worth of arms were received between 1967-72, and \$16.398 bn worth of arms between 1973 and 1977. In 1977 alone it received approximately \$2.43 bn worth of new arms. In other words, Iran received about 80 per cent of its total arms between 1973 and 1977, and almost 37 per cent in 1977 alone. It is true that the amount mentioned in the table covered the cost of the training programme also, but it has to be taken into account while evaluating Iranian military strength. Other countries also spend that amount but because their dependence upon foreign sources is limited the amount is not shown against the total agreement for foreign military supply as in the case of Iran. Additions of these items, however, inflate the figures and give the impression that a lot more arms were ordered than was actually the case. Probably more than half of that money was spent in the training programme. Even then, the total sum spent on arms procurement was astonishingly large.

Another fact that need be noted in this connection is that there is a big difference between the amount listed against the arms agreement and the actual delivery in a particular year or a given period. It is because of the time factor involved in fulfilling the contract. In the case of Iran only 33 per cent of the agreement signed had been finally ordered. The remaining would have reached Iran in the eighties.

Inflation and the high cost of absorption of new sophisticated weapons, have reduced the total quantum of arms reaching Iran. Nonetheless, Iran's military strength was bound to double by the time the present orders were fully executed. Of course, Iran would have gone on signing new agreements for the replacement of the old weapons and the addition of updated weapon systems. Therefore, it could be presumed that in the 1980s Irani military strength would have been doubled. Other things remaining constant, it would be argued that in future, as far as quantity was concerned, Iranian military strength might have remained constant but would have shown a qualitative improvement. Also, by that time, Iranians would have had ample time to get trained

TABLE 21
*United States-Iranian Military Sales Category*¹⁰⁷ (in thousands
of dollars)

<i>Category</i>	<i>FMS ordered</i>	<i>FMS delivered</i>	<i>Undelivered balance</i>
Aircraft	4,773,143	2,282,404	2,490,739
Ships	1,505,253	32,250	1,473,003
Vehicles/Weapons	538,063	292,764	245,299
Ammunition	837,416	403,616	433,806
Missiles	1,207,633	352,026	855,607
Communications equipment	367,534	135,569	231,664
Other equipment	245,987	111,347	134,640
Construction	572	592	-21
Repair/Rehabilitation equipment	132,114	7,688	124,426
Supply operations	522,885	166,490	356,395
Training	391,272	219,895	171,377
Other services	1,576,726	426,354	1,150,372
Undefined plus adjustments	345,309		345,309
	12,443,906	4,430,990	8,012,916*

*Through the 1980s.

in the use of these weapons with the result that Iranian military capability would have markedly enhanced.

Table 21 also reveals the emphasis that Iran put on its weapons and supporting facilities it hoped to obtain from the USA. For armour Iran depended upon Britain. But as far as aircraft, ship (new ones) missiles and services were concerned, Iran looked towards the USA. Of the total FMS ordered, almost \$10.1 bn (out of the total of \$12.44 bn till 1976) were devoted to these items. Iran received about \$3.5 bn (out of a total of \$4.43 bn) of these items during the same period, the big gap being in the field of naval equipment because submarines and Spruance-class destroyers had not reached by then. In future Iran would have received more aircraft (F-14), ships (Spreuance-class), and missiles (Phoenix, Condor, I-HAWK), as well as US personnel to integrate them into Iranian defence forces. All these equipments are third generation weapon systems that are being simultaneously introduced into the US armed forces also. Thus both

¹⁰⁷*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 137.

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Price in \$ mn</i>
Aircraft				
F-5 E/F	169	USA	1974-77	462
F-4E/RF-4E	189	USA	1973-77	1185
Phantom				
141-1974-75 }				
28-1976-77 }				
141-1973-76 }				
12-1976 }				
36-1977 }				
F-14A (Price includes Phoenix AAM and other components of the system)	80	USA	1976-78	2338
P-3 F Orion MR	6	USA	1974	73
C-130 Tpt ac	64	USA	1973-78	na
Boeing 707/3 J 9 C refueling tanker (6-1974 and 7-1976)	13	USA	1974-76	224
Boeing 747 (Originally acquired as tpt ac but modified as tanker)				
Helicopters mostly for the Imperial Iranian Air Aviation (for the army and navy)	6	USA	1976	234
Bell 214 A	287	USA	1975-77 }	4000 approx for the whole system
Bell 214 C	39	USA	1976-79 }	
AH-1J (helicopter gunship with TOW ASM)	202	USA	1974-77 }	
SH-3D ASW	18	UK	1975-76	363
RH-53 D (Mine-countermeasure)	6	USA	1976	118.4
Augusta-Bell—Plans for co-production in future	312	Italy	1980s	

Missiles					
Air-to-air (AAM)					
Sidewinder			350	USA	1980s
Sparrow III			350	USA	1980s
Phoenix (Initial cost \$394 mn but included here in the F-14 cost)			400	USA	1980s
Air-to-Surface (ASM)					
Condor				USA	1978
Maverick			2500	USA	1974-75
Tow (for AH-1J (Cobra hel see ATGW)					
Harpoon for P-3 Orion			22	USA	1975-79
Surface-to-surface (SSM) Navy					
Seakiller MK 2 (for SAAM-class frigates)				Italy	1972
Harpoon for FPBG and destroyers			200	USA	1978-81
ATGW					
AS-11/12					
Tow 4760 in 1976-78 }					
9494 in 1976-77 }					
Dragon			14,254	France	1976-78
				USA	103-9
			10,000	USA	1976-77
					146 8
Surface-to-air (SAM)					
Rapier				UK	372
(new advanced Rapier, S.P. with radar ordered for \$680 mn)					
Sea Cat (naval)				UK	
Tigercat				UK	

Standard Arm (naval)				
SA-7/9		USA		
1-HAWK		USSR		
		USA	1974-78	1,000 approx
Ships				
Destroyers				
Destroyers (Spruance-class)	2	USA	1973	
Combattante 11 FPBG (Harpoon SSM)	4	USA	1980-81	1,470 approx
Hovercraft (heavy)	12	France	1978-80	
Logistic support vessels	4	UK	1980s	
Submarines	4	UK	1980s	150 approx
	3	USA	1978-79	75 approx
Armour and artillery				
Chieftain med tk	800	UK	1973-77	
Scorpion 1t tk	250	UK	1975-77	
ZSU-23-4 and ZSU-57-2 SP AA guns	100	USSR	1975-77	
155 mn SP gun	390	USA	1975-76	122.7
203 mn SP how	28	USA	1976	16.2

the USA and Iran would have operated the same type of aircraft, ships, missiles and would have the same type of training programme. What would have been the political and military ramifications of this interfacing of the US and Iranian military programme, remained a closed book because of the rapid changes in Iran.

Iran's arms acquisition programme aimed at qualitative as well as quantitative upgrading of Iranian military capacity. The search for the best began in the middle sixties when the growing oil revenue as well as the increasing US support permitted Iran to acquire the best weapons available in the world market, especially in the Anglo-American market. In 1966-68 it meant the F-4 Phantoms, HAWK SAMs, Chieftain tanks, SAAM-class frigates, C-130 transport planes and hovercraft. By 1972, the demand included F-14 Tomcats, Phoenix AAMs, I-HAWK and Rapier SAMs, Boeing 707/747 transport planes and oil tankers. After 1974 Iran was not satisfied with anything less than the Spruance-class destroyers, submarines, Condor and Maverick ASMs, P-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance planes and Combattante-class FPBG armed with Harpoon SSMs. Iran wished to have in the future new weapons like F-16 light-weight fighters, E-3 AWACS, helicopters-borne mine-countermeasure system, Lupa-class frigate and Type 209 submarines.

What Iran acquired since 1972-73 should have, under normal conditions, greatly improved Iranian military capability. What Iran planned to acquire in future would have enhanced its military capability still further and Iran would not only emerge as the strongest regional power in the Gulf but, other things remaining the same, would have continued to hold that position for at least till the end of the next decade.

TABLE 23
IRAN: Military Strength 1972-73, 1978-79

1972-73	1978-79
General	General
Population: 30,500,000	Population: 36,365,000
GNP estimated: \$ 12.1 bn	GNP estimated: \$72.6 bn
Defence Budget, 1972: 0 915 bn	Defence Budget, 1978-79: \$9.94 bn (est.)
Total Armed Forces: 191,000	Total Armed Forces: 413,000

Gendarmerie: 40,000 with, 14 helicopters (AB-206)	Gendarmerie: 74,000, armed with lt ac, hels and about 32 patrol boats
Army: 161,000	Army: 285,000 (with Imperial Iranian Army Aviation Command)
5 inf divs	Reserves: 300,000
2 armd divs	3 inf divs
1 indep armd bde	3 armd divs
Armour included	4 indep bdes (1 armd, 1 inf, 1 airborne, 1 special force)
860 med tks (M-47/M-60)	Armour included
100 lt tks (M-24)	1620 med tks (M-47/60 and Chieftain)
1100 APC (M-113, BTR 50/60)	250 lt tks (Scorpion)
Several light and heavy guns	Some Ferret and Fox scout cars
ATGW: SS-11/12, TOW	825 APC (M-113, BTR 40/50/60/152)
(Delivery of 800 Chieftain med tk began from 1972 onwards)	100 ZSU-23-4 and ZSU-57-2 (self-propelled AA guns)
1 bn SAM (HAWK)	Artillery
8 hel	822 med and heavy guns (some SP)
58 lt ac	710 light guns 57/85 mm
Deployment: about 1200 in Oman (with art and hels)	1800 AA guns
	ATGW: ENTAC, SS-11/12, TOW, Dragon
	4 bn SAM (HAWK)
	600 hels (approx) including 220 AH-JJ armed hel
	58 lt ac
	(Deployment: 600 in Oman, 385 in Syria (UNDOF) and 524 in Lebanon (UNIFIL))
Navy: 9000	Navy: 28,000
1 destroyer	3 destroyers (1 ex-Br, 2 ex-US)
2 SAAM-class frigates	4 SAAM-class frigates
4 corvettes	4 corvettes (of them 2 reportedly in storage)
24 patrol boats and other lt vessels	7 large patrol craft
4 coastal minesweepers	5 Combattante-II class FPBG (Harpoon SSM)
2 inshore minesweepers	3 coastal minesweepers
4 landing craft	2 inshore minesweepers
2 heavy hovercraft	2 landing ship logistics
8 light hovercraft	2 landing craft utility
24 helicopters	

	2 logistic support ship
	6 heavy hovercraft (possibility of being armed with SSMs)
	8 light hovercraft
	Naval Air
	1 MR Sqn with 6 P-3F Orion
	1 ASW Sqn with 12-SH-3D hel
	10 lt tpt ac
	28 hel
	3 Marine bns
Air force: 22,000, 160 combat ac	Air force: 100,000, 459 Combat ac
2 sqns F-4D	10 Sqn F-4 (32 F-4D, 177 F-4E)
6 sqns F-5	10 Sqns/F-5 (12 F-5A, 140 F-5E)
1 reconn sqn	3 Sqns/F-14 (56 in all)
37 Tpt ac including 26 C-130 C	1 reconnaissance sqn 16 RF-4E
32 hels including 16 Super Frelon	1 tanker sqn 13 Boeing 707-320L
	4 tpt sqns 64 C-130 E/H and 6 Boeing 747
	4 lt tpt sqns with 29 ac
	about 166 helicopters
	86 trainer planes
Missiles	Missiles
AAM—Sparrow	AAM—Phoenix
Sidewinder	Sparrow
	Sidewinder
ASM—AS-12	ASM—Maverick
	AS-12
	Condor
SAM—Tigercat	SAM—Tigercat
HAWK	HAWK,
	I-HAWK
	Rapier
	SA 7/9

A study of the above and following tables reveals very clearly the vastly increased military capability of the Iranian armed forces in 1978 than what it was five years back. This change had taken place not only in terms of the defence budget, total number of defence personnel and the quantity of weapons but also in the qualitative sophistication in the weapon system acquired by Iran. Thanks to the increased oil price, Iran's GNP increased from \$12.1 bn in 1972-73 to \$72.6 in 1977-78, which permitted Iran to increase its defence expenditure by ten times during the same period. Its armed forces also doubled. The most spectacular

<i>Weapon</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Cost in \$ mn</i>
Aircraft			
F-16	USA	160	3800-4500 approx
F-14	USA	70	na
RF-4	USA	20	500
E-3	USA	3-7	1300
P-3 Orion	USA	39	
Helicopters			
CH-47	USA	50	425
SH-3D (Mine-countermeasure hel)	USA	15	300 approx
Augusta-Bell (co-production)	Italy	312	
Radar			
Blindfire SAM Radar system	UK		
Ships			
Submarines Type 209	German	6	
Destroyers Spruance-class	USA	4	1470
Frigates Lupa-class	Italy or Germany	6	na
Logistic ships	UK	4	140

Armour		
Chieftain (part co-production)		
Scorpion	UK	1400
ZSU-23-4 SP AA gun	UK	100
	USSR	100
		Total cost of the Soviet deal approx 414
Artillery		
203 mm how probably with newly developed laser-guided projectile	USA	
Missiles		
Phoenix	USA	1000
Rapier (Tracked)	UK	8000

TABLE 25
The Gulf States: Comparative Military Strength, 1978

	<i>Iran</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	<i>Kuwait</i>	<i>UAE</i>	<i>Oman</i>
General						
Population, 36,365,000	Population, 12,470,000	Population, 7,730,000	Population, 1,160,000	Population, 875,000	Population, 837,000	
GNP (1977), \$72.6 bn.	GNP (1977) \$ 16.3 bn.	GNP (1977), \$35.4 bn.	GNP, \$12.0 bn	GNP (1977) 7 bn	GNP (1977), \$2.5 bn.	
Oil Revenue (1977), \$22 bn.	Oil Revenue (1977), \$8.5 bn.	Oil Revenue (1977) \$33.3 bn.	Oil Revenue (1977) \$ 8.5 bn	Defence Budget, \$661 mn	Defence Budget, \$767 mn.	
Defence Budget (1978-79), \$9.94 bn.	Defence Budget (1977-78) \$ 1.66 bn.	Defence Budget (1978-79), \$9.63 bn.	Defence Budget (1977) \$ 322 mn			
Total Armed Forces	212,000	58,500	12,000	25,900	19,200	
413,000	4800 Security troops and 75,000 People's Army	National Guard 35,000 armed with 150 APC, 6500 Frontier Force, Coast Guard	Military Service, 18 months		Para-military, 3300 Tribal Homeguard	
Gendarmerie, 74,000 armed with 11 ac, helos and 32 patrol boats	Military Service, 2 years	armed with 50 patrol boats and 8 light hovercraft			Police Air Wing armed with helos and 1 ac	
		Military Service, Voluntary			Military Service, Voluntary	

[illegible]

Armour 1620 med tks (M-60 and Chieftain)	1800 med tks (T-34/54/55/62)	325 med tks (M-60, AMX-30)	124 med tks (Vickers, Centurian and Chieftain)	30 Scorpion lt tks	36 Saladin armcd cars
250 lt tks (Scorpion)	100 lt tks (PT-76)	200 armcd cars		86 Saladin armcd cars	Some artillery
825 APC	120 BMP MICV	(AML 60/90)	100 a·md cars (Saladin)	60 Ferret scout cars & APCs	ATGW, TOW, SAM, Rapier
1000 SP AA ZSU-23-4 and ZSU-57-2	1500 APC (BTR 50/60/152, OT-62)	300 MICV (AMX 10P & other APC)	20 scout cars (Ferret)	Medium art pieces	
	ZSU-23-4 and ZSU-57-4 SPAA	500 Ferret and Fox scout cars	130 APC (Sara·cen)	ATGW, Vigilant, SAM, Rapier and Cortale	
		105 and 155 mm SP how	AMX—20 155 SP how		
			ATGW, SS-11, TOW, HOT, Vigilant		

Artillery

822 med and heavy guns
(some SP)
710 light art
1800 AA guns ATGW—
ENTAC, SS 11-12, TOW,
Dragon SAM—4 bn HAWK
600 fels (including 220
AH-13 armed hel)

1500 APC (BTR
50/60/152,
OT-62)
ZSU-23-4 and
ZSU-57-8 SP AA
and Vigilant

M-42 40 mm SP
AA and AMX-
30 SP AA
ATGW—TOW
and Vigilant

Navy

28,000
3 destroyers
4 frigates
4 corvettes
7 large patrol craft
6 Combattante-II FPBG
armed with Harpoon
SSM
5 minesweepers
2 landing ships
(logistic)

4,000
3 SO-1 subchasers
6 Osa-I and
8 Osa-II FPBG
with Styx SSM
10 P-6 torpedo
boats
2 large patrol
craft (ex-Soviet
Poluchak-class)

1500
3 Fast patrol
boats (Jaguar-
class)
1 large patrol
craft
4 coastal mine-
sweepers
500/(Coast Guard) 600
5 Fast patrol
boats
12 inshore patrol
craft
6 patrol tannches
3 landing craft
3 patrol vessels
1 training ship
(500 tons)
4 Fast patrol
boats
3 FPBG armed
with Exocet
SSM
4 coastal patrol
craft
3 small landing
craft

2 landing craft (Utility)
2 logistic support ships
6 heavy hovercraft
8 light hovercraft

6 small coastal
patrol boats
5 minesweepers
3 LCT Polnocny-class

Naval Air

1 maritime recon sqn,
6 P-3F Orion
1 ASW sqn 12 SH-3D hel
3 Marine bns
48 hel

Air Force

100,000	28,000	12,000	1,000 (other nationalities not included)	1,800	2,109 (not including other nationalities)
459 combat ac	339 combat ac	171 combat ac	49 combat ac	46 combat ac	
56 F-14	12 TU-22 med bombers	16 Lightning	20 A-4	32 Mirage III	
109 F-4D/E	10 II-28 lt bombers	60 F-5E	9 Strikemaster	7 Hunter	32 combat ac
152 F-5	80 MIG-23	35 BAC-167	4 tpt ac	5 MB-326	12 Jaguar
1 recon sqn, with 16 RF-4E	115 MIG-21	Three operational conversion units	6 trainer ac	14 tpt ac	12 Hunter
1 tanker sqn with 13 Boeing 707—320L	60 SU-7	with 24 F-5F	42 hel	Missiles,	8 BAC-167
4 tpt sqns with 65 C-130 E/H and 6 Boeing 747	20 Hunter EB59/FR 10	16 F-5B	Missile, AAM-Rcd	AAM-R 550	15 lt. tpt ac
4 lt tpt sqns with 29 ac	12 Jet Provost	16 Lightning	Top, Firestreak,	Magic	27 hel
86 trainer ac	T 52	2 T-55	ASAM-AS 11/12	ASAM-AS 11/12	Missiles, SAM-Rapier
166 hel approx	45 tpt ac	35 C-130 E/H tpt ac	Sidewinder.		
Missiles,	227 hel	4 C-130 tankers	R-550 Magic		
AAM-Phoenix, Sparrow	Several trainer ac	12 trainer ac	ASM-Supper 530		
Side winder		64 hel	SAM-Improved		
ASM-AS-12, TOW, Maverick	Missiles,	Missiles	HAWK		
		AAM—Red			

SAM-Rapier, Tigercat
Improved HAWK

AAM-Atoll
ASM-AS IV/12
SAM-SA 2/3

Top, Firestreak,
Sidewinder,
R-530 R-550
Magic
SAM-Improved
HAWK

increase was a ten-fold increase in the strength of the air force. The number of naval personnel increased by three times. During those five years of military development, Iran not only increased the number of its weapons but attained a qualitative sophistication unattained by any other Third World state, with the possible exception of Israel.

Between 1972-73 and 1977-78 Iran's tank force doubled. Hundreds of helicopters were added to create a US-style Air Cavalry with a total cost of approximately \$4 bn. Iran's front-line combat aircraft strength also doubled. Its navy also developed proportionately. It is true that no heavy ship was added during that period but several other weapon systems were added which increased the overall capability of the Iranian navy. P-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance aircraft with Harpoon (ASM version) permitted Iran to keep watch over a vast area near its coast. The logistic and supply vessels enabled its destroyers and frigates to develop a bluewater capability. The Combattante-II FFBG armed with long-range Harpoon SSM, which had begun to join the Iranian navy by 1978, gave the Iranian navy the fire-power (missile) of the Spruance-class destroyer within the limited radius of action of a small patrol boat, which, from bases at Jask and Chah Bahr could cover the Gulf of Oman and the northern part of the Arabian Sea. Soon the Spruance-class destroyers and Tang-class submarines would have joined the Iranian navy, thus substantially adding to the number of its bigger vessels.

The greatest impact upon Iranian military development during the last five years was in the field of rapid transition from old to new weapon systems and concepts. In the field of armour Iran developed from the old M-47 Patton tank to M-60 and finally Chieftain tanks. Its navy began with all-gun corvettes, switched to destroyers with SAMs and guns, to SAAM-class frigates with SSM and SAM and finally would have acquired very sophisticated Spruance-class destroyers and modified Tang-class submarines. In terms of aircraft too Iran moved from F-5 to F-4 and finally F-14. Even in F-5 it switched to new and more powerful F-5E/F. The most spectacular qualitative change occurred in the field of missiles. Its AAM system graduated from old Sidewinder to Sparrow III and finally to Phoenix. In the field of ASM it began with AS11/12 and gradually acquired

TOW, Maverick and finally the Condor. It also acquired laser and TU guided "smart" bombs that can be broadly classified as ASM. Its ATGW system also progressed from SS-11/12 to TOW and finally to Dragon. In the field of SAM, Iran began with HAWK and Tigercat (and Sea Cat) and gradually acquired more sophisticated Improved HAWK, Rapier and SP SA 7/9 SAMs. In the field of SSM too Iran first acquired the Italian Sea Killer Mk II. It then began to think of acquiring the French Exocet but finally bought the Harpoon missile for its P-3, Combattante-II and the Spruance-class destroyers. It is possible that it might have opted for the Italian Otomat SSM when it ordered the Lupa-class frigates.

Iranian armed forces also developed new concepts during this period. Some of them were borrowed from the USA but others were probably the result of the experience of the October war. These new concepts were tailored to meet the Iranian requirements. Four of these new concepts can be highlighted with ease. The first was the concept of air cavalry which probably had its origin in the experiences during the Vietnam war. Part of this was also tried in Dhofar operations. The other one was the proper mix in the armour force consisting of tanks, APC, SP AA guns (ZSU-23-4), SP artillery (155 mm/203mm), TOW-armed helicopter and F-4 armed with Maverick and smart bombs. This combination gives the armour the required defensive-offensive capability for rapid mobility. The third concept was the use of the helicopter gunship (Sea Cobra) to patrol the sea-lanes of the Gulf. Lastly, the concept of integrated SAM radar, and controversial IBEX and AWACS communication and intelligence systems. All these new developments not only helped to increase Iran's military capability—air/ground, air/sea, anti-insurgency—but also made Iran potentially the most effective military power in the Gulf.

The air force was the key, the basis of Iranian military strength. It was emphasized by the Shah, who in his interview with Heikal, the noted commentator from Egypt, said, "We want to turn Imperial Air Force into an invincible power against all threats and acts of aggression. We must develop the air combat capability to destroy any enemy aircraft at a distance of two to three hundred kilometres from our borders. In a nutshell, we intend to be a power to be reckoned with in the region where

we live, the region where our wealth, stability, security and interests lie."¹⁰⁸ This was not a result of the surplus oil money after October 1973 but predated it. It was in conformity with Iran's growing air power since the sixties. This was reflected when Iran decided to acquire F-4 in 1967 and F-14 in July 1972.¹⁰⁹ Orders for F-14 were placed in August 1973¹¹⁰ well before the October crisis. More F-5, F-4, C-130 and helicopters were added to the air force to make it the pivot for Iran's air-ground or air-sea operations.

In the air-ground mix the air supremacy against hostile aircraft was assured by the F-14 armed with Phoenix AAM. The F-5, F-4 and helicopters provided ground support with conventional bombs, rockets, cannon fire which was supplemented with ASMs like TOW and Maverick, and smart bombs. The strategic mobility was ensured by the fleet of 64 C-130 transport aircraft. The helicopters took care of the tactical mobility. This air power was combined with a powerful self-contained armour force. Iranian armour had 1620 medium tanks,¹¹¹ 250 light tanks, about 800 APCs, 100 ZSU-23-4 and ZSU-57-2 SP/AA, several 155/203 mm SP guns/howitzers and TOW and Dragon ATGW. The triad: mobility fire-power and quick-reaction capability, ensured by the air-ground mix, considerably boosted Iranian military capability *vis-a-vis* other Gulf countries like Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Iraq was far superior to other regional Arab powers. Iraq boasted of adequate aircraft and tank strength but lacked the complementary weapon systems to provide the triad that Iran possessed. Thus:

The Iranian Army is developing as a heavily mechanized and primarily air mobile force designed to have the capacity for projecting itself rapidly and efficiently in the direction of any

¹⁰⁸ *Kayhan International*, 16 September 1975.

¹⁰⁹ *Jerusalem Post*, 13 August 1972.

¹¹⁰ Hamilton, Andrew, "Uncle Sam, arms dealer", *Washington Post*, 11 August 1974 in *Persian Gulf*, 1974, n. 72, 175.

¹¹¹ Iran's projected task-force was almost equal to that of France and double that of Britain. Cottrell, n. 4, 419-20.

conflict which may arise within Iran's growing security perimeter.¹¹²

The air-naval mix of the Iranian armed forces also produces a very versatile capability. The F-4 and F-14 planes, with the help of jet tankers (Boeing 707 and 747), can extend their operational radius upto 1400 miles. The long-range P-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance planes armed with Harpoon ASM not only helps in maintaining surveillance over a vast ocean space but provides a hard punch even against a big ship. Anti-submarine task is best performed by ASW helicopters especially in the narrow waters of the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. Armed helicopters (Sea Cobra type) fly patrol the shipping lanes in the Gulf proper. The helicopters with the IIAA Command can also provide valuable tactical support for troop movement in the narrow confines of the Gulf.

The air capability was fully supported by a combination of naval vessels designed to project Iranian presence both within the Gulf and also beyond, into the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. Three submarines, three destroyers, four frigates, twelve Combattante-II FPBG and two logistic support ships give the Iranian navy a limited "bluewater" capability. Four corvettes, seven large patrol craft, two landing ships (logistic), two landing craft (Utility), six large and eight small hovercrafts, as well as more than thirty patrol boats with the gendarmerie provide Iran with a potent presence in the Gulf. Of course, the heavier ships too can lend a helping hand, if need be. The Iranian naval capability is also supported by three newly created Marine battalions. The Iranian naval headquarters also reflect the role the navy is supposed to play. While the fleet headquarters are located at Bandar Abbas near the Gulf of Oman, the headquarters of the light force are at Khorramshahr in the Persian Gulf. Hovercraft are based at Kharg island. Other naval bases are at Bushehr and Hengam Island.¹¹³

The combined air-naval capability of Iran could project the

¹¹²Kinsinger, Paul, "Arms purchases in the Persian Gulf: the military dimension", *The Persian Gulf, 1975, The Continuing Debate on Arms Sales*, 1976, n. 106, Appendix II, 245.

¹¹³Borchgrave, n. 57; Koury, n. 46, 44 and *The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, 1977, n. 79, 128.

Iranian military presence from the Persian Gulf proper into the Arabian Sea covering the area roughly from Bombay to Aden. In the Gulf proper, it has a conventional (naval) as well as interventionist capability which no other regional power could hope to resist for at least a decade. Even the Osa boats (FPBG) with Iraq, as a weapon system, were inferior to the Combattante-II class of FPBG. They were also a sitting duck for the TOW and Maverick ASMs operated by the Iranian helicopters and F-4 planes. The light forces, helicopters and C-130 transport planes also provided Iran with a Gulf-wide interventionist capability which only Iraq could hope to resist effectively. Even Saudi Arabia, at that moment, did not have the capability to resist it. Thus Iran had a Gulf-wide quick-reaction capability which it could, if it so wished, use for maintaining the "stability" of the region. Iran also had a capability to close the narrow (21-mile wide) Strait of Hormuz if it so wished. It had the weapons to do so. Whether it also had the political will remained to be seen.

Iran had also over the last five years developed a bluewater capability. It had acquired three submarines, three destroyers, four frigates, twelve FPBG and two logistic ships. It would have acquired four Spruance-class destroyers and four logistic ships from the USA and UK. It was also planning to order six German-type 209 submarines and six Lupa-class frigates from Italy. Even without these new weapons, Iran's air-naval capability can be rated as above that of Pakistan and almost approaching that of India. If Iran had acquired and assimilated the new vessels in the coming decade it would have become a serious competitor if not a rival of India in the Arabian Sea area. India might even have lost the race if it could not catch up with the quality of its weapon system, especially in terms of long-range surface-to-surface, air-to-air and air-to-surface guided missiles, as well as its electronics like the radar and the ECM devices. India might have retained the sea-denial capability because of its submarine fleet but would not have been able to pursue the sea-control strategy.

Iran also strengthened its anti-insurgency capability during this period. In fact, the Iranian armed forces have been traditionally used to stabilize the power base of the ruling elite. Reza Khan strengthened the Iranian army during the inter-war period as a means to crush the tribal opposition to the central

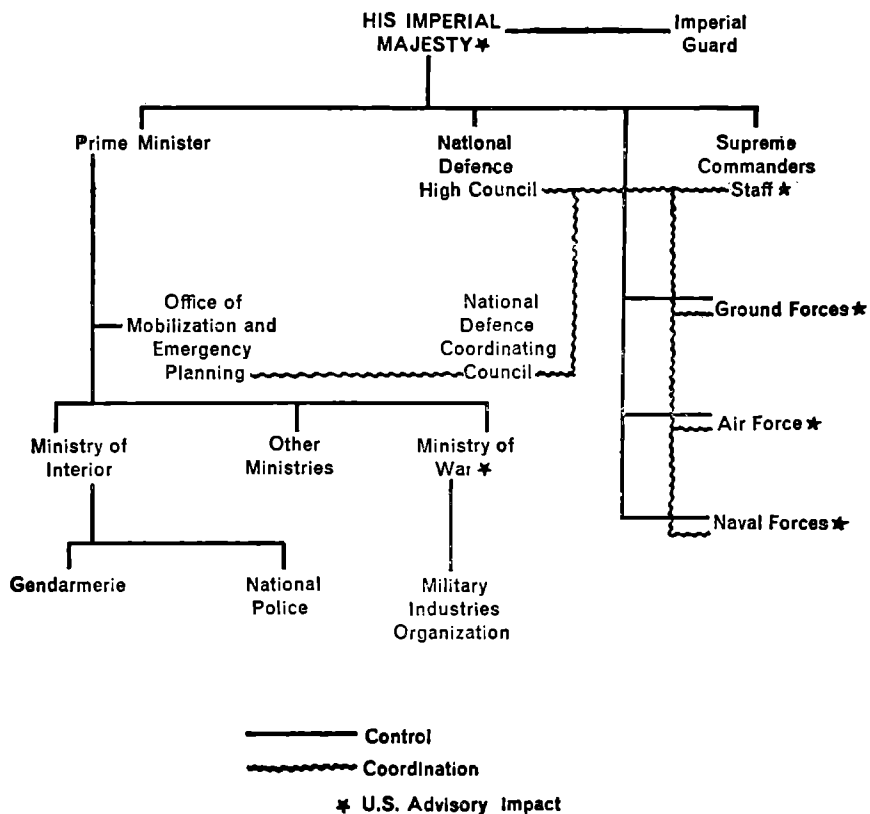
authority. His son too continued that policy during and after the Second World War, especially during the Azerbaijan and Kurdistan crises. Subsequently, the Khuzistan or Arabistan and the Baluchistan questions as well as the threat from the Iranian Marxist guerrillas prompted the Shah to develop an effective anti-insurgency capability. The USA helped Iran in modernizing the Iranian gendarmerie and the army to fulfil that role through the GERMISH and ARMISH. The CENTO too was deeply concerned with the so-called threat from subversion. The use of Iranian troops in Dhofar gave Iran a practical experience in anti-insurgency operations.

The Iranian regime improved its anti-insurgency capability during the seventies. In 1972-73 Iran had about 40,000 gendarmerie equipped with light weapons and 14 AB-206 helicopters. In 1978-79 the total number of Iranian gendarmerie had increased to 74,000. It was equipped with light aircraft, helicopters, patrol boats and possibly with Ferret and Fox scout cars. Also two new brigades were created—the air-borne brigade and the Special Force brigade, which were allegedly trained for anti-insurgency operations. The IIAA Command, with its hundreds of helicopters, could provide rapid tactical mobility at any point in Iran. It was, however, seen that an army and gendarmerie, trained for conventional and even anti-insurgency operations, could not be relied upon to fight continually against mass-based opposition to the ruling elite in Iran.

All decision-making powers in Iran were concentrated in the hand of one person—the Shah. He was the Supreme Commander of the Iranian Armed forces and exercised direct operational control over the separate military services. Other organizations like the National Defence High Council and the Supreme Commanders' Staff, a joint staff organization, had only the function to co-ordinate the activities of the three services. They did not share in the decision-making process. The Shah as well as the Ministry of War were under the US advisory impact.¹¹⁴ The Minister of War was appointed by the Shah but was not in the chain of command. He was primarily concerned with budgetary and fiscal matters. The Vice-Minister of War, General Hassan Toufanian, had primary responsibility for Iran's arms acquisi-

¹¹⁴Ibid., n. 79, 124.

TABLE 26
*Organization for National Defence (1978)*¹¹⁵



¹¹⁵Op. cit., 123.

tion programmes. He also implemented the Shah's decision on major purchases of weapon systems.¹¹⁶

The key positions in the Iranian defence organization under the Shah comprised the vice-minister of war, the chief of the supreme commanders' staff, and the commanders of the three services. The Shah consulted regularly with the five key power

TABLE 27
*Key Positions in Iran's Defence Organization, 1977*¹¹⁷

<i>His Imperial Majesty</i>	
Vice Minister of War	Chief, SCS
Gen. Toufanian	Gen. Azhari
Commander	Commander
IIGF	IIAF
Gen. Oveisi	Gen. Tadayon
Commander	
IIN	
Vadm. Habibollahi	

units, both singly and collectively, and tended to play one against the other. Military decision-making was, therefore, extremely centralized. The Shah maintained a continuing interest in up-to-date weapons technology and made the decisions on procurement of weapon systems for the armed forces. As Supreme Commander, he set ambitious objectives for the services, and stretched personnel to the limit to meet them.

In sum, the Iranian military policy was the policy of the Shah and reflected the real or perceived threat as seen by him. Some time back he even felt that Iran was being threatened with germ and chemical warfare. When asked by James O. Jackson and James Yuenger of the *Tribune* as to why there was heavy emphasis on defence against chemical and nuclear attack and against germ warfare he replied that some of Iran's neighbours were heavily preparing for that. He refused to name those countries but said that he knew the table of organization of some armies and there was a great emphasis on chemical and

¹¹⁶Ibid.

TABLE 28
Iran's Nuclear Power Programme¹¹⁸

Country	Year of agreement	Construction begun	Total planned		Under construction		Type of reactor	Other remarks
			No.	Capacity	No.	Capacity		
France	1974	1977	5	5000	2	1800	Pressurized water plant	Turnkey project of French consortium led by Framatome, situated on the Karun River. Expected to be ready by 1981. (Now cancelled by the new government.)
Germany	1974	1976	2	2400	2	2400	Pressurized water plant	Turnkey project by Kraftwerk Union, situated near Bushehr, expected to be ready by 1981-82.

¹¹⁸Table based on data gathered from Alvin J. Cottrell and James E. Dougherty, *Iran's Quest for Security: US Arms Transfer and Nuclear Options*, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis Inc., Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 1977, 21-2 and *Review of Developments in the Middle East*, 1978, Hearings, Sub-committee on Europe and the Middle East, House Committee on International Relations, 95 Congress, 2 Session, 12 June 1978, GPO, Washington, 1978, 120.

USA	1975	—	8	9600	—	—	—	Negotiations were in progress for an agreement on bilateral nuclear cooperation based upon US Government's new non-proliferation policy (full-scope safeguard). Future planning to depend on that agreement, if signed.

germ warfare.¹¹⁹ To some, these threats may seem farfetched, though, of course, nothing is impossible in this world.

The Shah had also definite views on Iran's nuclear policy *vis-a-vis* its military strategy. Iran's nuclear programme had its economic-technical, as well as politico-military dimensions. Iran's nuclear programme began in March 1957 when Iran and the USA signed an agreement for cooperation in the civilian use of nuclear energy.¹²⁰ The programme to utilize nuclear energy as a source of commercial and industrial power, however, began after the oil price-hike in October 1973. Iran contacted France, Germany and USA to supply nuclear power plants as one way of recycling the surplus petro-dollars.

Iran had planned the target of generating about 23,000 MWe of nuclear energy by the end of the 1990s. The total cost at that time was estimated at \$27.6 bn, though some authors raised it to \$126 bn, to provide 52 per cent of the total energy requirement.¹²¹ Iran contacted France during the Shah's visit in June 1974. Five plants were ordered but the French gave a firm commitment on only two of them. The Germans agreed in July 1976 to construct two plants at Bushehr. The deal also included supply of nuclear fuel for 10 years. The US-Iran agreement was reached tentatively in 1975, but several obstacles were put in the final implementation of the deal by the US Energy Research and Development Administration.¹²² The Shah blamed the USA for the delay in the final implementation of the programme. He said, "In atomic energy, you (USA) are asking us for safeguards that are incompatible with our sovereignty, things that the French or the Germans could never dream of asking. They are absolutely unnecessary because we are a signatory of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty."¹²³

The argument that was advanced in support of a rapid and massive nuclear energy programme in Iran was the limited quantity of oil reserves and the long-term need for industrialization and modernization of Iran. Thus nuclear energy would first supplement and subsequently replace oil. Even if one accepts the

¹¹⁹ *Kayhan International*, 19 November 1977.

¹²⁰ Cottrell, n. 4, 398.

¹²¹ Martin, n. 77, 245.

¹²² *Newsweek*, 23 June 1975.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 17 November 1975.

rationale behind this policy it cannot be ignored that nuclear power would have put more constraints on Iran than were envisaged. First of all, the cost of the nuclear programme was going to inflate beyond all possible estimates. If one takes the French deal as a test case one finds that the initial plan was to provide for 5000 MWe power for \$1.2 bn. The final agreement reduced it to 1800 MWe for the same amount—an inflated price rate of 330 per cent. If the price of sophisticated western technology keeps up its upward curve under the broad label of inflation, Iran's estimate of \$27.6 bn as the cost of 23000 MWe of nuclear power would have been inflated to approximately \$100 bn and more by the current rate. Surely \$4 million for one MWe of energy is a high price to pay by any standard, even for the construction of the power plant.

Construction of the nuclear power plant in Iran, which lacked trained personnel to handle sophisticated technology, meant that for years Iranian power plants would have been dependent upon foreign skilled labour. Iran would have had to import nuclear fuel at the price fixed by the west, and support part of the cost of either the fuel waste disposal or the reprocessing. And lastly, its nuclear power production would be subject to legislations in the country supplying nuclear technology and fuel. Environmentalists or anti-nuclear bomb lobby in those countries, by putting legal hindrances, could even halt nuclear power generation in Iran. The case of the Indian nuclear power reactor near Bombay should act an eye-opener for other Third World countries who want to put the source of their future energy in the hands of the developed nations. Thus under the present conditions, nuclear power in Iran not only appeared to be economically very expensive but also tied up with all kinds of political and technological constraints.

Iran, at one time, did seem to bypass some of these political-technological constraints by linking its nuclear programme with France, Germany and South Africa. It was reported in the *Washington Post* of 12 October 1975 that Iran was about to sign an agreement to purchase about \$700 million worth of uranium from South Africa and to help South Africa economically in the construction of a huge uranium enrichment plant to be built in South Africa. The paper added that one of the reasons that had

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prompted Iran to support South Africa was to break the monopoly of the USA on enriched uranium for power supply. Iran had already established diplomatic relations at the level of an ambassador as early as 1971, and had agreed to supply Iranian crude for the new refinery to be set up in South Africa.¹²⁴

Iran was also searching for uranium within the country. It was helped by the French Atomic Energy Commission in the survey for uranium in Iran. It was reported as early as February 1971 that deposits of uranium were found in Kerman, Khorsan and Isfahan regions. The Iranian Atomic Energy Commission announced on 17 March 1976 that uranium deposits were found in Kavir in northern Iran. Iran also tried to train personnel in the field of nuclear technology. It was reported by the *Times* on 21 October 1975 that Iranian nuclear scientists would be trained in UK under a 30-year agreement at the Harwell Atomic Energy Research Establishment. There was also a plan to invite scientists from Harwell to establish an atomic research centre in Iran. Thus Iran was trying to have an independent nuclear option but was handicapped because of the lack of adequately trained personnel and political constraints like full-scope safeguards that were being demanded by its allies before Iran could have not the nuclear technology but only nuclear power plants and the fuel. These constraints have increased of late. Thus, it is doubtful if Iran can hope to have an independent nuclear capability in the near future.

Some scholars believe that Iran's nuclear power programme would eventually help it in becoming a nuclear power. Commenting upon Iran's French deal a Pakistani expert said, "Since the development of nuclear power involves the processing and production of certain materials which would be used in nuclear explosives, Iran by deciding to pursue a peaceful nuclear programme has in fact kept open its option to go nuclear".¹²⁵ The US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency report believed that

¹²⁴Burrell, R.M., and Cottrell, Alvin J., *Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan: Tensions and Dilemmas, Washington Papers*, vol. II, no. 20, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., 1974, 35-6.

¹²⁵Mehrunnissa, Ali, "The changing pattern of India-Iran relations", *Pakistan Horizon*, 28 (4), 1975, 65.

Iran might acquire the reprocessing capability by the mid-eighties.¹²⁶ That would have given it a very substantial capacity to proceed with the manufacture of nuclear weapons. According to Laurence Martin, it would have provided plutonium for 3-6 weapons by 1985. By the 1990s Iran would have had over three metric tons of fissile material available in reactor reloads made from domestically produced material. This could provide material for 370 nuclear bombs. Iran's nuclear force was seen as a minimum deterrence against the USSR but sufficient to off-set an Indian or any other regional nuclear force, and was thus supposed to be part of a complex regional balance. The report that the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization and the French Atomic Energy Commission had signed an agreement to cooperate in building a uranium enrichment plant using the gas diffusion process¹²⁷ lent further credit to the argument that Iran was planning to go nuclear.

Some dismiss speculations about Iran's military-nuclear ambitions as premature and exaggerated.¹²⁸ The arguments used against Iran going military-nuclear were that Iran was a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty and also the prime mover of the General Assembly resolution in 1974 to declare the Middle East as the nuclear-weapon-free zone. Moreover, the Shah in several statements had categorically rejected the suggestion that Iran had any intention of developing a nuclear military capability. But this guarantee was conditional. The Shah in an interview with the *New York Times* of 24 September 1975 said that he was not thinking of developing nuclear weapons. But he added that he had a warning for the whole world. He said, "If say 20-30 silly, ridiculous little countries try to develop it what is going to happen. They are talking about it. Even Libya is trying to manufacture or get an atomic bomb, God knows for what purpose." He reiterated the point during his interview with Hasnein Heikal when he said that he had no intention of producing a nuclear weapon because of the prohibitive cost but added, "I tell you, quite frankly, that Iran will have to acquire

¹²⁶Martin, n. 77, 245.

¹²⁷Radio Tehran, 13 September 1976, quoted in *News Review, West Asia*, n. 37, October 1976, 672.

¹²⁸Cottrell, n. 4, 428.

atomic bombs if some upstart in the region gets them."¹²⁹

India is, as usual held responsible for attempting to introduce nuclear weapons and destabilize the regional nuclear scenario.¹³⁰ "If India should implement her option with an actual development of nuclear weapons, Iran would logically be presented with the problem of reconsidering her own nuclear policy."¹³¹ It is interesting that this argument was used despite the fact that the Iranians themselves did not treat the Indian nuclear option as a threat to their security. Even Cottrell says that when he raised the question with the Iranian monarch in March 1975 "he responded in a way that reflected a lack of concern over such a possible development."¹³² It is important to note that Iran did not give full support to Pakistan when it tried that the CENTO, at its Ministerial Council meeting in May 1974, should condemn India for its nuclear test. The Shah, in a news conference at Canberra on 27 September 1974, answering the question on India's nuclear explosion, said that he accepted the Indian stand that it was done for peaceful purposes.

The developments in the Middle East, especially the Arab-Israeli rivalry, were also supposed to influence Iran's nuclear option. According to Cahn, there was a continuing concern in Tehran that a change of rule in Egypt could return radical elements to power who conceivably might opt for a nuclear weapon capability. Even though a nuclear Egypt might not immediately pose a direct threat to Iran, at the very least it could incalculably exacerbate instability in the Middle East. "It might trigger adventurism among revolutionary Arab Forces throughout the Middle East and across the globe."¹³³ It is interesting to note that Israel, which not only possesses a nuclear weapon but proclaims to use it if and when necessary, was totally ignored by these American experts while assessing the nuclear scenario in the Middle East. Also Pakistan's quest to acquire nuclear-military capability was not only dismissed out of hand but it was even suggested that Iran would have little to fear from a nuclearized

¹²⁹ *Kayhan International*, 16 September 1975.

¹³⁰ Hann, Walter P., "Nuclear proliferation", *Strategic Review*, Winter 1975, 18, quoted in Cottrell and Dougherty, n. 120, 29.

¹³¹ Cottrell, n. 4, 428.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Cahn, n. 130, 29.

Pakistan.¹³⁴ It is an interesting example of an attempt to channelize Iran's threat perception into a given framework so as to dovetail Iran's policies into a particular pattern.

Some experts on Iran suggested two ways of preventing nuclear proliferation in countries like Iran. It was argued that the desire to acquire a nuclear weapon arose out of the growing security apprehensions in the wake of a US global retrenchment. Hence they suggested an effective and credible guarantee of an American nuclear umbrella as an alternative to the drive towards nuclear proliferation. "If the fear of isolation and of being overwhelmed by the hostile neighbours is pushing allied and friendly countries towards the nuclear option, then only an American recommitment to their security can unconceivably hold them back. This applies not only to America's formal ties with Western Europe and Japan. It applies also to less explicit relationships with countries like Israel, Iran and Pakistan."¹³⁵ Another way of preventing these countries from going nuclear was to build up their conventional military capability. It was suggested that as long as Iran remained the strongest military (conventional) power in the region it would not seek to introduce nuclear weapons which might neutralize its conventional military strength.¹³⁶ These powers would also be expected, therefore, to support US policy on non-proliferation. Thus, the nuclear scare was used to counter the growing trend in the USA to establish some form of arms control in the Gulf. In fact this lobby sought to counter arms control arguments and to argue for an unlimited arms sales programme to Iran.

Arms Control and Iran's Military Options

There was a growing criticism about the quality and quantity of arms going to Iran and also the inflated military expenditure of Iran since the increased oil revenue. The Iranian nationalists were always criticizing it, so also the *Tudeh*. The Iraqi paper,

¹³⁴Cottrell and Dougherty, n. 120, 34.

¹³⁵Cahn, n. 130, 58.

¹³⁶Cottrell and Dougherty, n. 120, 32, 38. Also see Ann Hessing Cahn, "Determinants of the nuclear options: the case of Iran", in Onkar Marwah and Ann Schulz, eds., *Nuclear Proliferation and the Near Nuclear Countries*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1975, 195.

Tarik ash-Shaab, on 23 June 1974, published an article by Hamid Safri, reportedly a member of the Polit Bureau of the *Tudeh* Party, in which he alleged that the USA was exploiting the arms trade to infiltrate into the Iranian political system. It also charged the USA of arming Iran so that Iran could fulfil the task that might be assigned to it (surrogate theory). Other Iranian intellectuals were also unhappy about the way Iran was spending money on arms. Manoucher Parvin, an Iranian teaching economics at Columbia University, examined the "threats" to Iran and came to the conclusion that in Iran the military mechanism was feeding upon the national resource:

Such a military mechanism originally established for the instrumental function of national defence gradually outgrows its former boundaries and functions no longer merely responding to the demand for security against attack but creating new demands for itself as an automative organism bent on preserving and expanding its interests? Thus, while the total cost of the military goes on increasing it does not lead to a comparable increase on security.¹³⁷

There was a strong section not only in Iran but also in the USA which was critical of the increasing military expenditure in Iran especially at the cost of urgently needed socio-economic development. This trend was very clearly visible during the Kennedy administration, and even before. There were criticisms about the US AID programme in Iran in the Hearings by the House Sub-committee on Government operations.¹³⁸ Iran again came under fire in a report by a team reviewing military assistance to Iran in 1960.¹³⁹ The US military aid programme to

¹³⁷Parvin, Manoucher, "Military expenditure in Iran: a forgotten question", *Iranian Studies*. 1 (4), Autumn 1968, 158.

¹³⁸*United States AID Operations in Iran*, Hearings, House Sub-committee of the Committee on Operations, 74 Congress, 2 Session, May-July 1956, GPO, Washington, 1956.

¹³⁹Report of the Staff Survey Team, Sub-committee for the Review of Military Assistance to Korea, Thailand and Iran, GPO, Washington 1960, and Report of the Staff Survey Team, Sub-committee for the Review of Mutual Security Program for Economic Assistance to Korea, Thailand and Iran (with Sub-committee's recommendations), GPO, Washington 1960, quoted in Chubin and Zabih, n. 36, 104.

Iran was drastically cut during the Kennedy period, which was one reason that prompted the Soviet-Iranian detente in 1962. The change of government in the USA after 1964-65 lifted the restraints on Iran's arms acquisition programme. In fact Iran was encouraged to act as the guardian of the Gulf. Iran continued to buy arms with the blessings of the US administration. During that period there were few criticisms of the Iranian military programme, especially in the USA. The tide, however, turned after 1974, following the rise in oil prices, Iran's hawkish attitude towards the oil price and the large orders placed by the Shah and also the Saudis and the Kuwaitis in the USA. Suddenly there were strong lobbies actively engaged in obstructing the sale of arms to the Arab World and Iran.

The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) was supplying data designed to promote so-called arms control in the Third World. The ACDA reviews arms transfer cases in the light of Section 511 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended in 1974, which lays down that the transfer should not contribute to an arms race in the region, not help in the outbreak or escalation of conflict, and prejudice the development of bilateral or multilateral arms control arrangements. Since 1974 the ACDA has participated in the review of 218 separate actions concerning arms transfer to the Gulf area. Besides the ACDA there were other groups like the Democrats, working through the Brookings Institution in Washington, that were canvassing for a check on the arms trade. Senator Edward Kennedy was personally active in propagating arms control in the Gulf. His article in *Foreign Affairs* of October 1975 was a very forceful condemnation of the arms race in the Persian Gulf and a strong plea for arms control there.¹⁴⁰ Senator Kennedy, while acting as the chairman of the joint House-Senate Economic Sub-committee, had also raised the question of moratorium on the sale of arms not only by the USA, but also by other arms-producing countries including the USSR.¹⁴¹ He even introduced an amendment (Nelson Amendment) to impose a moratorium on US arms sale to the Gulf.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Kennedy, Edward M., "Persian Gulf: Arms race or arms control"? *Foreign Affairs*, 54 (1), October 1975, 14-35.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 31-2. Also see *Kayhan International*, 20 September 1975.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 27.

There were the pro-Israeli and pro-Arab lobbies that were directly or indirectly acting against the Iranian arms acquisition programme. The Israeli lobby was worried about the growing rapprochement between the Arabs and the USA especially after the October 1973 war. The desire to act as the mediator in the Arab-Israeli dispute coupled with the need to be on the right side of the Arab oil-producing countries who suddenly developed vast economic surpluses had prompted the USA to sell sophisticated arms to the Arab states, especially to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Israelis were afraid that these arms, even if not transferred to the front-line states, might upset the overall Arab-Israeli military balance especially in reference to very sophisticated third generation weapons like F-15 planes armed with Phoenix AAM, as well as the whole new ground environment system that would go with them. Since direct criticism of "friends" like Egypt and Saudi Arabia was no more acceptable in the USA, they had to be lumped together with Iran so as to project a case for arms control in the Gulf.¹⁴³ This lobby got a valuable but indirect support from the section in the US Congress that was sympathetic towards Israel. This group argued that arms transferred to the Gulf states might be used against Israel. It was easy to build a case against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait but even Iran was suspected as a potential supporter of the Arabs. It was reported that in the October 1973 war, Iranian C-130 transport planes had helped to transport Saudi Arabian troops to Syria, and that Iran had to cease this "unauthorized" use of the C-130 upon US "protest."¹⁴⁴

The lobby which was working for arms control in the Gulf got a valuable and probably unintentional support from the Arabs also, who were getting worried about the growing military

¹⁴³Abir, Mordechai, "The impact of recent Western arms sales to the Gulf states", *The Persian Gulf, Continuing Debate on Arms Sales*, n. 106, Appendix III, 256-61. Dr. Abir, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel, maintained in that note that the transfer of arms to the Gulf states was disturbing the overall Arab-Israel military balance and that ultimately most of these arms would end up with the front-line or the confrontation Arab states.

¹⁴⁴*The United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 23-4.

strength of Iran.¹⁴⁵ The growing Saudi-Iranian rivalry was stressed by several writers. According to some western scholars the Saudis could not openly challenge Iran today but the dispute remained sharp.¹⁴⁶ It is estimated that the Saudi response to Iran's aggressive policy in the Gulf would also include a military preparedness on the part of Saudi Arabia. "Saudi Arabia is not going to sit by while Iran makes the Persian Gulf into its own lake. . . ."¹⁴⁷ The Iranian writers too have been anticipating a hostile Saudi stance. According to Ramazani, the Saudis did not fully rejoice over the Iranian show of force in an Arab land (Oman).¹⁴⁸ Some Iranians even blamed the USA for actively encouraging Saudi arms build-up to balance Iran.¹⁴⁹ Abbas Amirie, the Director of the Institute for International, Political and Economic Studies in Tehran, thought that Saudi Arabia's almost fanatical friendship with America amounted to an open invitation to polarization.¹⁵⁰ Even the Shah, in an interview to the *US News and World Report*, while commenting upon the statement of William S. Simson, the then American Secretary of Treasury, that the USA should turn away from Iran and move closer to Saudi Arabia, said that US-Iran relations were based "on such a high level of interest that they could not be influenced by the pleasure or taste of individuals with momentary careers."¹⁵¹ Though the Shah was putting a brave front, the Iranians were getting sceptical about total American support, something which they had taken for granted for well over two decades.

¹⁴⁵*News Review, West Asia*, n. 37, October 1974, 1190-91.

¹⁴⁶Martin, n. 77, 239 and Rober P. Berman, "The Shah's Iranian Empire: old games, new stakes (ours)", *The Persian Gulf*, 1974, n. 72, 251.

¹⁴⁷Testimony of Professor Marvin Zonis, *New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf*, Hearings, House Sub-committee on Foreign Affairs, 93 Congress, I Session, GPO, Washington, 1973, 102.

¹⁴⁸Ramazani, R.K., "Emerging patterns of regional relations in Iranian foreign policy", *Orbis* 18(4), Winter 1975, 1055.

¹⁴⁹Amirsadeghi, H., "With Russia and America: the Shah's balanced alignment", *New Middle East* (38), November 1971, 11.

¹⁵⁰Amirie, Abbas, ed., *The Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in International Politics*, Institute for International, Political and Economic Studies, Tehran, 1975, 267.

¹⁵¹*US News and World Report*, 22 March 1976, 58.

Several arguments were advanced by the advocates of arms control to limit the flow of arms to the Gulf. One of the most commonly used arguments was that the flow of arms at the present rate would destabilize the region. It would not only create intra-regional but also intra-state tensions, caused by military power play against civilian interests.¹⁵² The second argument was that since the inflow of sophisticated arms in large quantities could not be absorbed within the framework of the limited technologically competent personnel in the country, a large number of foreign personnel, mostly American citizens, were imported with the weapons for training and maintenance of those weapons. More weapons were being ordered and it was feared that the number of US personnel would go up to about 50,000 in the 1980s. If the country concerned was engaged in a medium or high intensity war, these foreign nationals would have to be actively engaged in the fighting at least at the maintenance, supply and logistic levels. In other words, they would become hostages and the USA might indirectly be drawn into that conflict to support them. It was also feared that transfer of third generation sophisticated arms to the Gulf, especially to Iran, might ultimately jeopardize US strategic interests in the area. The Shah had boasted of making Iran the fifth strongest power in the world within two decades. According to a House report, the USA might be helping to develop a military power with whom it would have to reckon in the years to come—a power that occupies a strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz, through which 60 per cent of the world's oil supplies might flow in future.¹⁵³

Arms control also became an issue between the struggle for power between the Congress and the Executive. According to several US sources President Nixon, during his trip in May 1972, had promised to supply Iran with all the weapons that the Shah would demand.¹⁵⁴ Sophisticated weapons like F-14 were promised before 1973. Though the quality of weapons supplied had been raised before October 1973, the oil price-hike made it

¹⁵² *United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea Areas*, 1977, n. 79, 13.

¹⁵³ *United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf*, Report, 1976. GPO, Washington, 1975.

¹⁵⁴ *United States Military Sales to Iran*, v staff report to the Sub-

possible for the Gulf states to order those new weapons in bulk. The administration went along with it and supported the arms transfer to Iran. This policy also led to two other developments that had domestic implications for the USA. The sale of new sophisticated weapons generated an inter-services competition among the American armed forces. For example, both the US navy and the US air force canvassed for the sale of F-14 and F-15 respectively, hoping that bulk purchase of these weapons would help lower the per unit cost for their planes too.¹⁵⁵

In some cases the manufacturing firm would even try to contact the Iranian government for the sale of a new weapon even without first obtaining the prior approval of the Department of Defence (DOD). One such case was the F-18 L deal where the Northrop Corporation contacted the Iranian government for a land version of the F-18 (navy). The US DOD was not planning to acquire F-18 L. Thus, in effect, the Northrop was indirectly trying to acquire funding from Iran for a military project in the USA, thus "possibly establishing a precedent for a foreign country to influence weapons development and foreign-military sales in the United States."¹⁵⁶ Also, the large amount of money, running into billions of dollars, automatically led to various types of kick-backs. The Congressional Hearings on the Grumman deal for F-14 with Iran only partly revealed that sordid story.¹⁵⁷ The Congress, therefore, began to seriously look into the question of arms transfer to the Gulf, especially after 1974.

Another powerful argument used by the advocates of arms control was that Third World countries, even the oil-rich countries, were over-spending in the military field with the result that the country's socio-economic development was retarded. This argument was used especially in the case of Iran because it was

committee on Foreign Assistance of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, July 1976, GPO, Washington, 1976, 41.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, IX.

¹⁵⁶ *The United States Arms Sales Policies in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, 163.

¹⁵⁷ *Multinational Corporations and United States Foreign Policy*, Hearings, Sub-committee on Multinationals, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 94 Congress, 2 Session, Grumman sale of F-14s to Iran, Part 17, GPO, Washington, 1977.

suggested that Iran had the capacity to fruitfully absorb the surplus oil money for economic development and that the Shah was staving off the socio-economic development of Iran by spending billions of dollars on arms. The Iranian nationalists had been drawing attention to this fact since the middle of the 1960s. Also some American experts on Iran, like Professor Zonis and Professor Cottem, too had referred to this question in their testimony before the Congress as early as 1973, even before the increase in the oil prices. After 1964 the US Secretary of Treasury, William Simon, lent his powerful support to the pro-arms control lobby in the USA. Over-spending in the military field was also directly creating an anti-American feeling among the masses in Iran. The Americans were held responsible not only for arms trade but also the subsequent training programme which necessitated the presence of thousands of Americans in Iran. Their presence, it is alleged, gave rise to serious socio-economic problems and even a US Government Report hinted that anti-Americanism had become a serious problem in Iran.¹⁵⁸

Lastly, arms transfer was being linked to the question of human rights, and the arms control lobby in the USA was seeking to find ways and means to hinder arms transfer to those countries where it could be proved that human rights were being systematically violated. Iran, with its absolute monarchy, single-party system, SAVAK etc., had already drawn the attention of the American arms control lobby. The controversial amendment of 1976 to the Foreign Assistance Act (of 1961) and Foreign Military Sales Act provided the teeth to the argument. According to that amendment, "No security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violation of internationally recognized human rights."¹⁵⁹ Iran had ratified the covenant of the Human Rights on 24 June 1975, and therefore was doubly bound by the constraints imposed by it. The question of violation of human

¹⁵⁸*The United States Arms Sales Policies in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea Areas*, n. 79, IX-X.

¹⁵⁹H.R. 13680, *An Act to Amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1951 and the Foreign Military Sales Act*, Senate, 94 Congress, 2 Session, 14 June 1976, GPO, Washington, 1976, 136-37, quoted in Cottrell and Dougherty, n. 120, 51.

rights was discussed in the US Congress in one of the sub-committees of the House¹⁶⁰ where the authoritarian rule of the Shah, absolute powers of the SAVAK and even the single-party system introduced by the Shah at that time were criticized as being contrary to human rights.¹⁶¹ The use of the army and of US weapons in suppressing anti-Shah riots added more grist to the mill of the human rights lobby in the USA.

Despite the growing pressure for arms control, Iran, thanks to the support in the US administration, was able to acquire most of the things that it had asked for. Of course it was refused a few things and decisions on some were pending. Iran, it is reported, had asked for weapons like the B-I bomber, nuclear-powered submarines and AWACS. The bomber and the nuclear submarine were rejected out of hand and it was not sure if Iran would have obtained the AWACS. These weapon systems form an integrated part of America's nuclear strategy and it is doubtful if the USA would have passed them on to Iran, even without nuclear weapon components and under the control and supervision of the US personnel. Iran had even tried to obtain a nuclear-powered submarine from France but finally had to settle for a renovated conventional US Tang-class submarine.

Iran had, during the last five years, acquired sophisticated weapons like F-4, F-14 armed with Phoenix AAM and Maverick ASM, Improved HAWK and Rapier SAMs, P-3 Orion maritime reconnaissance planes armed with long-range Harpoon ASMs and Tang-class submarine. It might have got the Spruance-class destroyers in the near future if the situation in Iran had not deteriorated drastically. In addition Iran has asked for 70 F-14 planes and about 300 F-16 new light-weight jet fighters. The USA had accepted to deliver 160 of these new F-16 planes in the near future. The decision on the 140 planes was still pending.¹⁶² In the meantime, even before Iran had received the new

¹⁶⁰*Human Rights in Iran*, Hearings, Sub-committee on International Organization of the House Committee on International Relations, 94 Congress, 2 Session, August-September 1976, GPO, Washington, 1976.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, 8, Shah's comment on the single-party system, *ibid*, 87.

¹⁶²*Review of Developments in the Middle East*, 1978, Hearings, Sub-committee on Europe and the Middle East, House Committee on International Relations, 95 Congress, 2 Session, 12 June 1978, GPO, Washington, 1978, 121-22.

F-16 it was already thinking of ordering F-18 as a possible replacement for F-4. A letter to that effect had been sent from General Toufanian, the Deputy Minister of war and the person in charge of the new weapons programme.¹⁶³ Each of these planes was estimated to cost \$15.8 mn and the total package was stated to be more than \$4 billion. If the deal had gone through Iran might have begun to get F-18 in the 1980s.

There were also certain weapons that Iran desired and, if it really wanted them, could have easily acquired them. But it did not, partly because of the high cost per unit. The Iranian armed forces were not satisfied with their latest Chieftain main battle tank. It is surprising how the Iranian weapons become outdated as soon as a new weapon is introduced in the market! The Leopard II was reputedly superior to the Chieftain and Iran began to send feelers to get the new tank in return for oil. The deal fell through probably because of the prohibitive cost quoted by the Germans. The Iranians also wanted a through-deck cruiser that could operate ASW helicopters and STOL/VTOL aircraft like the Harrier. This deal also fell through and the Iranians armed the P-3 maritime reconnaissance aircraft with long-range ASM (the Harpoon). Thus by and large, despite certain setbacks, Iran had been able to acquire almost all the weapons that it could afford. The only other country in Asia that was treated on a similar level was Israel. In both cases the arms transfer was possible because of the strong lobby in the USA and a very sympathetic US administration. Of course the Shah too was prepared to play the game of a pro-western regional power.

While the arms control groups were doing their bit, there was also a strong group supporting the transfer of arms to Iran. The Shah, of course, was its biggest advocate. But there were other Iranians and Americans, both in the establishment and outside it, who were a strong lobby trying to counter the arms-control group. Of course the strongest of them was the Shah himself because without his driving force there would not have been the accelerated militarization in Iran.

The arguments used by the Shah to justify transfer of arms to Iran, especially from the USA, were four-fold. The first was a

¹⁶³*The United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea Areas*, 1977, n. 79, 162-63.

strong emotional appeal to militarism in Iran. The Shah, in a speech on 14 September 1975 at the graduation ceremony of the Defence College in Iran, said that weakness was tantamount to death and added, "We have no intention of dying, for there is much work to be done to ensure the glorious future which will commit this nation to history."¹⁶⁴ The Shah had time and again argued that Iran had an international responsibility as the guardian of that regional security and Iran wanted to be self-sufficient in fulfilling that responsibility. The Shah is reported to have said in an interview to *Jenne Afrique* "It is natural that we should furnish ourselves with modern arms. This is because we ought to be able to ensure the complete integrity and stability of the Persian Gulf alone if the present policy of cooperation in defence that we are offering has to be modified."¹⁶⁵

The Shah had also been cajoling and, alternatively, threatening the Americans. In an interview with the *News and World Report* he warned the Americans that they could not afford to weaken Iran.

Could the United States afford to see Iran lost? Could the whole world afford it? You can't just live in your dreamland—your fortress America—and let all the countries of the world eventually disappear. A false sense of security will destroy you—like nothing . . . Iran is one country that if it goes, you are going to feel it badly. If we disappear, don't think that the rest of the region will stay as it is. If we go, the inexorable fate of the region will be that the present source of energy to Europe and Japan and to some degree to the US will not only be in jeopardy but will probably be cut off.¹⁶⁶

He also warned the Americans that if the Congress put an embargo on arms sales to Iran that would be "so irresponsible that I am not even thinking about it."¹⁶⁷ He said that he could always buy from other sources. The Shah even threatened the Americans by saying, "If you try to take an unfriendly attitude towards my

¹⁶⁴ *Kayhan International*, 15 September 1975.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 July 1971.

¹⁶⁶ *US News and World Report*, 22 March 1976, 57.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

country, we can hurt you as badly if not more so that you can hurt us. Not just through oil—we can create trouble for you in the region.”¹⁶⁸

Iranian authors, for several reasons, also lent support to arms transfer to Iran. In contrast to the Shah’s hawkishness, Shahram Chubin was a dove. He said that Iran’s arms build-up was a “general insurance policy in line with her intention of eventually achieving increasing self-reliance and of assuring her own defence in a wide scrutiny perimeter.”¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, though the framework appears to be modest, it can justify a limitless militarization of Iran. Explaining the large military expenditure, he argued:

To some extent the military buildup appears more extensive viewed from the distance because factors such as block-obsolence, starting from scratch, the size of the country and the multiplicity of potential security problems were often discounted. External observers tended to equate order for weapons with deliveries, and deliveries with assimilation. Projections were foreshortened, time-frames discounted and questionable intentions derived from the enhancement of capabilities. In truth, military build-up was not as remarkable on closer examination as it appeared, for it included in large part deliberate stock piling and warehousing, had some civilian spin-offs, and was constrained by the narrow skilled manpower base and infrastructure. Reflecting a decision to exchange medium range depending on the West in technology for long-range self-reliance, it was a calculated gamble.¹⁷⁰

Abbas Amirie too followed a similar line of argument and said that Iran was not going to spend money at that rate in future.¹⁷¹

Mr Borz Atapour came out specifically against the arguments used by the arms control group in the USA. Replying to the article by Edward Kennedy in *Foreign Affairs*, Borz Atapour said that it misled the American public. He took exception to

¹⁶⁸Ibid. Also see the Shah’s interview to American journalists, *Kayhan International*, 11 August 1976.

¹⁶⁹Chubin, n. 34, 218.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., 202.

¹⁷¹Amirie, n. 150, 281.

Kennedy's thesis that Iran wanted to extend its role in the Gulf and beyond. He said that Iran was neither interested in leadership nor competition in the Gulf and had offered regional security arrangements for the Gulf. Commenting upon the charge that the money spent on arms was money taken out of the development budget, he said that in Iran, the development budget had over-reached its maximum and that military modernization was an integral part of Iran's developmental policy and "in step" with total modernization.¹⁷²

Support for arms transfer to Iran came from various corners in the USA: administration, intellectuals, arms manufacturers, and the kick-back agents. Of these the administrative support was most crucial because it was the administration that finally decided the policy under the American Presidential form of government and pushed it through the Congress. As stated before, the US administration, especially the State Department, had been sympathetic to Iran's arms build-up since the middle of 1960. This support became crucial when arms transfer to Iran came under fire in the Congress. The defence of arms transfer to Iran in the Congressional Hearings, therefore, became a good index of the support of the US administration to the Shah and his military programme. The Du Pont-Sisco exchange in the debate in the House sub-committee was only one indication of the clash between the arms control group in the Congress and the pro-arms transfer group (to Iran) in the administration.¹⁷³

The Shah was always considered as a loyal ally of the USA. It was also argued that the arms transferred to Iran would not be diverted to a third party to be used against US interests. Even the use of American equipment by Iran in Oman was treated as in accordance with the provisions of the Foreign Military Sales Act, which permitted the use of such equipment in regional or collective measures consistent with the UN Charter. Iran's assistance to Oman in dealing with foreign-supported guerrilla warfare was viewed as such a collective measure.¹⁷⁴

The main support of the administration became obvious when

¹⁷²Atapour, Borz, "Cooperation not competition", *Tehran Journal*, 11 December 1975.

¹⁷³*The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 141.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*

the policies of the Shah and Iran's military programme came under fire from the Human Rights group. Alfred L. Atherton, Jr. Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs in the Department of State, gave a long testimony before the Sub-committee dealing with human rights in Iran where he tried to defend the Iranian government's actions.¹⁷⁵ He gave a clean chit to the Shah. He repeated the arguments that the Iranian regime was being attacked by a combination of neo-anarchism and extreme religious conservatism working together. According to Atherton, there were only 2800-3500 political prisoners in Iran and many were released.¹⁷⁶ Atherton added that the USA did not intervene in human rights problems in Iran because he considered them as Iran's internal matter. But he added that if at any time that matter became "a growing affront to international standards, we would, of course, reconsider our judgment. The trend appears to us, however, to be in the opposite direction."¹⁷⁷ He also gave a clean chit to the Shah by adding, "I believe that the advances which have been made in improving the human rights of the broad majority of Iran's population under considerable adversity far outweigh such abuses as have occurred in an attempt to control the violent challenges to the Government."¹⁷⁸

The US administration not only gave its full support to Iran but also made its position very clear on the question of human rights and arms transfer to Iran. Robert J. McCloskey, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, in a letter dated 11 August 1975 to Hon. Donald M. Fraser, Chairman of the Human Rights Committee in Iran, said that the alleged violations of human rights in Iran were carefully considered by the administration which came to the conclusion that there was insufficient reliable evidence to show that "a consistent pattern of gross violations" of human rights exist in Iran and that Section 502B (of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1974) did not apply in the case of Iran.¹⁷⁹ The administration maintained its stand

¹⁷⁵ *Human Rights in Iran*, n. 160, 17-28.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 23-5.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 26-7.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 27-8.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

even in subsequent years, and continued to support the Shah. The *Review of Developments in the Middle East*, 1978, maintained that the USA, officially, "was encouraged by the steps taken to improve Iranian Human Rights conditions over the past two years, although there are areas where we hope further improvements will develop."¹⁸⁰ The administration also continued to believe that the Shah would be able to hold on to his power in the future and, therefore, was worth supporting. Assistant Secretary of State, Joseph Sisco, praised the Shah's enlightened leadership¹⁸¹ and maintained that there was no indication that an insurrectionary movement was likely to develop in Iran. According to him, the government was stable and the succession was constitutionally provided for.¹⁸²

Those who pleaded for continued supply of arms to Iran used different arguments. One common argument was that such an aid would help to maintain the so-called arms balance in the region. Every time a weapon was introduced in a neighbouring country, especially Iraq, an effort was made to justify the sale of new arms to Iran. A classical example was the transfer of about 10-12 Tu-22 supersonic bombers to Iraq in 1973. That small bomber force became a pretext for Iran's demand for the B-1 bomber (which it did not get), Improved HAWK, F-14 and Phoenix AAM, and a new set of radar networks and Rapier SAMs. In fact the F-4 Phantoms, available with Iran at that time, would have done the needful in any other state. Again, in 1976, when the arms control group had started generating a strong pressure for an arms embargo, additional arms to Iran were being justified on the basis of a report published in an obscure paper (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, 5 November 1976), that Iraq and USSR had reached a secret agreement under which Iraq would receive military aid up to \$4 billion in return for the use of two Iraqi bases.¹⁸³

Very often Kiplingesque arguments are used to rationalize arms sales to Iran. Cottrell and Dougherty, in their monograph, cautioned the Americans from taking up a position based on

¹⁸⁰ *Review of Developments in the Middle East*, 1978, n. 162, 116-17.

¹⁸¹ *Kayhan International*, 7 April 1973.

¹⁸² *The Persian Gulf*, 1975, n. 63, 70-1.

¹⁸³ Cottrell and Dougherty, n. 120, 43 (footnote).

moralistic anti-militarism and the idealistic preference for economic over military instruments that are supposed to be deeply embedded in western liberal thought and uniquely pronounced in the Anglo-American intellectual tradition about foreign and defence policy.¹⁸⁴ They argued that arms transfer must be seen in its realistic image and that the USA by giving arms to Iran was not only doing a favour to that country but also advancing its own security interests.¹⁸⁵

These arms-to-Iran groups have also provided support to Iran and to the US administration against the pressure generated by the human rights group. According to one author, a decent concern for human rights had traditionally been part of American foreign policy, but he suggested that there should be definite limits on the actions the United States could and should take to influence the ways in which other governments conducted their internal affairs. "By and large, the nations of the Gulf are progressing reasonably, taking full account of their history, heritage, economics, and regional political realities."¹⁸⁶ Cottrell was more forthright. According to him, the USA should not impose its political and legal standards upon a country whose society had been shaped by a different historical experience.¹⁸⁷ He argued that the US action of sitting over judgment over Iran constituted a form of "moralistic interventionism."¹⁸⁸ He suggested that the human rights issue not be made an absolute criterion for policy decision-making. "The desire to promote human rights everywhere in the world must be weighted against the desire to attain other very important objectives, including the preservation of international peace and stability."¹⁸⁹

Other arguments were also produced to support the sale of arms to Iran. One was called the ripple effect. According to that argument not only did the sale of arms bring billions of dollars to the USA and also provided for a continuing sale of spares, training programme and services, but it opened up the local civi-

lian market too for the Americans because of the goodwill created by the American military sale.¹⁹⁰ The other argument was that arms sales were an important instrument to control the policies of the recipient country. Since training, regular maintenance and continuing demand for spares are an on-going process, no country changes its major weapon system suddenly without a great deal of loss. For example Iran, even if it so wishes, cannot suddenly replace the F-14 Phoenix AAM mix by another system. Thus USA could have an effective hold even if a new regime came to power. USA, if necessary, could retaliate by bringing the Iranian military machine to a virtual standstill.¹⁹¹

Despite these pro-Iranian pressure groups, Iran's military programme was facing serious constraints. Within Iran, there had been a growing demand for better socio-economic conditions for the masses. The global inflations as well as a high rate of inflation in Iran had put a serious strain on the purchasing capacity not only of the Iranian government but also of the man on the street. Part solution was to divert more money from arms purchase to socio-economic development. Inflation and also the inflated prices of finished consumer goods, including sophisticated arms was another serious constraint on Iran's armament programme.

Quoting inflated prices was evident in the case of military equipment. When Iran planned to order the Spruance-class destroyer, each unit was quoted at \$ 110 mn.¹⁹² The price then jumped to \$ 234 mn and finally to \$ 338 mn per unit, with the result that Iran had to reduce its order from six ships to four ships.¹⁹³ The AWACS were quoted at \$ 100 mn per unit in 1974. Their unit price went up to \$ 180 mn in 1976. Even F-14, which was quoted at \$10-12 mn in 1974, was priced at about \$22 mn by 1976. Also, the more sophisticated the weapon the costlier was its training programme, maintenance and spares. Thus almost half the amount of the foreign military sale of the Gulf countries, including Iran,

¹⁹⁰*United States Arms Sales to the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas*, 1977, n. 79, 25-6.

¹⁹¹*United States Military Sales to Iran, Report*, July 1976, n. 154, 52.

¹⁹²*News Review, West Asia*, n. 37, March 1975, 278. The Shah quoted even less, \$100 mn, Cottrell, n. 4, 426.

¹⁹³*The United States Arms Sales Policy in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea Areas*, 1977, n. 79, 154.

was spent on obtaining services because of the lack of trained manpower and required techno-industrial infrastructure in the Gulf. Since both the arms and the services were quoted at highly inflated prices, a country like Iran could only get one-fourth of the arms that an European country would have been able to buy for the same amount of money. Thus the spiralling cost of the weapon system had impinged upon Iran's military programme. The Shah too complained about it in his interview with *Le Monde*. In the meanwhile, Iran's oil money was not keeping pace with the rate of inflation. Finally, the Shah's image was badly tarnished, especially during the riots of 1978. If he was the real force behind Iran's arms programme then further erosion of his image as the strong, dependable ally led to a further cutback in arms transfer from the USA to Iran. Finally, after the exit of the Shah, many of the arms ordered earlier were rejected by the new regime. Thus, some sort of arms control has been *ipso facto* imposed upon Iran since 1979.

Iran, despite all these constraints, had already acquired a formidable amount of military hardware and it had already reached a saturation point keeping in view Iran's resources and infrastructure. Iran did not have the capacity to absorb any further weapons unless it surrendered its whole military programme to the care of foreigners, which was not the best way to assure Iran's security. Yet, even at the 1978-79 level, Iran remained the strongest regional power in the Gulf and an emerging power in the Arabian Sea area. Hence, if the Iranians had planned to base their national security on the army they had acquired a good machine.

However, the arms and the army could not really offer the Shah the overall systemic security that he had bargained for. The future of these sophisticated arms remained undecided. The new regime has not only halted the arms purchase programme but even those arms obtained at great cost fell into disuse after the American maintenance staff left Iran after 1979. The Iranian case is a good illustration of how an inflated and accelerated arms acquisition programme that was not in tune with the national ethos could finally become counter-productive. Thus the Iranian experiment illustrates two points that are important for a developing state. Firstly, unless a country has the necessary indigenous infrastructure to absorb sophisticated weapons their

acquisition does not necessarily strengthen its military capability and hence its national security, and secondly, very sophisticated weapons do not *ipso facto* ensure systemic security of the ruling elite.

Chapter IV

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE SHAH

When you can see a little light you can't stand the darkness
any more.

MEHDI BAZARGAN

The earth shook the day the Shah left Iran. The tremors, which levelled three villages in eastern Iran, seemed to indicate the turmoil in that country. Did the Shah's exit indicate a revolution or a chaos? All those who were concerned with Iran believed that Iran would witness, sooner or later, an upheaval that might shake the foundations of the Pahlavi dynasty but few anticipated the fiercely destructive hurricane that lashed that country and swept away the whole of the then existing systemic superstructure. The worst affected were the ruling elite and its entourage. None knew what hit them. Till the last moment the Shah could not or would not understand as to why the people of Iran had turned against him. He kept on asking the question till the eve of his departure: "Where did it all go wrong?" and would not find among the people surrounding him anyone to give him the right reply. It dramatically highlighted his self-imposed isolation in the Niavaran Palace, and, in a nutshell, symbolized the reason for the failure of the Pahlavi dynasty.

The question as to why the Shah lost would be debated for a long time but some obvious reasons would not be hard to pinpoint. The type of political system created by him was bound to crack at a given point because of its inherent structural weaknesses. Secondly, the Shah had a faulty threat perception and, therefore, his responses to them were also wrong. The result was that instead of meeting the main challenge squarely he kept on

pursuing the old policy that had gradually led to the erosion of the foundations of Iran's political system. As far as his threat perception was concerned he not only continued to underestimate the public reaction but also to see the main threat to Iran as emanating from sources outside Iran. He was obviously wrong on both counts.

Since the Shah believed that the threat to his security was mainly from sources outside Iran, it could be neutralized by seeking support from outside forces, i.e., from the west and especially from the USA. He blamed the USSR for the events in Iran. He linked the developments in Iran to a grand conspiracy involving the Soviet and Cuban presence in Bab al-Mandeb region. He also saw the *coup d'état* in Afghanistan as a part of the main plot. He was once again trying to revive the old slogan of "threat of encirclement" to gain the support of the west. He threatened the west that if he went not only would Iran be split into three or four autonomous pieces but part of it might even be acquired by the USSR as "Iranistan." He also threatened the west that a change in Iran would mean "either the beginning of World War III or the strategic surrender of the western world."¹ The Shah, thus, equated his survival as the absolute monarch of Iran with the survival of western security. This was the Shah's last trump card. He offered the west stability in the Middle East, uninterrupted oil supply and a strong barrier to Soviet expansion in return for full backing in his quest for systemic continuity in Iran and also total backing against the mass revolt that was brewing in the country. The west, and especially the USA, despite temptations, did not commit itself to the Shah's survival. It is, however, doubtful if full western support would have prolonged the Shah's rule for long. He would have lost anyway because the real threat was not from outside but from within, which he had underestimated.

The Shah believed, or at best pretended so, that only a small minority was opposed to him and that people were with him. When he was asked as to why the people were burning his portraits he is reported to have said: "That could be a minority,

¹Borchgrave, Arnaud de, "Tea with the Shah", *Newsweek*, 20 November 1978, 21.

truly, the majority does not think that way.”² He believed that he was popular. “Nobody can overthrow me—I have the support of 700,000 troops, all the workers and most of the people”³ As usual, he put the blame on the *Tudeh* Party and the Islamic clergy. He, therefore, believed that the opposition to his regime came from small and mutually contradictory groups, Islamic and Marxist, which could be isolated and suppressed by repressing a few. He underestimated the degree or extent of popular opposition. Thus he was shocked by the mob fury, which was based on hatred and a peculiar Iranian tradition of quest for martyrdom.

The Shah’s final defeat was in-built in the type of system that he had evolved. Since the ultimate goal of his polity was total concentration of power in one hand, he could never have supporters, i.e., people who could share his power. Anyone who aspired to share power automatically became an opponent. He ruled by isolating the foci of power—feudal elements, religious groups, liberal democrats, even the military. But he did not follow up the power game to its logical end by playing one group against another. He could have done so only by letting each group have enough of an independent power base and by sharing, once in a while, his power with them, thereby letting each group hope that some day it would be able to assume power on its own. But he was afraid of sharing power and thus weakened all the political groups so that they could not act as independent variables.

While curtailing the power base of each of these traditional groups, he did not even create an alternative group that would have a stake in the continuity of the system. Undoubtedly, the top elite in the military and bureaucracy did have a stake in the continuity of the system but even though that group did benefit from the system it had a limited share in the Iranian power structure. Even they were not trained to be independent variables because that would itself have posed a potential threat to the Shah’s ultimate quest for total power. They remained tools rather than supporters of the system. The tools always are as

²*The Observer* (Sunday), 7 January 1979, quoted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 1979.

³*US News and World Report*, quoted in *Australian*, 20 June 1978.

strong as the arm that wields them and when the arm itself began to weaken the tools too became ineffective.

The tools that kept the Shah in power were varied, ranging from the constitutional infrastructure and political parties, which gave his regime a semblance of legitimacy, the tools of coercion like the police, gendarmerie, army and the dreaded SAVAK, the support of the USA, oil, money and the information media. These tools were used, individually and collectively, to strengthen the autocratic regime of the Shah. Finally all of them proved too weak to protect him.

Often it is argued that the Shah's intentions were admirable but his methods were autocratic. It is at best a liberal interpretation of the political system that had evolved in Iran during the regime of the Shah. But even that interpretation is subject to severe scrutiny because though the Shah had based the legitimacy of his rule on approved constitutional and institutional frameworks, like the *Majlis* and the political party system, the framework itself was twisted to suit the centralized and autocratic rule of the Shah. Not only were elections manipulated to fill the *Majlis* and the Senate with yes-men but the political parties were expected to support the monarchical system. The Rastakhiz Party, in its session on 4 January 1978, not only appointed Jamashid Amouzegar, the then Prime Minister, as its Secretary General, but also passed the resolution supporting the Shah, Iranian monarchy and the Constitution. The same party organized a counter demonstration in Iran on 14 January 1978 against the nationalists, saying that it would not allow the fruits of the revolution to be assailed by "a handful of misled, wayward and treacherous elements."

The tools of legitimacy were an important supplement to the tools of coercion, both overt and covert. The covert operations of the dreaded SAVAK instilled fear not only among the avowed opponents of the Shah but also among the common man. Even those who were a part of the system were not sure that the SAVAK was not keeping a watch over them. It is argued that the secret police went out of control but the Shah, aware of its nature, did nothing to stop the reign of terror.⁴ It is also suggest-

⁴Bill, James A., "Iran and the crisis of '78", *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1978-79, 328.

ed that the Shah wanted to base his rule on force, "preferring to balance coercion with calculated reform."⁵ This policy was largely responsible for the gradual erosion of the legitimacy of the system because coercion was felt by all while reforms lost their legitimacy since they came from a regime that was alienated from the popular will. It is also interesting to note that this type of argument by some western scholars presupposes that coercion can be balanced by reforms. It is based upon an inherently dangerous logic that a dab of butter on the bread can satisfy the craving for freedom, and partly explains the reason why some of the western scholars are shocked by the growth of the so-called "radical" movements in the Afro-Asian world.

Since the Shah remained isolated from the masses and, therefore, dependent upon his small coterie of yes-men, this group, devoid of any real share in power, began to amass wealth. Their venality and avarice also contributed to a large extent to the downfall of the Shah. Corruption also extended deep into the royal family. His family members and the yes-men, hiding their greed behind the bland mask of court servility, used their position to syphon off the Iranian wealth in their own pockets and to channelise it to the safety of foreign banks. None dared to complain because these people, the "eyes and ears" of the Shah, protected themselves by using the power of the system. This group too, therefore, had a vested interest in strengthening the "absolute monarchy" as a shield for their corruption. Thus, the stronger the Shah the greater the opportunity for these parasites to bleed the people, which they did. It continued till a stage was reached when the overpowering avarice began to feed upon itself and the fire that was so pleasant became an instrument to ignite the whole household and burn those who had played with it unrestrained.

Another important tool used by the Shah for the continuity of his regime was his linkage with the west, especially with the USA, based upon variables like the oil policy, willingness to play the role of an American surrogate in the region, arms requisition programme, willingness to permit US military installations to be stationed in Iran etc. All along, since the Second World War, the Shah and his propaganda machinery

⁵Ibid.

had created an impression that the western security in the region depended, to a large extent, upon the continuity of the Shah and his dynasty. It had paid dividends in the past, not only in 1953 when the USA rescued him from a possible *coup d'état* launched by the National Front under Dr Mossadeq, but even afterwards when the USA helped to a large extent to strengthen the Iranian SAVAK and other tools of coercion. All along, except for a short period during the Kennedy administration, the Shah has drawn full support from the USA. The support continued even in 1977-78 when the Shah was facing serious popular opposition. The Carter administration, especially his National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, went out of its way to back the Shah. Brzezinski is reported to have directed the American Ambassador to Iran, Sullivan, to tell the Shah that the US would back whatever measures he felt he needed to restore order.⁶ There were, however, other voices that cautioned restraint. "Presidential cheer-leading by telephone or threats of military intervention of any kind can only be counter productive to long-term American interests. Future Middle East Vietnams must be avoided."⁷

The US administration, however, began to get increasingly perturbed by the turn events were taking in Iran. As usual, the CIA was blamed for not informing the President about the seriousness of the situation in Iran. Of course, no one expected the CIA to deliver the goods any more. But the administration geared itself up to face the situation. By the middle of December 1978, George Ball, former Under Secretary of State, was appointed temporary consultant to the National Security Council. His task was to prepare a report on the Persian Gulf with emphasis upon Iran. The administration also could not act decisively because of the reported rift between Cyrus Vance and Brzezinski. Brzezinski's reaction was influenced by his perception of the Soviet policy in the "arc of crisis" in the Arabian Sea littoral. Vance considered the Iranian crisis as primarily a result of indigenous dissatisfaction. The decision to increase the US naval presence in the Indian Ocean at that juncture might very well reflect the US response under Brzezinski's scenario. It, however,

⁶"Showdown for the Shah", *Newsweek*, 20 November 1978, 20.

⁷Bill, n. 4, 341-42.

failed to have any effect upon the developments in Iran except that the Iranian case was projected as yet another item on the agenda of Soviet-American Cold War rhetoric.

The presence of more than 30,000 Americans in Iran also conditioned the US response to the crisis in Iran. Anti-American feelings were running high. The safety and finally the evacuation of Americans also attained high priority in the American policy towards Iran. In the light of the collapse of the whole infrastructure, including the communication, their evacuation finally ended up as an exodus, often ill-organized. Sometimes the US Air Force planes were sent to evacuate women and children. More were evacuated after the new government of Bazargan came to power. The new government offered full help in that evacuation, which was treated as a victory of American diplomacy in Iran.

As the position of the Shah became shaky, informed circles in the USA began to search for alternatives. The *Newsweek* of 18 December 1978, in its short write-up "If the Shah Falls," came up with five possible alternatives. They included a constitutional monarchy with the Shah as a nominal head and a coalition government headed by old National Front leaders like Karim Sanjabi or a pro-western politician like Ali Amini. It, however, required the cooperation of those opposition leaders which could not be assured as long as the Shah was on the throne. It was then suggested that the Shah should leave and the regency council, provided for in the constitution, should run the country. Even that suggestion was unacceptable because the regency council, under the conditions prevailing at that time, would have been dominated by the pro-Shah elements. The magazine suggested a third alternative, a republic under the leadership of moderates like Sanjabi or Amini: because it was suggested that if that effort too failed, there were chances of an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, which in turn would open up the possibility of a Libyan-style army rule led by young and radical officers. It commented that in that case "the political and economic balance of the Mid-East would be upset, and the US would be left yearning for the "good old days" of the Shah's autocratic rule."⁸ A former State Department official with wide knowledge of Iran, writing under the pen-name of Abdul

⁸*Newsweek*, 18 December 1978, 12.

Kasim Mansur, also suggested the forming of a coalition government with Ali Amini or else a regency council. He suggested that the USA should no longer depend upon the Shah or his son but seek a rapport with the National Front leaders like Dr Karim Sanjabi and Dariush Farouhar, and the student group so as to use it as a force against the Islamic leaders like Khomeini.⁹

The change in the American official policy became visible by the time the Bakhtiar regime was installed. The US administration tried to salvage it by offering to restrain the top army officers from precipitating events like staging a military *coup d'état*. Brzezinski sent General Robert Huyser, the deputy NATO commander, to Tehran to warn Iran's military leaders against a coup.¹⁰ Subsequently, when Dr Shapour Bakhtiar too seemed a lost cause, the US administration had no option but to endorse any group that would not be pro-Soviet. Assistant Secretary of State, Harold H. Saunders, testifying before a House International Relations sub-committee, seemed at pains not to align Washington with any single political group. He suggested that the administration would endorse almost any solution that was free of Soviet involvement and brought stability to Iran.¹¹ The recognition of the new government of Mehdi Bazargan was thus a foregone conclusion.

Once it became evident that the Shah had lost irrevocable ground, the United States, which master-minded the salvage operations in Iran 25 years ago, signalled that it was not prepared to do the same again. That was sensible, if not Scout's honour; a nation's self-interest is not served by sticking to a ruler who has become detested by his people.¹²

Anyway, the USA could not have repeated the 1953 performance even if it had the will to do so. Twenty-five years ago the USA was still a newcomer in Iran with a reasonably good image.

⁹Mansur, Abdul Karim, "The crisis in Iran: why the US ignored a quarter-century of warning", *Armed Forces Journal International*, January 1979, 31-3.

¹⁰*Newsweek*, 29 January 1979, 22.

¹¹"Exit the King: the Shah leaves but turmoil remains behind", *New York Times Weekly Review*, 21 January 1979.

¹²"Exile comes home", *Economist*, 270 (7062), 6 January 1979, 7.

In 1978, it was linked with the hated Shah. Then, the revolt against the Shah had not acquired the form of a mass movement based upon the concept of total unity against unlimited oppression. Also, economically, the Iranians were not at a great disadvantage, thanks to billions of dollars of oil money that had been pumped into Iranian economy, which acted as a cushion against hardship due to the disruption of Iranian economy. Moreover, the whole thing boiled over at such a fast pace and at such short notice that the USA had no time even to plan a counter-action. Consequently, it had no option but to ditch the Shah and the whole system in Iran that it had helped to build, strengthen and sustain for over twenty-five years. The Shah lost when his thin chance of survival was weighed against the basic national interests of the USA.

The Shah also tried to use the economic resources of Iran, especially its oil money, as one of the tools to acquire and ensure absolute power. Some scholars try to interpret it differently. According to them "in Iran political development has been deliberately sacrificed to economic growth."¹³ This argument not only presupposes that economic growth and political development are mutually contradictory and that one cannot be achieved without sacrificing the other. Political and social progress are organic links in the overall developmental process of any society and cannot be isolated from economic growth. The Iranian case is a good example of that maladjustment in society. Moreover, in the case of Iran and several other oil-producing states in the Third World, rapid economic growth, if the overspending of economic resources can be called economic growth, was due not because of indigenous efforts but was based upon oil money towards which they had contributed only marginally. Thus, it was, in a way, an artificial growth whose fragility became evident when the systemic infrastructure began to give way. Also, the argument that the Shah had sacrificed political development to economic growth presupposes that he was not sacrificing political development before the oil boom, which is historically wrong. His main objective was the quest for absolute power and he had used the economic potentials of Iran to achieve his goal. He failed.

¹³Bill, n. 4, 330.

As long as the oil money was flowing at a rate that it could be absorbed within the framework of a developing society it was, to some extent, beneficial. But the manifold increase in oil money, following the price rise of 1973, seriously affected the Iranian economy which, in an effort to force the oil billions within a limited exploitative capability, began to crack at the seams. These oil billions not only led to prestigious projects and unrestricted arms purchase but also to unabashed public and private corruption and a very high rate of inflation. While the one further discredited the ruling elite and eroded whatever legitimacy it had, the other added millions of disgruntled poor as well as fixed-income middle-class Iranians to the list of active opponents of the regime. The malaise introduced by the oil billions snowballed within a short span of four to five years and led to the collapse of Iranian economy and consequently the political system of that time.

More than \$100 billion flowed into Iran between 1974-78 but despite the oil riches Iranian economy faced a slow-down. The uncoordinated leap forward led to dislocation and backlash. The country's absorption capability was miscalculated. More than thirty-four per cent of Iran's Fifth Plan disbursement remained unspent because of lack of infrastructure. The new trend was to go slow and the Sixth Five-year Plan for 1978-83, which ought to have been finalized in 1977, was being drastically revised. Pumping of oil money had led to serious after-effects. Despite the claim that real income in Iran had increased by fifteen per cent per annum,¹⁴ its benefit was negated by other side-effects of the inflow of oil money. The rate of inflation in Iran had increased, according to conservative estimates, to 30-40 per cent per annum. Agriculture was showing a negative growth. Farming had become uneconomical because of inflated wage levels and relatively low prices of foodstuffs, with the result that fields and orchards were left untended and unharvested. The negative trend in agriculture led to an exodus from the rural areas to urban centres. The result was that not only did the rural sector suffer but also the influx of more people increased the unemployment problem in the already explosive urban centres. The partially

¹⁴ "When emperors lack clothes", *Economist*, 270 (7062), 6 January 1979, 7.

employed and unemployed masses, more susceptible to the call from religious leaders, swelled the ranks of anti-Shah demonstrators.

Iranian capital, which was always flowing out at a steady rate even before, began to gush out as more and more oil money began to flow in. The rate of flow increased in proportion to the deteriorating political situation in Iran and it was estimated that approximately three billion dollars were moving out of Iran every year. Of that almost two billion dollars were attributed to the Pahlavi dynasty. The Pahlavi Foundation was accused as the source of economic corruption. The flow of money added to the panic and reflected the loss of confidence of the ruling elite and its supporters.

The economic situation deteriorated rapidly in 1978 because of three other factors. The Shah, to win over the salaried class, granted a 25 per cent pay-rise for almost 900,000 civil servants. That put a heavy constraint on Iranian economy because the Shah had to find more money to pay these civil servants. The strike by oil workers by the end of October 1978 complicated the matter further because the oil production came down to 700,000 barrels per day, which was just sufficient for local consumption. The oil workers' strike was basically motivated by political reasons. They demanded an end to martial law, release of all political prisoners, and trial of all corrupt police and administrative officials. Troops guarded the oil plants and installations against sabotage but even the military government in November 1978 could not force the oil workers to increase oil production. There were also cases of sabotage to oil pipelines and senior oil executives were threatened. Some were even killed.¹⁵ By November 1978 the foreign oil experts working in Iran began to leave. The final push to the tottering economy was given by the strikes and passive resistance offered by government officials and bank employees. Taxes were not collected and money was not disbursed. Almost 1000 banks closed down. Some were even attacked and burnt by the extreme Islamic groups who considered "usury" as anti-Islamic. Thus the Shah who had predicted in 1974 that Iranian oil money would put Iran on par with Europe within a

¹⁵ "The Shah's oil arteries harden", *Economist*, 270 (7061), 30 December 1978, 31.

decade, was hard-pressed to counter the ill-effects of that power. The tool had bounced back.

Information media was another important tool used by the Iranian ruling elite to strengthen its hands, both within Iran and also to influence international public opinion. Not only was press, radio and TV controlled in Iran but sustained efforts were also made to influence international news media, especially in the USA. All through the last two decades the average American audience was captive of Iranian public relations. Undoubtedly there were some who were not bought but their voice was submerged in the chorus of organized propaganda. However in 1976-77 things began to get hot in Iran and also in the USA, especially because of the human rights movement. Concerned by the new trend in American public opinion towards Iran, the leadership there hired a major American organization to gather data on the attitude of prominent Americans towards the Shah and his government:

Numerous influential Americans formerly stationed in Iran as military advisers, diplomatic officers, intelligence leaders, and industrial contractors are today in charge of consulting firms, research institutes and business organisations, all plugged directly into Iran. Many of these figures visit the Shah personally whenever they are in Tehran, and some have better access to him than the official American diplomats stationed there.¹⁶

These people did try to project a pro-Shah image in the USA.

As long as things were relatively quiet in Iran, the Iranian government did succeed in hiding the truth, not from its own people, but foreigners. But as the situation in Iran began to deteriorate the foreign news media, following its own logic of news reporting, began to give more and more coverage to the opposition in Iran, thereby indirectly helping to propagate an anti-Shah image abroad and also helping to boost the morale of the anti-Shah forces in Iran itself. Thus the Shah lost even that carefully nurtured tool.

All these tools became ineffective when the Iranians, till then cowed by the coercive tactics of the regime, finally broke down

¹⁶Bill, n. 4, 337.

the psychological barrier of intimidation and rose in open defiance of the system. Several political groups were already present in Iran. They were either inactive or were working in isolation and, therefore, were ineffective. Most of them came out into the open. The last days of the Pahlavi dynasty witnessed the strengthening of the old liberal-democratic groups, the Islamic movement as well as the clandestine resistance groups. All these forces not only became individually more active but also formed a common front with a well-defined objective. Though these groups were following different lines, each of them was, to a limited extent, connected in one way or the other with the other. For example, the liberal-democratic group of Mehdi Bazargan was connected with the Islamic movement and also with the clandestine resistance group. These inter-connecting links also helped in strengthening the common front and served a useful purpose in projecting a unified front at the time of the final collapse of the Shah's regime. Moreover, the liberal democrats gave a much-needed respectability to the movement. It was no longer only a "left" or a "*mullah*" movement.

It is difficult to assess the relative strength and importance of these groups during the last days of the Pahlavi dynasty but it is important to define them not only because of the role they played in toppling the old system but also because of the role they would be called upon to play in shaping the new system in Iran. These forces drew their strength from five main sources: the middle class, the clergy, the workers, the students, both in Iran and also abroad, and the mass of poor Iranians who had migrated to the cities in search of crumbs that might fall to them from the big and tempting cake of oil money. Even these groups were not in isolation because the middle class included bureaucracy, professional class, small merchants and the *bazaris* and this influenced the volatile youth group, especially the students as well as the unemployed. The working class movement in Iran was not allowed to grow and yet the workers in the oil industry were instrumental in paralyzing the system by going on strike. Other workers, including the white-collar workers in banks and government offices, also dislocated the system by refusing to cooperate with it and by offering what can be called some form of passive resistance. The clergy, on their own, might not have been able to assert themselves but for the presence of large numbers of dis-

contented and unemployed or under-employed Iranians caught in the web of high inflation, and the political support and legitimacy given to the Islamic movement by the liberal-democratic forces and the *bazaris*. The clandestine organizations too would have been powerless to alter the system but for the mass discontent and the political atmosphere created by the Islamic movement and the liberal-democratic groups. Thus the effectiveness of these political groups and the political movement in Iran have to be judged not only in relation to their intrinsic strength but also in the total perspective of the national ethos of that time. It is possible that such a combination might not emerge again and, therefore, each of these groups might play a role different from what it played when all of them had combined to oppose the Shah.

Not everyone in Iran was opposed to the Shah. Top-ranking officers in the army, the police and the bureaucracy, the newly emerging business class and the entrepreneur, as well as top-level technocrats had a stake in the continuity of the system and, therefore, inevitably supported the regime. The old feudal class had lost its power and prestige and had ceased to play its traditional role. The peasant and the rural sector also did not play much of a role in the Iranian revolution. The drama was basically confined to the big and small cities where the middle class, along with the clergy, played a major role in organizing and directing the movement.

The Iranian middle class can be said to consist of low- and medium-level bureaucracy, teachers, technicians, professional class and small businessmen including the *bazaris*. Due to the rapid modernization of Iranian society the professional middle class more than doubled in size between 1956 to 1976, leaping from six per cent to thirteen per cent of the total employed population. When one adds the merchants and the businessmen to it, the percentage increases to twenty-five per cent, a high level for a developing society. Moreover, its influence should be seen in view of its concentration in the urban centres where politicization and, therefore, anti-Shah feelings were maximum. Not only was the middle class denied political participation but it also suffered due to economic hardship. The fixed-income group was crushed by the rising inflation, while lack of suitable employment for "educated" Iranians added to the growing discontent. An analysis

of the social background of several hundred active opponents of the regime apprehended, imprisoned or executed by the Iranian police between 1972 and 1976 indicated that well over ninety per cent were young men and women from the professional middle class.¹⁷ The atrocities committed on them further alienated the regime because it affected a large number of people in a closely-knit Iranian family ethos. It, therefore, added fuel to the fire. The Shah and his people not only looked down upon this group and called it pseudo-intellectuals, cynics and negative people, but also underestimated the power of the disgruntled middle class in a developing society.

The middle class was the main base of the liberal-democratic groups in Iran. Prominent among these groups were the Iran Nationalist Party of Dariush Farouhar, the Party of Shapour Bakhtiar, and the Society of Iranian Socialists of Dr Karim Sanjabi. These groups comprised the Union of National Front Forces, or the National Front as it was commonly called. It lost a bit of its strength and cohesion when Bakhtiar agreed to the Shah's request to form a government before the Shah's departure. Another very important liberal-democratic group was the Iran Liberation Movement led by Mehdi Bazargan. It was formed in 1961. Among the liberal-democratic groups it was closest to the Islamic movement and also had links with the *Mujahedeen*. Some of the members of these liberal-democratic groups also formed the Iranian Committee for the Defence of Liberty and Human Rights, which acted not only as a new pressure group against the Shah and a channel of communication with pro-nationalist elements outside Iran (especially in the USA) but also as a forum which helped to consolidate the operational unity of various political groups in Iran and thus helped to evolve the common front.

There was also another old group called the Pan-Iranist Party. It was led by Mohsen Pezeshkpour. It was a Nazi-type party with the slogan: blood, earth, race. It had irredentist claims over Bahrain, Tazikstan, Afghanistan as well as the Pushtu- and Baluchi-speaking areas. It was used as a pressure group by the Shah whenever he wanted to assert his claims over Bahrain. This group, though active, was not reported to have played an impor-

¹⁷ Ibid., 334.

tant role in the Iranian revolution.

Till the last few months, the liberal-democratic groups were more inclined to work within a framework that would retain the institution of constitutional monarchy but with in-built restraints on the absolute powers of the monarch. As late as November 1978, Dr Sanjabi was arguing for a return to the constitution and, by implication, to constitutional monarchy. Dr Sanjabi was also supported by some important Islamic leaders like Ayatollah Shariatmadari who, while supporting the constitution, was also demanding the formation of the council of the *ulema*, as provided for in the constitution, to review the laws from the angle of Islamic justice. Few of these leaders were against the institution of monarchy and, therefore, the continuation of the Pahlavi dynasty, though most of them would have preferred the Shah to go. The Shah, however, reacted too slowly to their demands and finally Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been preaching not only for the removal of the Shah but also for an end to the monarchical system in Iran, steamrolled his point of view which became the basis of the Iranian movement during the last two months of the Pahlavi dynasty.

The liberal-democratic groups used the human rights movement, especially in the USA, to gain a limited political support from the US administration, a limited freedom of action in Iran as well as a forum to air their political views abroad. Dr Sanjabi, a legal expert, at one time the Dean of the Law Faculty of Tehran University and one of the members of Dr Mossadeq's cabinet, was best suited to lead the human rights movement in Iran. He was an important member of the Human Rights Commission in Iran which was set up by the end of 1977. His standing, political as well as intellectual, in Iran and abroad projected him as one of the chief spokesmen of the Iranian opposition.

The Carter administration had, during the initial period, made the human rights issue one of the determinants of US foreign policy. Iranian opposition used it as a lever to compel the Shah to liberalize political atmosphere in Iran. Since the arms control lobby in the USA was also using the human rights question as one of the instruments to restrict the flow of arms to the Middle East, the Shah had no option but to respond by lifting the restrictions on fundamental rights in Iran and by giv-

ing concessions on the crucial question of trial by civil court as opposed to the military court. The Shah reportedly met William Butler of the Human Rights Commission of Jurists and tried to satisfy him about the steps being taken in Iran under the pressure of the human rights lobby. Certain judicial reforms were most probably due to the Shah's desire to satisfy that lobby. It permitted the liberal democrats to publicize their cause more openly. The Shah was thus caught in the web of the human rights programme. Even Dr Henry Kissinger, in an interview to *Dialogue*, accused President Carter of encouraging revolution in Iran by making human rights a *vocal* objective of US foreign policy. He insisted upon quiet diplomacy to achieve the same objective.¹⁸

Another important political group that also staked a claim to being anti-Shah was the *Tudeh* Party, as the Iranian Communist Party is known. Though treated as a major threat to monarchy in the 1940s and 1950s the *Tudeh* did not play a crucial role in the overthrow of the old regime. There were several reasons for the *Tudeh*'s inactivity. It had been suppressed so long by the Iranian security forces (banned in 1949) that it had ceased to be an effective force without Iran. Moreover, the Soviet-Iranian detente of 1962 indirectly hurt the party's image when the USSR began to openly support the Shah in his domestic policy, especially the White Revolution. It led to a split in the party and the more radical factions broke off. During these days of forced inactivity in Iran the *Tudeh* was not able to maintain an effective power base. The students began to be attracted towards more radical movements, whether to the right or to the left. The *Tudeh* did claim influence among the workers, especially the oil workers. Nourredin Kianouri, one of the leaders of the *Tudeh* Party, in an interview with Edward Behr of *Newsweek*, maintained that the old *Tudeh* members among the working class had once again become active and indirectly claimed that the workers in the oil field obeyed the *Tudeh* party members.¹⁹ It is, however, difficult to verify this claim. The *Tudeh* also delayed

¹⁸*International Herald Tribune*, 6 February 1979. *Dialogue* is the publication of Trilateral Commission, a non-partisan organization focusing attention on North America, Europe and Japan.

¹⁹"We must guard against a coup", *Newsweek*, 29 January 1979, 56.

joining the anti-Shah movement till very late, which also went against it. But once the revolution was on the point of achieving its objective, the *Tudeh* not only came out in support of its aims but Nourredin Kianouri went out of his way to assure the *Tudeh* support even for the Islamic movement led by Ayatollah Khomeini. He even supported his demand for an Islamic republic and said,

I believe that there are no overwhelming differences between scientific socialism on one hand and the social content of Islam on the other. On the contrary, they have much in common.²⁰

The *Tudeh* leader hoped that the party would be permitted to share power once the Shah was removed but as events have proved, the *Tudeh* was rejected both by Khomeini and Bazargan.

Another major component of the anti-Shah movement in Iran was the clandestine armed resistance movement. Growth of armed resistance to the regime is directly related to the political ethos in the country. Basically, terrorism is a symptom of the political malaise in a given society. There is no need for terrorism in a free society where it is neither needed nor glamourized and legitimized at the popular level. But in a non-participatory political system when the right to oppose or to dissent is equated with treason and the opposition is labelled as rebel and subjected to harsh coercive pressure tactics, the opposition goes underground. Terrorism is, therefore, their answer to total oppression. It also assumes the shape of a continuing protest as well as a means of political indoctrination. The continuity of the movement, therefore, becomes a psychological morale booster for the oppressed. Terrorist becomes hero and the act of terrorism itself is legitimized. The glamour attracts the young and the romantic to it. The drama of politics thus produces its own hero or villain, depending upon how one looks at it. Iran too was no exception to it.

There were two main resistance movements in Iran, the *Mujahedeen* and the *Fedayeen*. Both were not monolithic structures but were composed of factions based upon personal loyal-

²⁰Ibid.

ties and ideological orientations. The *Mujahedeen* was reportedly formed in the first half of 1960. Mehdi Bazargan was intimately connected with the movement from its inception. The movement supported the idea of the Islamic republic but emphasized the egalitarian elements in the Islamic doctrine. Its membership was estimated at about 30,000. During the revolution it remained loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini. It was reported that it had a more radical group which was demanding a People's Democratic Republic. This group was reported to have infiltrated the oil workers in Iran. The *Fedayeen* was from the beginning a left-wing movement and believed in Marxism-Leninism. It was formed in the late 1960s. It incorporated three main groups. One was close to the *Tudeh* party. The other was led by Bijan Jazani, an ex-*Tudeh* member who had turned more radical. The third group was formed by Ahmedzade and Pouyan and was believed to be the extreme radical wing believing in armed uprising. Both these leaders were subsequently killed in action. There was also another radical group, *Cherikh-e-Feday-e Khalq*. It was reported to have been trained by the radical Palestinian group, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). It was subsequently implicated in the attack on the American Embassy in Tehran.

The resistance movement thus reflected the wide spectrum of political groupings in Iran, ranging from extreme left to ultra right. The liberal democratic groups, except that of Bazargan, did not have links with the resistance groups, maybe because of the ideological constraints of the liberal-democratic movement itself. These resistance movements had their links with the Palestinian guerrilla organizations, especially the PLFP and *al-Fatah* (PLO). The PLO had closer ties with the Islamic groups, as was reflected by the close contacts between Yasser Arafat and Ayatollah Khomeini after the revolution. The Iranian resistance groups became active in the seventies, during which period, besides organizing bases in the mountainous terrain in the north near the Caspian Sea, they also organized an urban guerrilla movement in the big cities. They were also responsible for the assassination of the military prosecutor in 1971, after he had sentenced thirteen young Iranians to death. The same year an abortive attempt was made to kidnap the Shah's twin sister. The next year, the Deputy Chief of Police was assassinated. In

1973 the security allegedly unearthed a plot to kidnap the Shah, the Empress and the Crown Prince. Americans serving in Iran also became the target of this group. An American military adviser was killed in Tehran in June 1973. In May 1975 two US Air Force officers were assassinated. In August 1976, three employees of Rockwell International were killed in Tehran. Several of these resistance fighters were either killed in action or arrested, tried, and shot or imprisoned. This group played an important role during the last days of the Pahlavi dynasty, when their military training was useful to fight against the troops loyal to the Shah. The unity of purpose, however, failed to consolidate the resistance movement into a cohesive force capable of projecting itself as an independent variable in Iranian politics. The resistance movement disintegrated after the revolution and each group once again went back to its old linkage with the political group, thereby becoming the cutting edge of that group in its quest for power in the turmoil that followed the revolutionary upsurge.

The third and probably the most important component of the anti-Shah movement was the Islamic group. Activities of this group have to be studied not only from the political angle alone but also from the religious ethos, especially of the *Shii* religion as followed in Iran. Earlier, the westernized Iranians had looked down upon the religious movement as reactionary. But gradually that attitude underwent a change. Religion, because it was condemned by the Shah, became one of the uniting factors against the regime. To that extent it was politicized. Educated and westernized Iranians began to congregate in the mosque. Women took to the veil not necessarily because they wanted to but because *chador* had become a symbol of revolt and a sign of protest against the regime. The mosque became a rallying point for an anti-Shah movement and, *ipso facto*, the clergy its leaders.

In Iran the clergy had played a political role even in the past, especially as leaders of the mass revolt against what they claimed as unjust and un-Islamic action on the part of the government. Their secular role, therefore, complements their religious position which is very high and respectable in Iran. Leading *mujahids* are generally men of great learning, integrity and popularity. They are renowned for their high standard of personal honesty and for the simplicity of their living. They are popularly

chosen as the religious leaders and are trusted by the masses. People pass on them large sums of money as *zakat*, that is spent by these *mujathids* on public benefit. This is especially true about the higher ranks though the lesser leaders like the *mullahs* are sometimes corrupt.

The call of these *mujathids* awakes a ready response among the Iranians who are charged with emotions that surface on occasions like the mass mourning during the month of *Muharram*. The spirit of self-sacrifice and glorification of martyrdom can easily take a political turn, as seen by riots not only during the days of *Muharram* but also by the demonstrations in the 40-day cycle of public mourning following the shooting of people by the police. Each demonstration thus became the basis for yet another one. The general strike and demonstrations of 30 March 1978 followed the February riots in Tabriz. Again there were demonstrations in Yazd on 7 May. The riots in Iran on 9 May, following the mourning ceremony in a mosque, spread to other cities in Iran. Another symbol of Iranian glorification of martyrdom is tying around the head a white shroud that is used after the death of the person, thereby symbolizing the determination to do or die.

The *mujathids* had been opposing the Shah's policies like land reforms and the new rights to women, as well as his disregard of the constitutional norms. Their opposition continued to grow as time passed. Khomeini, who had always been active in politics, criticized the Shah for destroying the economy of the country, giving away Iran's natural resources, especially oil, to industrial powers, deliberate policy to undermine Iranian agriculture to provide a market for foreign goods, subjugating the Iranian armed forces to foreign leadership, for destroying freedom of press and information, and police brutalities. The Shah, instead of trying to reach an accommodation with some of these religious leaders, tried to insult them, humiliate them and to crush their resistance. They were harassed and imprisoned or exiled. The government tried to control the power of these Islamic leaders by trying to put its own people in places of authority at the holy places and religious endowments. The holy places, long considered as out of bounds, were invaded. One reason why Ayatollah Shariatmadari turned against the Shah's regime was that troops reportedly entered his home and killed

one of his followers before his eyes. Ayatollah Khomeini came under special attack. His father was reportedly killed by agents of the Shah's father. Also the SAVAK was implicated in the death of his elder son in 1977, though he was supposed to have died of a heart attack. He himself was exiled after the religious riots of 1963 and lived abroad for almost fifteen years till his triumphant return after the departure of the Shah. Ayatollah Taleghani is another popular political figure. He is known for his "radical" ideas. He too was imprisoned by the Shah. These religious leaders not only command great respect among the public but their word also carries weight with the thousands of *mullahs* throughout Iran who in a way form a cadre for the Islamic movement. The *Mujahedeen* also come under their influence. Thus the Islamic movement, with its spiritual authority and political linkages, posed a serious threat to the Shah.

During the last days of the Pahlavi dynasty these diverse political movements came together, sank their differences and formed a common front. The unity of purpose and the sense of direction provided by them, in turn, attracted the masses, whose force was no longer dissipated because of the internal bickerings of the component units of the common front. The common man hated the regime but was afraid. The mob psychology submerged his earlier fear of the guns and the tanks, and he challenged them. Thousands were killed and wounded. Finally the guns fell silent before the willingness of the multitude to die. The revolution had been achieved.

The Shah too contributed his bit to his final downfall. He had not only ignored the earlier signs of discontent but as the opposition grew stronger the coercive tactics too became more brutal, till a stage was reached when he felt that he could no longer control the situation by force alone. Then he began to talk of making compromises, haltingly at first, still believing that he could halt the downward slide and regain his lost power. He was playing for time. But even if he was sincere in his efforts, they contributed too little and were too late. His policy failures during 1978 too contributed a great deal to his final exit.

The Shah lost his initiative after 1977 and was reacting to the pressure generated by the opposition. The human rights lobby in Iran was able to criticize the Shah and his regime openly and get away with it. In early 1977, Ashgar Djavadi, a noted poet,

circulated a letter critical of the Shah. No official action was taken against that "offence." In May 1977, Dr Ibrahim Khajenouri, a noted historian, wrote an open letter that was highly critical of the official party, the Rastakhiz. In June 1977, six prominent Iranians, including Dr Karim Sanjabi, Dr Shapour Bakhtiar and Dr Dariush Farouhar, in a letter, accused the Shah of following a policy of despotism in the guise of monarchy, of creating inflationary conditions and shortage of food and housing, of squandering the country's oil resources etc. It demanded fundamental rights for Iranians, return of the exiles to Iran and a government based on free elections and a majority rule. Again, on 12 July, sixty-four lawyers called for the abolition of all extra-constitutional courts, including military tribunals. On 12 November, fifty-six prominent Iranians called for the abolition of the SAVAK. These liberal-democratic forces were formally organized on 7 December 1977 in the form of the Iranian Committee for the Defence of Liberty and Human Rights. It held its first press conference in Tehran on 12 January 1978. The same month, it sent an appeal to the UN Secretary-General, Dr Kurt Waldheim, and charged the Iranian government of violating Article 21 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On 11 December 1977 they also formed the Union of National Front Forces and demanded constitutional monarchy.

These political pressures were also accompanied by mass demonstrations. The February 1978 riots in Tabriz can be said to mark the beginning of an open public defiance of the government. The army had to be called to handle the situation which had gone beyond the control of the local police. The Tabriz demonstration, or riot, was followed by others in Yazd, Qom, Shiraz and Isfahan, culminating in the huge 9 May demonstration in Tehran. The situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the Shah had to cancel his proposed visit to Hungary and Bulgaria.

On 13 May, the Shah, in a news conference for the Iranian journalists, accepted part of the blame but also accused the National Front for the deteriorating law and order situation. He also pledged his word that he would continue his policy of liberalization. On 16 May, the Iranian Committee for the Defence of Human Rights warned the Shah against any further oppression of the people and said that it would only lead them more and

more towards general riot and revolt. The riots continued in July in Meshed, Qom and Isfahan. By August, almost all the cities of Iran were in the grip of the riot situation. Arson was common. Special targets were the cinema houses. Between 18-19 August picture houses were burnt in Meshed, Abadan, Shiraz and Rezaieh. Of these the burning of the Rex cinema house in Abadan was most tragic: 377 persons were reported to have died and 233 injured. Most of the audience was composed of women and children. The blame fell on the SAVAK and, therefore, upon the Shah. People began demanding his death. Riots continued unabated. Martial law had to be imposed in Isfahan following the ten-day riots. These developments also coincided with the holy month of *Ramadan*.

The Shah responded by an iron fist in a velvet glove. By mid-August the armed forces were put on the alert and Sharif Emami was asked to form a new government. The Shah also made a broadcast on 5 August in which he promised to grant freedom of the press and of opinion. He also promised that the elections scheduled to be held in June 1979 would be absolutely free. He, however, said that the monarchical system would not be tampered with. Earlier, the Shah had also made some concessions. On 6 June he had ordered the dismissal of General Nemattullah Nassiri, Chief of the SAVAK since 1965. He was replaced by General Nasser Moghadam, who had reportedly played an important role in introducing democratic reforms in the armed forces. General Nassiri was appointed ambassador to Pakistan but resigned shortly. On 6 July, the Deputy Head of the SAVAK, General Ali Mo'Tazed, was also relieved of his post and sent as ambassador to Syria. By October, about 34 top-level officials of the SAVAK had been removed. They were accused of deceiving the Shah and of exceeding their limits. The removal of these top-level officers must have undermined the operational capability as well as the morale of the SAVAK during those crucial days. The axe also fell on several civilians, top bureaucrats and even ministers who were charged with corruption. Even the royal family was prohibited by a decree on 26 September from entering into financial dealings with government agencies. The power of the royal family over the Pahlavi Foundation was also curtailed. These steps, however, failed to control the situation. The Shah, therefore, alerted the army and also changed the

cabinet. Jamshid Amouzegar had to go and the Shah appointed Sharif Emami as the new Prime Minister.

August was a crucial month. Religious feelings aroused during the month of *Ramadan* fed the riots. The situation was getting out of control. The Shah had to compromise. He promised to be more liberal, hoping thereby to placate the liberal-democratic and human rights groups. He also appointed Emami, hoping thereby to win over at least some of the Islamic movement leaders. It was also a gesture of his conciliatory policy. Sharif Emami, after a great deal of trouble, succeeded in gathering his twenty-two-member cabinet by 28 August. The Iranian Parliament approved the new cabinet on 16 September. The new cabinet included, among others, General Reza Azimi as Minister of War and General Abbas Qharabaghi as Minister of Interior. General Qharabaghi was till then the head of the Iranian gendarmerie. Even Emami was close to the Palace. He was Prime Minister during 1960-61 and President of the Senate in 1963. Before being appointed as the new prime minister, he was the President of the Pahlavi Foundation. Thus, in fact, he was the Shah's own man.

Sharif Emami tried to win over some of the leaders of the Islamic movement by offering certain concessions. The portfolio of the minister of state for women's affairs was abolished in the new cabinet while a new one was created for dealing with the *waqf* (religious endowment organization). The controversial imperial calendar introduced two years back was scrapped in favour of the traditional Islamic calendar which it had replaced much against the wishes of the clergy. The new government also banned the casinos and gambling houses. Emami also reiterated the Shah's promises about liberalizing the political situation, and said that all political parties would be allowed to operate freely in Iran. Consequently, it was reported on 29 August that fourteen parties had expressed their desire to operate openly.

The opposition, however, was sceptical of the offers of the new government. While Ayatollah Shariatmadari said that he and his supporters would give the new government three months to meet their demands, Ayatollah Khomeini denounced them as a plot to destroy the Islamic movement. He called upon the people to overthrow the regime. The liberal democrats, the Union of National Front Forces, issued a twelve-point pro-

gramme and demanded its implementation before it accepted the credibility of the new government. The programme included items like the dissolution of the SAVAK, release of all political prisoners, abolition of military courts, establishment of an independent judicial system and legalization of all political groups. The mass protest and riots continued unabated. The Emami government could neither satisfy the political opposition nor survive in the face of mass protests, demonstrations and riots, especially the Tehran riots of 5 November. Also, the Emami government had not been able to control the strike by the oil workers. The opposition too refused to form a coalition government. The result was that the Shah handed over the task of running the country to General Gholam Reza Azheri, the then Chief of Staff, who was appointed on 6 November as the head of the new military government.

The role of the military in Iran at that juncture could be divided into two main categories. In one case the military acted as an instrument of the regime to tide over a tight situation and, if need be, to form a caretaker government on behalf of the Head of State till a civilian government could take over. In another case, the military elite sought to control the civilian government either by offering its conditional support to it or by intervening militarily in certain situations and thereby trying to force the civilian government to follow a course determined by the military clique. The military government of General Azheri illustrated the first case while the role of the military clique after the departure of the Shah represented the second facet of military rule in Iran.

The worsening law and order situation in Iran and the refusal of the opposition to cooperate with the Shah tore the velvet covering off the mailed fist of the Iranian regime. The Shah had been using the army even earlier as an instrument of intimidation against the masses but now the army was given the task of forming a government and running the country. The Shah hoped that it would give him some tactical advantages. He hoped to regain relative stability by following a tough policy against the riots and mass demonstrations. The new government paraded tanks and APCs in the cities in a vain display of force. Eight-hour night curfew was imposed. General Gholam Oveisi, former Chief of Iranian Land Forces, was appointed as the new Labour

Minister to handle the striking oil workers and to force them to once again start oil production. General Oveisi had also played a key role in suppressing the riots of 1963 that were inspired by the Islamic group and was known for his tough policies. The new government also took a hard line on the liberal democrats. Several of their leaders were arrested, including Dr Karim Sanjabi, who had just then returned after meeting Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris. All educational places were closed. Radio and TV were controlled by the army. Important newspapers, including the *Kayhan International*, *Tehran Journal*, *Journal de Teheran* and *Ayandegan* were closed and their offices occupied by army men.

The Shah also took advantage of the new military government to do some spring cleaning. The new government arrested General Nematollah Nassiri, the ex-SAVAK chief, who was accused of ordering torture and illegal arrest. Amir Abbas Hoveyda, ex-prime minister, and five other former ministers were arrested, as also the former police chief and dozens of other top bureaucrats who were rounded up for trial. The Shah also set up two boards to investigate the property and holdings of the members of the royal family and to turn them over, if and when necessary, to charitable organizations. He also promised to clean up the Pahlavi Foundation that was associated with the corruption in royal circles. The Shah also sought this opportunity to once again come nearer to the masses to gain some credibility and thereby legitimacy. He said,

I commit myself to make up for past mistakes, to fight corruption and injustice and to form a national government to carry free elections. . . . Your revolutionary message has been heard. I am aware of everything you have given your lives for.²¹

The military government was the last ditch stand of the Shah. It failed to deliver the goods. Since it was working under the shadow of the Shah it could not be an alternative to the political system that had become the target of popular opposition. The

²¹Quoted in "Showdown for the Shah", *Newsweek*, 20 November 1978, 18.

anti-Shah forces rejected the military government just as they had rejected the Emami government earlier. The military government too could neither control the street and coerce the oil workers so as to increase oil production, nor could it obtain the cooperation or at least the neutrality of the opposition groups. The Shah was once again back to square one and was searching for a civilian leadership that might handle the situation for him. He first approached Dr Gholam Hossein Sadighi, an old-time opponent who had been imprisoned five times for his anti-Shah activities. Dr Sadighi was reported to have obtained the Shah's consent to several political concessions like political freedom, judicial reforms, reforms in the field of internal security (SAVAK), right to investigate charges of corruption by the ex-ruling elite, and the demand that no one who had served the Shah during the past twenty-five years (since the anti-Mossadeq *coup d'état*) would be included in the new government. But Dr Sadighi was unable to assemble a cabinet because of the opposition groups' stand of non-cooperation in any form with the Shah's regime. Dr Sadighi was accused of compromising with the Shah. Finally Dr Sadighi gave up and the Shah requested Dr Shapour Bakhtiar on 2 February to form the new civilian government. On 4 February the Iranian *Majlis* and the Senate went through the formality of naming Bakhtiar as the new premier.

The offer by the Shah to Dr Sadighi or Dr Bakhtiar to form a government was basically different in content than his earlier tactic of ruling the country through a military government. In some ways, it represented a basic change in his approach and also of the realization that the future of his dynasty depended solely upon the willing cooperation of at least a section of the forces opposed to his rule. He might have also believed that by offering a section of the liberal-democratic forces a chance to form a government he might be able to divide the opposition and weaken it. Such an eventuality might also permit him, after some time, to stage a comeback. Though Dr Bakhtiar accepted his offer against the wishes of his erstwhile colleagues in the National Front, he had hoped that he would be able to muster enough support to re-establish a civilian government within the framework of constitutional monarchy and also check the growing power of the Islamic group which he felt would pose an ulti-

mate challenge to secular and liberal-democratic forces in Iran. He also probably wanted to open a dialogue with the leaders of the Islamic movement, especially with Khomeini, and thereby avoid a civil war, i.e., an open armed confrontation between military forces loyal to the Shah and the opposition.

Bakhtiar's dilemma was that though he meant well, he lost his credibility as an opposition leader by appearing to become the Shah's man. He was rejected by the secular and liberal-democratic politicians who feared, probably rightly, that the Shah might use Bakhtiar to sabotage their movement. Ayatollah Khomeini rejected the Bakhtiar government as illegal, and called upon his supporters to further intensify their efforts to finally topple the Shah's regime. Bakhtiar was unable to coopt anyone who had any credibility with the opposition. Attempts were made to persuade General Fereidoun Jam to return and join the government as the Minister of War. General Jam had fallen out with the Shah seventeen years ago and had some credibility. But even he refused to oblige Bakhtiar. It was no longer a question of forming a "nationalist" government. At that time, any such attempt invited the charge of collaboration with the Shah and the hated monarchical regime. Thus Bakhtiar was left with no option but to rely upon the Shah's goodwill, the reluctant support of the USA and unpredictable pro-Shah elements in the armed forces. He was faced with a military group that he did not control and which was prepared to push him to the extreme in its fight against the anti-Shah forces. Bakhtiar, however, succeeded in side-tracking the hardliner, General Oveisi, and instead got General Abbas Gharabaghi as the new Chief of Staff. Even then his supporters were more of a liability than an asset.

Matters were further complicated when the Shah left Iran and went into voluntary exile. The Shah had, in his radio address on 7 January, told the audience that he was planning to go abroad for rest. After appointing Bakhtiar as the new prime minister the Shah did go for a short "holiday" to his country resort. Finally he left the country on 16 January after appointing a regency council as provided for in the constitution. Plans for a regency council were discussed as early as December 1978 when the internal developments were culminating into a crisis situation. The regency council was appointed on the eve of the Shah's departure. It was composed of eight members: the prime

minister, heads of the *Majlis* and the Senate, the chief justice and four members appointed by the Shah. It was headed by eighty-one-year-old Sayed Jala'eddin Tehrani. The formation of the regency council was a formality because none took it seriously. Even Bakhtiar was reported to have told the correspondent of the BBC that the regency council was no longer important since the real power was vested in the hands of his government. It was expected that the Shah's departure might strengthen Bakhtiar's hands. He could pretend that he was partly responsible for it. But the Iranians were remind of the events of 1953 when the Shah's departure had signalled the preparation of a military coup against the nationalists. Hence the Shah's departure, in fact, intensified the struggle between the pro-Shah armed forces and the opposition forces. That finally led to the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty in Iran. In that last phase of the struggle Bakhtiar played only a minor role, that of the "constitutional" spokesman of the old regime, a role another person would have avoided.

As the anti-Shah struggle intensified, Ayatollah Khomeini began to assume a more prominent role, even eclipsing those Iranian leaders, be they secular like Sanjabi and Bazargan or religious like Ayatollah Shariatmadari and Ayatollah Taleghani, who were till then directing the struggle from within the country. In some ways the international press helped to boost his position from that of one of the several opponents of the Shah to that of the main "leader" of the movement. Khomeini moved from Iraq to France on 6 October from where he began to operate more openly against the Shah. The French government did nothing to halt his anti-Shah activities. On the other hand, his small house in the suburb of Paris became a base of operations for the anti-Shah movement outside Iran. As the powers of the Shah waned Khomeini seemed to grow in stature. He had not found it prudent to visit Iran as long as the Shah was present but plans were set afoot for his return as soon as the Shah left Iran. The army leaders were opposed to his return and had arranged for a parade, as a show of strength, in Tehran a day before the arrival of Khomeini. He reached Tehran on 1 February 1979. Almost two million people were said to have joined to welcome him. All the arrangements for his arrival and reception were made by his supporters including the clergy and

some members of the armed forces, especially that of the Air Force, who also took him in a helicopter to the Behest Zahra cemetery. Khomeini said his prayers there and also made a short speech. The armed forces were absent all through.

Dr Bakhtiar had been seeking to negotiate with Ayatollah Khomeini even while he was in Paris. He had offered to form a government of national unity so as to avoid a civil war. Khomeini ignored the offer. Despite the snub and even the hostile attitude of Khomeini, Bakhtiar continued to show a low profile. He paid public respect to him and even said that he would send an important delegation to Paris to seek his guidance. The delegation was supposed to include persons like Sayed Jalaeddin Tehrani, the head of the regency council. Khomeini's spokesmen replied that it would serve no useful purpose unless Bakhtiar was first prepared to resign. Bakhtiar, however, continued to maintain that Khomeini was welcome back to Iran but that he would not give up his position to an Ayatollah. "A cardinal does not replace a Prime Minister."²² After Khomeini's return Bakhtiar offered to hold a referendum organized by the opposition but in an atmosphere of democracy. None was willing even to consider his offer because the opposition was on the point of winning without it. Khomeini had the street with him. His supporters had already organized a parallel government in several cities.

Bakhtiar never had real power. It rested with the armed forces loyal to the Shah. Whatever prestige he had as a nationalist was lost by his actions. He was seen "at best, as a Kerensky, a social democrat caught up in a revolution, or, at worst, as a post-imperial front-man."²³ Thus, when the final crash came on 11 February he had no option but to hide himself from the wrath of the revolutionaries.

Since Bakhtiar was a nominal head of the government and because the real powers rested with the armed forces, the main struggle was between the army and the opposition. The direct confrontation between them could be traced back to the riots in Tabriz in February 1978, when the army was called to restore order. Since then the army was increasingly used to suppress the

²²"Iran after the Shah", *Newsweek*, 29 January 1979, 17.

²³"The coming of an obdurate messiah", *Economist*, 270 (7066), 3 February 1979, 35.

demonstrations, often brutally, leaving thousands of dead and wounded, like the suppression of the demonstration in Tehran on 8 September (now known as Black Friday). Gradually the content of this confrontation began to change. It was no longer the armed forces versus the masses but the pro-Shah elements in the army and the forces allied to the opposition. This change had come about because of the split in the armed forces as was revealed in the fighting at the Doshan Tappeh airbase, Lavizan barracks and at the Niavaran Palace. During these fightings the units of the Imperial Guard, the *Javidan*, still loyal to the Shah, were confronted by the civilians, including the members belonging to the *Mujahedeen* and *Fedayeen* groups and the pro-Khomeini elements in the air force. The defeat of these troops loyal to the Shah meant the end of the old regime. The armed forces, which were built up by the Shah as the bulwark of his system, failed.

There were several reasons why the Iranian armed forces failed to uphold and protect the system. Primarily, the Iranian military proved to be an inadequate instrument against the mass movement. Military might be used to coerce the population, especially in big cities, but it cannot make the people support the regime. It cannot even prevent the surreptitious undermining of the system through passive resistance, strikes, sabotage, terrorism and finally civil rebellion. In Iran the army was brought to break up the anti-regime demonstrations but it could not produce oil or re-open schools, shops, banks or government offices. Moreover, the army, by siding with the Shah even lost the chance of playing a role as an independent political force capable of taking over the control of the situation through a military *coup d'etat*. By supporting the discredited and crumbling monarchical system it had lost its credibility and legitimacy as an independent variable. In fact, by using the armed forces as his instrument of coercion, the Shah sacrificed the army, which could have played an independent role, for a few months of respite.

Even though some members in the top leadership of the army might have wished to stage a *coup d'etat* they probably realized that they would not be able to carry even some of their junior officers and soldiers with them. Apart from their lack of credibility there were other reasons also that put serious constraints on

the armed forces' capability to launch a successful *coup d'etat* at that juncture. The Iranian armed forces lacked cohesion. The Shah, as the supreme commander of the armed forces, always retained the initiative in his hands. Not only were the three Services compartmentalized but even in each unit the top leadership was deliberately kept isolated from each other for fear of their coming together to launch an anti-Shah *coup d'etat*. Thus, the Iranian armed forces lacked the inter-Services and intra-organizational cooperation that can come only after long association and cooperation. Therefore, when the system began to crack, the top elite in the army was still willing to obey the Shah but did not have the capability to displace him. Moreover, even if some of them had a mind to stage a coup against the opposition they were restrained and probably rightly so. What more could they do to contain the opposition than what was already being done?

The Iranian armed forces were also suffering from two other major weaknesses. It was a conscript army and assuming that even one-third of the armed forces were composed of the conscripts, who probably reflected more sharply the growing discontent of the masses, it constituted a grave political risk. There were several reports of the soldiers turning their guns against the officers, and deserting or even joining the opposition forces. Their military training became available to the opposition. Thus the weapon of oppression itself began to develop cracks at the crucial moment.

Another source of political weakness in the Iranian armed forces was the result of its rapid expansion and modernization. The Iranian armed forces expanded from 161,000 in 1970 to 413,000 in 1978. The army doubled in strength to 285,000 but the air force increased to 100,000, an expansion of 600 per cent. This rapid expansion of the armed forces, especially of the air force, as well as the new stress on modernization, introduced in the armed forces young Iranians from the lower and middle classes who had acquired a relatively higher (technical) education and were more politicized. This group also began to act within the armed forces as an articulator of anti-Shah feelings and finally it supported the opposition against the pro-Shah forces. The role of these technicians and other officers, during the fighting between the pro-Shah *Javidan* and the air force troops at the Doshan Tappeh airbase, illustrated the point vividly.

Finally, the task of protecting the dynasty was specifically assigned to the Imperial Guard and the Rangers—elite forces that remained loyal to the Shah till the last. They were also the most favoured troops. Thus they became the final targets of attack and when they went down the monarchy itself was lost.

Chapter V

THE NEW REGIME: HOW REVOLUTIONARY?

When the Shah left, the statues of the Pahlavi kings were pulled down by the mobs, thereby signalling the end of the old system. But there was no indication of the emergence of a new order that would replace it. The Iranian revolution was not the work of a single well-knit movement that could smoothly slide into the place of the previous regime. The Iranian revolution was the result of a mass movement that was composed of divergent ideological forces which had come together for the specific purpose: the overthrow of the monarchy. The time-span was so short that the front could not absorb its constituent units, purge their contradictions and create a unified force. The result was that the various groups that had combined to oust the Shah began to contest for power amongst themselves after his overthrow. Each of them believed that it represented the public will and that it alone had the right to fashion the new system the way it thought the people wanted or even deserved. The period after the collapse of the old regime, therefore, witnessed the struggle for power between different foci of power in Iran. Efforts were indeed made to maintain, at least for a short time, the facade of revolutionary unity and therefore the struggle for power was covert. It was reflected in their efforts to control the instruments of power. Some of these instruments were often ornamental, like the cabinet and the government machinery. Others, like the Islamic Revolutionary Council, the revolutionary committees, the Islamic militia and the National Guard were real. Anyway, even the efforts to control the ornamental instruments of power illustrated

the nature of the power struggle in Iran at that time.

The composition of the new cabinet reflected the attempts by the various foci of power to try and parcel out to themselves the new cake. The new cabinet, to that extent, reflected the relative bargaining power of these groups that had combined to overthrow the old system. Even there, some who were extreme radical (left), were left out which signified the growing rift between the right and the left with the centre, at first turning more towards the right and afterwards regretting it. Ayatollah Khomeini *nominated* Mehdi Bazargan as the new Prime Minister on 4 February, even though the Bakhtiar government was not fully ousted from power. There is no reason to believe that Khomeini had consulted others, not even his Islamic colleagues, about that appointment which prompted Ayatollah Shariatmadari to comment that though Bazargan was acceptable to him as the new Prime Minister, he had reservations about the autocratic way he was named.¹ Khomeini also gave Bazargan his religious blessings by pronouncing that anyone who worked against him violated the sacred religious laws.² It took some time for Bazargan to gather his colleagues. The new cabinet was composed of Bazargan's old colleagues like Ahmed Sadr Haj-Sayed Javedi (Interior), old liberal democrats like Dr Karim Sanjabi (Foreign Affairs) and Dariush Farouhar (Labour and Social Affairs) and technocrats and civil servants known for their competence and integrity. Some of them were Ali Akbar Moinefar (Planning and Budget), Ali Ardelan (Finance), Mostafa Katiraii (Housing and Urban Development), Yousef Taheri Ghazvini (Road and Transportation) and Dr Karim Sami (Health). The person in the cabinet closest to Khomeini was Ibrahim Yazdi, Deputy Prime Minister and in charge of Revolutionary Affairs.

The real authority in Iran at that time was personified in Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been projected by the news media and also by mass appeal as the sole leader of Iran. He operated through a small group of his close confidantes who had served him in his exile. It included several religious leaders as well as other Iranians like Sadegh Ghotbzadeh and Ibrahim Yazdi, who became the head of the state radio and TV and the Deputy

¹*International Herald Tribune*, 7 February 1979.

²*Ibid.*, 6 February 1979.

Premier respectively. Khomeini was also supported by Mehdi Bazargan and the *Mujahedeen* as well as drew strength from mass appeal, as displayed in several pro-Khomeini demonstrations.

Ayatollah Khomeini's organizational support came from the Islamic Revolutionary Council, which had started operating even when he was in Paris and whose composition always remained secret. It was running a parallel government in Iran even after the Bazargan cabinet was fully installed. Its members authorized arrests, set up revolutionary courts, confirmed death sentences, organized security and arranged for the distribution of essential items. It worked through hundreds of revolutionary committees operating throughout Iran. In Tehran alone there was a network of fourteen such committees under the overall control of a *mullah*, Mohammad Reza Mahdavi-Kani. These committees were further divided into sub-committees, each dealing with items like security, intelligence, control of arms and ammunition, distribution of essential supplies and relief operations. Their arbitrary action so annoyed even Bazargan that he was reported to have said, "They oppose us, they are against our appointments. Our day has been turned into night."³

The most notorious aspect of Khomeini's new set-up which has attracted the widest condemnation, was the institution of the so-called Islamic courts. These courts combined two functions: judging the culprits on the basis of the Islamic legal code, based, among other things, on the *Sharia*, and more important than that, the functions of a "revolutionary court" sitting on judgment on the power elite belonging to the erstwhile regime. They were charged with torture, massacre of people, treason and corruption. The arrests were arbitrary and trials devoid of all norms of well-established judicial procedures. Mostly the trials were held in secret though some were also televised. The western news media was excluded from the proceedings. Often, the trials were summary and the punishment swift. More than 150 persons were reported to have been executed by these courts and hundreds were allegedly awaiting trial. These trials evoked protest not only from outside but also from within Iran. Several political groups were critical of the way they were being conducted. The pressure generated by them compelled Khomeini to call a halt to

³Ibid., 2 March 1979.

them before the March referendum but once the votes were counted the courts renewed their function with greater zest. Top-level officials of the SAVAK, armed forces, police and the bureaucracy fell a prey to these trials. Though there is no overt criticism of these trials in Iran, because the persons condemned were hated by all sections of the opposition, yet there are reports that more and more Iranians are looking at them as a symbol of political execution and vendetta rather than as a symbol of revolutionary justice. But Bazargan, one-time staunch supporter of human rights in Iran, and now the head of the new government, has condoned these executions.

Attempts were also made to fashion afresh the instruments to implement the will of the new power elite, especially when it was faced not only with opposition from political groups but also from resistance groups. Large numbers of arms, reportedly 300,000, missing from the army depots and police headquarters during the fighting and "lost" in Iran, also posed new problems. Since the instruments of the previous regime (the police, SAVAK and military) had been destroyed, the new power elite had to create a new structure that it could control and use for maintaining its security. The armed forces too needed to be reorganized and brought under the control of the new elite so as to use them as an instrument to safeguard the security of the new system from threat, both from outside Iran and from within the country. The movement for autonomy among the minorities was once again posing a threat to the integrity of Iran and to the absolute powers of the central authority. These centrifugal trends could be halted by political efforts and also by display and, if necessary, use of military power. General Mohammed Wali Qarani, a long-time critic of the Shah, who was imprisoned in 1958, was made the new Chief of Staff and entrusted with the task of patching up a new Iranian army. The armed force were indeed used, rather ineffectively, against the Kurds and the Turcomans and were even paraded in Tehran in a bid to display "power" by the new elite. General Qarani was unfortunately assassinated by a new radical group. The armed forces will take a long time before they can reach even the minimum level of their effectiveness under the previous regime.

The real instrument that the new power elite designed to ensure systemic security against internal opposition was a

new organization called the National Guard. It was created by the Khomeini group. The armed guard who had been maintaining security on behalf of the newly formed revolutionary committees were to be incorporated in this new organization. Members of the resistance groups were asked to surrender their weapons to the National Guards or be dealt with as counter-revolutionaries.⁴ The National Guard has an Islamic bias. It was initially headed by Ayatollah Lahoutie, who was replaced in mid-April by a younger man, Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani. He was to be assisted by a member of the Islamic Revolutionary Council. The government of Bazargan would have little control over the National Guard. Thus it will be a parallel institution totally controlled by the Khomeini group. What effect it would have upon strengthening the Islamic group and what role it might play during the forthcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly, remains to be seen.

The new power elite also began using the information media as an instrument of power. Radio and TV was brought under the control of the Islamic group and used to propagate Khomeini's programme of fundamentalist Islamic revolution. Its crusade so enraged the Iranian feminists that the car carrying Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, a new politician close to Khomeini and also the new Director of the Voice of the Revolution, was attacked by women who were opposed to the anti-feminist policies of the Islamic group. Press censorship too has been imposed in Iran. Some of the well-known foreign language papers like the *Kayhan International*, *Tehran Journal* and *Journal de Teheran* have practically ceased publication. Also, the newspaper editors have reportedly received calls from a newly appointed communication commission warning them to reflect "a proper Islamic emphasis" in their papers.⁵ Experience during the days of the previous regime has demonstrated that though these controls might mislead and confuse outsiders the Iranians themselves have evolved ways and means of interpreting the realities correctly. In fact, lack of "correct" news is almost equated with "bad" news and inevitably rumours start taking the place of authentic information, thereby doing even more harm to the system. Freedom of

⁴Ibid., 15 March 1979.

⁵*Time*, 26 January 1979, 14.

information is, therefore, likely to become a new focus for the anti-Khomeini movement in Iran.

As seen earlier the anti-Shah movement in Iran was composed of several groups with different ideological orientations that were often incompatible. It was their common programme of opposition to the Shah that had led to the working alliance. Once that aim was achieved those forces became competitors for power. These forces can be broadly divided, in the Iranian context, into two main currents: Islamic and secular. Both of them can be further divided into several categories like fundamentalists and modernists in the Islamic groups and liberal-democratic and leftist in the secular group. There are also other variables like members of the armed forces, students, workers and the advocates of the feminist movement that play the role of pressure groups for each of these different groups. The main dividing line, however, is the struggle for power between the forces of secularism and those of Islamic revivalism.

The Islamic world faced the challenges of the west in three ways: by advocating going back to the so-called purity of Islam (fundamentalism), by absorbing the good points of westernism, and by isolating religion from economic and political life (secularism). The last was due to the impact of the liberal-democratic ideas in the pre-World War II period, as also of the socialistic ideas of the post-war period. Each of these three trends had their advocates like Abdul Wahab in Arabia, Mohammed Abduh in Egypt and Kamal Ataturk in Turkey respectively. Thus it is necessary to differentiate between the terms Muslim and Islamic. Although Islam remains the main religion in this part of the world, all Muslims are not necessarily "Islamic." That term should be reserved exclusively for those groups that preach Islamic revivalism either on the basis of modernization or else reject all vestiges of modernization and westernization as un-Islamic and advocate that society should be refashioned on the principles that governed it during the days of the Prophet and the Caliphs. Of late there is a tendency to ignore the first group and to identify Islamic revivalism only with Islamic fundamentalism, which is not correct. Undoubtedly, Islamic fundamentalism is gaining new strength, especially in Saudi Arabia (*Wahbism*), Egypt (Muslim Brotherhood), Pakistan (*Jamait-e-Islami*), Indonesia (*Masjumi*) etc. The present fundamentalist

movement in Iran can be treated as a part of that upsurge.

Islamism, if such a word can be acceptable, has acquired the dimensions of a new ideology. Also, it is a potent political force and has been used successfully for political purposes. It was employed as a powerful weapon in the anti-imperialist struggle by Jamaluddin Afghani in the second half of the last century, when he tried to generate the force of pan-Islamism and tried to group the Muslim world under the leadership of the Ottoman Sultan who was also a Caliph. Even today, pan-Islamism evokes an emotional appeal that can unite the Muslims either on an individual basis or even at the level of governments. Islamism was also made a basis for national identity by Iqbal and Jinnah in the making of Pakistan. It was also used as an instrument against the corrupt political system in Egypt by the Muslim Brotherhood. In Iran too it had been an active force against the monarchy since the turn of the century. It became a rallying point for the anti-Shah protests, especially during the last twenty-five years. Though modernism has not been totally rejected by some Islamic leaders, the Islamic movement in Iran conforms more to the fundamentalist model. This came into conflict with the secular forces that too had evolved in Iran over a number of years.

The secular movement in Iran is more amorphous and has a broader spectrum than the Islamic movement, which is closely knit by the interaction of variables like the clergy, mosque and the Muslim population. Unlike India, where secularism has been elevated to the level of state policy, secularism has not evolved as a cohesive political force in Iran. It forms only one of the components of the socio-political ethos that is influenced by diverse forces like liberalism, democracy, socialism, Marxism, working-class movement, student movement, feminist movement, etc. The advocates of these movements see Islamic fundamentalism not only as a social challenge but also as a political threat. But since the forces of secularism are themselves divided because of their ideological and political orientations, they are unable to pose a united opposition to the Islamic revivalist movement in Iran. It is possible that the newly developing confrontation might temporarily bring these forces together. The "unity of purpose" would, however, depend upon the nature and the degree of challenge posed by the new movement.

The anti-Shah front started cracking the moment victory

seemed in sight. The liberal-democratic group feared that the Islamic group led by Ayatollah Khomeini might try to usurp power. Also, because of their liberal-democratic background they were ideologically opposed to the religious character of the new regime that might emerge under the unrestrained leadership of the Islamic group. They were also afraid that in the game of numbers the Khomeini group would clearly out-strip them because though the liberal democrats enjoyed popularity and even esteem of the politically conscious Iranian, they had created neither a clandestine political organization nor an armed resistance group of their own to fall back upon. Maybe both these institutions went against their political convictions at that time. Yet, despite the fact that they knew that they were weaker than the Islamic group, which was supported by Mehdi Bazargan and his group, they decided to raise their protest.

There were several points on which the liberal democrats differed strongly with the pro-Khomeini group, viz., the name Islamic Republic, power and functions of the Revolutionary Islamic Council, the Islamic committees and the revolutionary courts, the feminist movement etc. These points were also picked up by other groups in Iran. A new group called the National Democratic Front was reported to have been formed in the first week of March. One of its leaders was Hedayatollah Matine-Daftari, a grandson of Dr Mossadeq. The new group was announced during a million-strong rally commemorating the twelfth anniversary of Dr Mossadeq's death. The National Democratic Front demanded that instead of a referendum on the question of "Islamic Republic," the people should be asked to vote only on the question of the abolition of monarchy, and the character of the new republican government be determined by another referendum to be held after a thorough national debate on that question. The front also called for the creation of a revolutionary coordinating council to supervise the provisional government of Mehdi Bazargan and to focus on matters like the referendum and the subsequent formation of a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution for Iran. Thus it wanted to create an institution that might counter-balance the influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Council. The front also wanted the trials at the Islamic court to be held in the open.

The liberal democrats had lost a section of their group when

Bakhtiar, against their express wish, decided to become the prime minister. He was denounced by the Iranian "nationalists" though his action had helped not only in pre-empting a military *coup d'état* but also in expediting the exit of the Shah. That gap was temporarily filled by the support of the Bazargan group. Bazargan could be treated as one of the leaders of the liberal-democratic movement in Iran; after all he was leading the human rights movement in that country. He was, therefore, ideologically nearer to them than to the Khomeini group to which he was politically aligned. Initially, Bazargan did try to intervene on behalf of the liberal-democratic group and tried to put a check on the activities of the pro-Khomeini supporters. He did succeed to some extent before the March referendum but once Khomeini's programme obtained an overwhelming support as shown by the poll results, even Bazargan's pleadings lost their weight. The split between Bazargan and the liberal democrats became inevitable. The split became public when Dr Sanjabi resigned from the cabinet in April 1979.

Besides the liberal democrats, there were other groups also that were opposed to the Islamic movement. The *Tudeh* Party, with its communist ideological base, could not have found any common grounds with it. Undoubtedly the *Tudeh* did show its willingness to join the anti-Shah front, though a little late, but the Khomeini group showed no inclination to accept that offer. For the Islamic group, communism was equated with atheism and, therefore, was anathema. The ideological differences were, therefore, insurmountable. Moreover, the Islamic movement believed that the *Tudeh*, once allowed to operate freely, might soon become an organized force. Despite the SAVAK and the official ban, the *Tudeh* had survived in Iran for the past three decades. It had maintained its links, however loosely, with its wings among the students, workers and the resistance movement and could build up its strength rapidly. The supporters of the Islamic group, therefore, had no desire to add to the strength of their potential rivals. The *Tudeh* continued to remain a political outcast in Iran. Khomeini's stance has no more intimidated the *Tudeh* than the tactics of the Shah's regime. *Tudeh*, long suppressed in Iran, was prepared to continue the confrontation, if need be, at the level of "armed peoples struggle." When Nourreddin Kianouri, one of the leaders of the *Tudeh*, was asked by Edward

Behr of *Newsweek* if the *Tudeh* was preparing for a civil war, with an armed peoples' struggle, he replied:

A political party must always keep its options open. The national struggle, which resulted in the Shah's departure, may be carried to its logical conclusion, with an army at the service of republican Iran. But it is also possible that Iran's reactionary forces, with United States and Israeli imperialist support, could attempt to carry out a coup that would be much more brutal than has happened so far—on the scale of Chile or the massacre of Communists in Indonesia. We don't want that to happen, and we don't want a repetition of the 1953 repression in Iran. We must guard against it.⁶

The resistance movement, especially the *Fedayeen*, opposed the Khomeini group. The *Mujahedeen* were organized by Bazargan and were pledged to support Khomeini. The *Fedayeen*, on the other hand, were believed to have a left orientation. After the revolution, both made the Tehran University campus as their base. The campus was virtually divided into two camps and though there was tension between the two groups, it did not lead to an open clash. The *Fedayeen* was indirectly supported by the liberal democrats in the National Front who, in an open letter, asked that the *Fedayeen* be given a bigger role in the new regime.⁷ The plea was not heeded to by Bazargan and Khomeini, who saw it as a potential rival. The pro-Khomeini group also accused the *Fedayeen* group of attacking the radio and TV centre, the US Embassy and mosques where arms were stored. They were also accused of not surrendering their arms. Possibly some of the arms "lost" when the military bases were overrun by the anti-Shah groups, might have also fallen into the hands of the *Fedayeen*. Despite repeated appeals by Khomeini, not all these arms were returned. At one time he even said that failure to surrender these arms would be *haram* (anti-Islamic).⁸ These arms did pose a threat not only to the old resistance group, the *Mujahedeen*, but also to the National Guard that the pro-

⁶*Newsweek*, 29 January 1979, 56.

⁷*International Herald Tribune*, 21 February 1979.

⁸*Time*, 26 February 1979, 14.

Khomeini group was setting up. Attempts were made to patch up these differences, especially by the PLO chief, Yasser Arafat, during his Tehran visit but there is no reason to believe that these efforts bore any fruit. Thus the "left" resistance movement has also moved firmly into the anti-Khomeini camp.

There were also reports that the *Mujahedeen* who had earlier backed Khomeini were gradually getting disillusioned and had begun shifting to a more liberal stand. In April, when Ayatollah Taleghani was insulted by the pro-Khomeini group, the *Mujahedeen* joined with *Fedayeen* to protest against the ill-treatment meted out to him and his family. This shift may be the result of two factors. Firstly, the hard core of the *Mujahedeen* might be afraid of losing their power and status since the pro-Khomeini group had started building up the National Guard. Also, the *Mujahedeen* too had radical wings, *Mujahedeen Khalq* and *Mujahedeen Azadi*, which opposed the way Islamic policy was being misused by Khomeini. If the *Mujahedeen* too breaks off, the Khomeini group will be in serious trouble.

The workers,' students' and feminist movements are the imponderables of Iranian politics. In themselves, they are not powerful movements since they were not allowed to grow root in the country under the Shah. Therefore, they had no option but to join the political movements that were working against him. Yet they remained important pressure groups and recruiting groups for diverse political forces. They would continue to play that role even in future. It is also possible that post-revolution politics might give a new impetus to the growth of student and working-class movements and they might be infiltrated by various political groups and thus more actively politicized. During the period of the Shah's regime, though the students and the workers lent their support to the anti-Shah forces, they were not fully controlled by them. The fact that the Tehran University students were split between the *Fedayeen* and the *Mujahedeen* is well known. Also, the oil workers were most reluctant to increase oil production even against the express wishes of Khomeini. The workers of Iran, especially the highly trained workers in the oil industry, if roughly handled, have a capability to hurt the present government as badly as they hit the previous regime.

The feminist movement in Iran is also an interesting example of

a hastily organized anti-Islamic movement. The reaction against the imposition of Islamic norms on women not only became a basis for a new feminist movement in Iran but also a pretext for the anti-Khomeini forces to rally around a slogan. The feminist movement in Iran drew its support from the growing opposition to the newly introduced Islamic concepts that threatened to take away, in the name of fundamental Islam, their rights under the Family Protection Act of 1975. That law not only gave a wife a right to divorce but also protected her from arbitrary divorce and from polygamy. Iranian women also feared that they might lose in society the place that they had attained due to decades of modernization of the Iranian society. Among other things, the *hejab*, the Islamic norms of modest dress for women, became a hotly debated issue in Iran. The militant feminists objected to the *chador* as a new form of bondage under the new Islamic regime. Their protest movement, which got support from the secular forces, took the form of demonstrations in the second week of March. Noted feminists like Kate Millet from the USA and Claudine Moulard from France also participated in them. Thousands of women came in the western dress. They braved the bitter cold and snow to demonstrate for their rights. They ran into a mass of religious zealots who beat them and stabbed them and the pro-Khomeini armed guards fired in the air to scare them away. *Rusari ya tusari*, "wear a head wrap or get a head rap," has become the new slogan of the anti-feminist zealots of the Khomeini group. The feminist movement thus added thousands of Iranian women to the ranks of anti-Khomeini forces.

The realignment of forces and the protest movements in Iran also coincided with the national referendum which was held on 30 March. It was aimed at getting popular approval for the type of new regime to be established in Iran. The Khomeini group insisted that after the defeat of the monarchy Iran should have an "Islamic" republic. The secular group wanted the matter to be deferred till a thorough debate was held on that question. But the Khomeini group wanted to bank upon the then prevailing public mood to get its point approved by the masses. Khomeini was upset by the demands of the secularists. In a speech on 11 March at Qom he not only urged all Iranians to vote for an Islamic republic but also called those Iranians who

opposed the establishment of the Islamic Republic traitors. He added that those who wanted to add the word democratic to the Islamic Republic were under the influence of the west, and were either ignorant or traitors. He rejected democracy, which he equated with the west.⁹

The result of the referendum was announced on 4 April. Of the total of 20,288,021 votes cast, 20,147,055 votes were in favour of the Islamic Republic. The official announcement said that all the 140,966 negative votes were cast in Tehran.¹⁰ This means that there was one hundred per cent affirmative polling in all other parts of Iran. This raises serious doubts whether the referendum was really free and the results not manipulated. Newspaper reports mention that not only the "left" but also the non Persian minorities in Iran, especially the Kurds and the Turcomans, had given a call to boycott the referendum. There were disturbances in those areas on the eve of the referendum. There were also complaints that voters were being intimidated to vote in favour of the Islamic Republic by the presence of pro-Khomeini armed men, and by the fact that their ballots were being cast in public view. At one polling station, a Muslim leader was reported to have said that he had observed about 2000 people vote in three hours and that only two or three had voted against the Islamic Republic.¹¹

The overwhelming "yes" votes obtained in favour of an Islamic Republic have strengthened the hands of the Islamic group to incorporate the Islamic principles in the new constitution that is going to be framed. The next step would be an election for a constituent assembly which is scheduled to be held in May or June 1979. Though the constituent assembly has yet to be elected, the broad features of the proposed constitution have already been chalked out by the Islamic group. Under the new constitution Iran would have a presidential form of government. The cabinet will be responsible only to the President. The legislature (the *Majlis*) will be unicameral. The proposed constitution also includes the usual features like guarantees to minorities, right of free speech, freedom of the press, an inde-

⁹*Canberra Times*, 12 March 1979.

¹⁰*International Herald Tribune*, 5 April 1979.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 31 March-1 April 1979.

pendent judiciary, a multiparty system, etc. It would also include a religious council which would supervise the laws that might be passed by the legislature, to see that they do not violate the Islamic principles. In fact, the Islamic group had been insisting upon this provision even during the previous regime. This new body, the Council of Guardians, is to be composed of twelve members: four religious leaders, four prominent jurists and four Supreme Court judges. The decision is to be by a majority vote, except in religious matters when a unanimous vote by the clergy would have the power of a veto over the bill. In case of a dispute between the *Majlis* and the Council, the case would be referred for arbitration to religious leaders or even a leader of that time. If such a council is formed under the new constitution the Islamic group would have a stranglehold over the legislature. Thus with an executive not responsible to the legislature, the clergy having a veto over the legislature and the Islamic court looking after the judiciary, the Islamic group would have a total control over the Iranian political system.

The Khomeini group was also worried about the demonstration that was planned, before the referendum, by a section of its opponents. Khomeini not only blanketed them as "left" but also called them bandits and unlawful elements. He threatened that he would deal with them as he had dealt with the Shah.¹² The demonstration was organized despite the opposition of the Khomeini group. It was staged in Tehran on 23 February. Pro-Khomeini supporters attempted to disturb the rally but there were no clashes. Almost 50,000 persons participated in it. Though the number was not very impressive the rally included representatives of oil workers, farmers, factory employees, and the *Fedayeen* groups. The rally called for the creation of a Peoples Army, expulsion of foreign workers, nationalization of banks, industries and foreign capital.¹³ The rally pointed to a grim fact that the absolute control of the Islamic group over the life of the country would not be accepted by the opposition groups without a fight. It is possible that it would act as a catalyst that might bring all types of "secular" groups—liberal democrats, leftists, *Fedayeen*, and sections of students, workers

¹²Ibid., 20 February 1979.

¹³Ibid., 24-25 February 1979.

and even of the armed forces—into some form of a common front. No wonder the Khomeini group is feeling threatened with such an eventuality.

In his confrontation with the newly developing opposition Khomeini cannot even depend fully upon the Islamic group because there are sections that might not support him fully. Apart from the large sections of the *Sunni* minorities who would resent a *Shii* dominance, even the *Shii* hierarchy in Iran contains people who have looked with disfavour upon Khomeini's attempt to use religion as a tool to achieve absolute political dominance. One such person is Ayatollah Shariatmadari, a respected religious leader in his own right, who has often complained about the arbitrary way in which the Khomeini group has been steamrolling the so-called Islamic movement. Shariatmadari is known for his moderate views. It was reported that he had even formed his small party, which would be based in Qom,¹⁴ the base of operations of Khomeini. Shariatmadari was also attacked in an article that was allegedly written by Sheikh Sadegh Khalkhali, a close aide of Khomeini. Khalkhali has denied it. But the article, published in the last week of April, has widened the split in the ranks of Islamic leaders. It was reported that a new resistance group, *Mujahedeen Azadi*, has pledged its support to Shariatmadari.

Another important religious leader who has clashed with Khomeini is Ayatollah Taleghani. Even in the past, he had the reputation of being a "progressive" *mullah*. His son is reportedly a Marxist. Taleghani is not reported to be anti-communist. He has no objection to the communists operating openly in Iran. According to him, they could form parties as long as they did not receive orders from abroad.¹⁵ Thus, he had no objection to an indigenous left movement. His views, therefore, did not coincide with those of the pro-Khomeini group with the result that in April he was manhandled by "unidentified" Islamic militiamen. His two sons and one daughter-in-law were also beaten up and detained in Tehran. The result was that Taleghani closed his office in Tehran and went underground. The incident led to protests from the liberal-democratic group and also to pro-Taleghani demonstrations by students. The radical resistance

¹⁴"Imam or Caliph?" *Economist*, 270 (7070), 3 March 1979, 58.

¹⁵*International Herald Tribune*, 13 February 1979.

group, *Mujahedeen Khalq*, also supported Taleghani. Subsequently, it was reported that the top Islamic leaders met in Qom to resolve the crisis. Differences between Taleghani and Khomeini were sorted out, and the high-handedness of the pro-Khomeini group controlled. Taleghani once again joined the folds of the Islamic group. But it is anyone's guess as to how long this enforced detente would last. Any open split in the ranks of top Islamic leadership in Iran would ultimately recoil on Khomeini and thus indirectly strengthen the secular movement.

The total impact of the revolution on Iran's systemic structure was devastating. The Pahlavi dynasty, to ensure its autocratic power, had created a systemic infrastructure that had led to a process of integration of the various non-Persian minorities, initiated steps towards social modernization, brought about agricultural reforms, began a process of industrialization and also tried to strengthen the Iranian police, gendarmerie and the armed forces. The revolution has destroyed most of it. The process of restructuring the society has not yet started and in the meanwhile the centrifugal tendencies inherent in a multi-faceted society like Iran have already started to assert themselves. The case of non-Persian minorities in Iran illustrates the point vividly.

In Iran, the Persian heartland is surrounded by non-Persian minorities like the Arabs in Khuzistan, the Baluchis, the Turcomans, the Azerbaijanis and the Kurds. They are ethnically, linguistically and culturally different from the Persians. Most of them are also *Sunni*. The Pahlavi kings had subjugated them by force and by other means like demographic redistribution of population and economic, administrative and social incentives. They also tried to inculcate in them a sense of Iranian national consciousness. The process had not completed fully and, therefore, after the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty, these minorities started to reassert their identity and began demanding autonomy. Their main demands were recognition of their separate cultural identity which included the recognition of their language for educational purposes, a greater share in government revenue and a larger participation in the decision-making process. They also looked upon the new upsurge of *Shii* nationalism in Persia as a potential threat to their own nationalism, especially when the Islamic group led by Khomeini tried to install the Persians and the *Shii* clergy in places of importance in these areas after the

revolution. The clash between the new Persian nationalism and the urge for autonomy among the non-Persian minorities in Iran, thus, became inevitable, especially when the Pahlavi infrastructure that had held them back broke down completely. It led to revolts in several outlying areas, especially among the Kurds and the Turcomans.

The Kurds have always been a difficult minority to govern. The Iranian Kurds created problems for the government during the Second World War, when an Autonomous Republic of Kurdistan was formed under the leadership of Mullah Mustafa Barazani. The full thrust of the Kurdish movement was subsequently diverted towards Iraq, where a Kurdish war has been going on for almost two decades. Iran, trying to use it as a lever against Iraq, encouraged it, thereby creating a base for Kurdish nationalism in Iran as well. After the 1975 detente between Iraq and Iran, thousands of Kurds sought refuge in Iran, thereby swelling the number of Kurdish nationalists. Many of them were trained fighters. The overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the destruction of the coercive instruments of power in Iran encouraged the Kurds to demand autonomy for themselves in Iran, a demand they shared with other non-Persian minorities. The Kurdish Democratic Party, which is also operating against the Iraqi government, started to operate in Iran too and became a major component of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which is spearheading the autonomy movement in that area. Fighting started soon after the revolution when the Kurds raided police and gendarmerie posts and government offices and also attacked pro-Khomeini militia that was dispatched to quell the movement. The towns of Sanandaj and Naqadeh became the main centres of Kurdish resistance. The Iranian armed forces even used helicopter gunships to dislodge the Kurds but they held to their positions. Their demand for autonomy was accepted by the government before the March referendum but was subsequently rejected.

The Turcomans in the northern part of Iran also came into conflict with the new regime. This trouble in the north can be traced not so much to Turcoman nationalism *per se* but to the disputes between the Turcomans who had lived there and the Persians who moved there during the Pahlavi dynasty and who were offered a most favoured treatment by the regime. The new

Islamic regime also tried to strengthen the hands of the Persian population living there. Arms were handed over to them and the newly formed militia was also composed of the Persians. The tension that was being generated exploded in March in the armed conflict between the Turcomans and the Persians. Gonbad-e-Kavus became the centre of Turcoman resistance. The Iranian forces used the Scorpion light tanks, APCs as well as aircraft against the Turcomans. Hundreds of persons were killed in battle. An uneasy cease-fire was announced but there is no reason to believe that the mutual hatred that was accentuated by the recent fighting would subside. Turcomans, like the Kurds, had boycotted the March referendum and there is no sign that they would easily give up their demand for autonomy.

In Khuzistan, or Arabistan as the Arabs used to call that area, the demand for autonomy was a reflection of the impact of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism that was promoted by Iraq and which had become a part of Iraq-Iran rivalry. Undoubtedly, after the 1975 detente, Iraq stopped exploiting that question but the impressions of a decade-old propaganda campaign and also the clandestine institutional structure created during that period cannot be erased with the detente between the two governments. The Arabs of Khuzistan are not only conscious of their Arab heritage but are well aware of the fact that they also occupy the major oil-bearing area of Iran. The demand for autonomy in Khuzistan concentrates on better representation for the Arabs in the central government, more allocation of funds and encouragement to Arabic language and culture. A delegation of Arabs from Khuzistan met the Persian Premier, Mehdi Bazargan, and pressed its demands for autonomy within the context of a federal structure. As yet, the movement has not resorted to armed struggle but has confined itself to peaceful demonstrations. But if the central government decides to ignore their demand, it will not be wrong to predict a more violent action on the part of the Arabs.

The demand for autonomy, if fully acceded to, would *ipso facto* mean creating a federal structure in Iran. The proposed constitution does not provide for it. It would be interesting to watch whether the present regime would accept the autonomy demand and try to provide for it on an institutional basis or resist it and try to suppress the minorities by force. Bazargan did

promise to support the demand for Kurdish autonomy before the March referendum¹⁶ but withdrew it afterwards by saying that it threatened national unity.¹⁷ Khomeini also threatened those who demanded autonomy and said, "the hands of divisive agents will be cut off and buried."¹⁸ But threat alone would not work. The present regime does not have sufficient coercive force at its disposal to suppress the minorities if they launch full-scale insurgency operations. The police, the gendarmerie and the army have been badly wrecked. The newly formed Islamic militia and the National Guard do not have the capability of handling an anti-insurgency campaign. Even if the Islamic group does try to recreate a new army it cannot be sure that it would not turn against it. A failure to solve the minority problem peacefully would, therefore, further weaken the pro-Khomeini force.

The Iranian armed force, during the days of the Pahlavi dynasty, were designed to provide security in three fields. It was an instrument to project the state power against outsiders, both for defensive as well as for aggressive purposes. It was also used to subjugate the minorities and other centrifugal forces in Iran. And it was also expected to guarantee the systemic security of the regime. There is no reason to believe that it would not be asked to fulfil these three roles under the new regime also. But the Pahlavi dynasty was military conscious and had taken great care to create, strengthen and groom the armed forces. Reza Khan himself was an army officer and his son too took an active interest in the affairs of the armed force. The crown prince too was groomed towards that end. The new regime, however, came to power only after destroying the Iranian armed force. Its strength lies in an appeal to Islamic fundamentalism. It is indeed trying to create its own support base, like the Islamic militia and the National Guard. There is also an attempt to reorganize the armed force under its own leadership. But the Islamic group faces several constraints in reconstructing a really effective military machine.

It will have to start anew with the very basic task of first

¹⁶Ibid., 26 March 1979.

¹⁷Ibid., 5 April 1979.

¹⁸Ibid., 26 April 1979.

creating a superstructure of the Iranian armed force because the old one has been completely destroyed. More than a hundred field-grade officers of the old regime have been either executed or retired and about half of the senior officers have been otherwise purged. More than sixty per cent of the soldiers have reportedly deserted and efforts to bring them back have not been very successful. Those who remained would probably belong to either of the three factions: pro-Khomeini, pro-radical and, quite possibly, pro-Shah elements who would be biding for time. Undoubtedly, some elements in the armed forces opposed the Shah and joined with Khomeini to overthrow the old regime. But it would be wrong to assume that all of them would unquestionably support the leadership of the present Islamic group. The better educated and politicized amongst them, especially the technicians, the NCOs and even some junior officers, might well support the liberal democrats or even the radicals. Any attempt to weed them out would further erode the efficiency of the Iranian armed forces. Thus even if the Islamic group reorganizes the armed forces it does not necessarily mean that it would strengthen its hands. The result might well be quite the opposite. This is one reason why the new regime is trying to create other institutions like the National Guard which might act as its instrument of coercion as well as its shield.

The present regime has indeed started taking cautious steps to reorganize the armed forces, especially in view of the threat posed by the Iranian minorities. General Mohammed Wali Qarani, a close supporter of Khomeini, was appointed as the new Chief of Staff. But he could not do much without an officer corp which he had no power to create. Moreover, it was reported that he could not restrain the Islamic group from interfering in military matters. His strong-arm method against the Kurds was also criticized. Finally, he resigned. He was assassinated shortly afterwards. He was succeeded by General Nasser Farbod who is prepared to go along with the Islamic group. He is reported to have said that the new army would be formed on the basis of Islamic directives and principles¹⁹ to protect the people against the elements of the old regime. He also promised to

¹⁹Ibid., 18 April 1979.

equip it with the most powerful equipment.

The present regime has also tried to use the army to bolster its image like the old regime. It ordered the army to parade in the cities, before the March referendum, to demonstrate not only its strength but also its solidarity with the new system. Not only was the military parade a poor show but it probably had the same effect upon the Iranian people as similar parades held during the previous regime. The present regime is faced with a dilemma. If it creates a really effective military machine it cannot be sure that it would not turn against it. And, if it does not create an efficient army it cannot rely solely upon the National Guard and the Islamic militia to counter the possible threat from the minorities as well as its other political opponents in Iran. Either way, its present position remains precarious.

The systemic security of the present regime is also threatened by other groups like the workers and the students. The working class has begun to assert itself in Iran. Before the revolution they paralyzed the country and disrupted its economy by strikes. After the revolution, several unofficial workers' committees have begun to interfere in day-to-day work. But this is a minor irritation because there is as yet no organized working-class movement in Iran that could play a decisive role in influencing the policies of the new regime. It is possible that all the different political groups now competing for power in Iran might deem it useful to organize and politicize the working class for their own political gains. Moreover, the reconstruction of the new economic structure in Iran would depend, among other things, upon the willing cooperation of the working class. Would it cooperate? Especially, would the workers in the oil industry cooperate fully with the Islamic regime? The oil money is essential for the survival of the new regime. Producing adequate oil would mean strengthening the hands of the Khomeini group. Would the oil workers, the most politicized section of the Iranian working class, willingly do so or would they in return demand a larger share in political participation?

Another factor that would influence the working-class movement is the fear of unemployment. One might disagree with the economic policies of the previous regime but it did generate employment through industrialization and also through recruit-

ment in the armed forces. The disruption of the industries and the armed forces would add hundreds of thousands of young people to the list of unemployed. They would further radicalize the working-class movement. This movement would also be influenced by the growing number of educated unemployed: students who have degrees but no suitable jobs. Whether the Islamic movement, with its fundamentalist ideology, will be able to solve the employment problem and satisfy the working class remains to be seen.

Iranian Revolution and International Environment

The Iranian revolution caught the world unawares. Everyone knew about the mounting public discontent against the Shah but none believed that the regime would collapse within a few weeks. Hence neither the American nor the Soviet government had prepared the alternate plans. This was particularly true about the Carter administration which continued to support the Shah, the military and Dr Bakhtiar till the last moment. Undoubtedly the Americans stood to lose most by a change of the regime in Iran because they had groomed it to play a strategic political and economic role that dovetailed with the American policies and objectives in the region. Hence their last efforts to prop up the Shah's regime. But following the decisive events on 11 February, when the nationalists defeated the pro-Shah forces at the Doshan Tappeh airbase near Tehran, the USA suddenly switched the side. It immediately recognized the new regime of Bazargan and Khomeini, even before the Shah's Niavaran Palace and the Lavizan barracks of the *Javidan* guards were overrun. This sudden capitulation, in some ways, helped the USA in salvaging part of its stakes in Iran. The USSR had started supporting the anti-Shah movement a little earlier. But it did not lead to any fruitful dialogue between the USSR and the Khomeini group because of its anti-left bias.

The first reaction of the American experts, especially the Brzezinski group, was to blame the USSR for all the trouble. They tried to project it as a Soviet move to undermine the US influence in the area. The Soviet and Cuban presence in the Bab-al Mandeb region and the new radical regime in Afghanistan were produced as evidence of Soviet designs. As usual, they

were trying to explain the situation from a narrow military-strategic perspective while ignoring the internal dynamics of the developments there, a mistake often committed by some of these experts. The US reaction was, therefore, conditioned by that perspective. The USA fully supported the Shah's regime while it lasted, then switched on to an "open" support to the Saudi ruling elite, and simultaneously began displaying its military might. The number of US naval vessels in the area were almost doubled—an increase from five to nine. Soon after, a task-force composed of the aircraft carrier, the *Constellation*, escorted by a cruiser and a destroyer, was dispatched to the Indian Ocean area. Loud suggestions were also made to permanently station an Indian Ocean task-force, based probably at Diego Garcia. That policy was justified as follows:

The carrier force is intended to warn the Soviet Union against nourishing South Yemen in its new war with Yemen, the naval presence to help fill the gap in American contingency planning left by the transformation of Iran, from a well-armed ally standing between the oil-rich states of the Middle East and the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, into an Islamic Republic unfriendly to the United States and hostile to Israel.²⁰

The US government was also worried about the psychological impact of the events in Iran on other oil-producing countries in the Gulf. It thought that the inability of the USA to protect its protege against internal pressure might erode the confidence of the pro-American ruling elite there in the credibility of US support in case they too allowed the situation to deteriorate to the extent that their regime too might be threatened by events similar to Iran. Prominent US administrators, therefore, made public pronouncements to the effect that the USA would come to their rescue, if need be, by using its military power. James Schlesinger, the Secretary of Energy, said in a TV interview, "The United States must move in such a way that it protects those (oil) interests, even if that involves the use of military strength or of military presence." The sentiment was echoed, rather discreetly,

²⁰Middleton, Drew, "Showing the flag isn't what it used to be", *New York Times, Weekly Review*, 18 March 1979.

in another interview the same day by Harold Brown, the Secretary for Defence, who had recently returned from a Middle Eastern tour.²¹

It was presumed by the American decision-makers that Iran was *lost* to the USA. They turned their attention fully to their alternate ally in the region—Saudi Arabia. The Saudi rulers must have been shocked by the overthrow of the Shah by a mass movement which drew its inspiration, among other things, from Islamic fundamentalism. But the Saudis have been living with the threat of a coup for decades. Other monarchies in the Arab World have been overthrown, especially in Egypt and Iraq. Even in Saudi Arabia, there were abortive attempts to overthrow the government. Next door, in Oman, the Sultanate has been under constant threat from the radicals for over a decade. Thus the Saudis were quite used to the idea of a possible coup. Also, unlike the Shah, the Saudis were not afraid of a fundamentalist movement because they themselves led a sort of fundamentalist movement of their own. Moreover, the Iranian revolution, despite all its possible repercussions, must have come as a relief to the Saudis who saw the Shah as a potentially dangerous rival in the Gulf region. They must also be realizing that with the Shah gone, and oil production in Iran liable to be frozen well below the 1978 level, the Saudis would be playing a much more important role in oil diplomacy than even in the past. Thus the Saudi analysis of the Iranian developments must have differed radically from that of the Americans. This was reflected in the Saudi response to the American policy in the Middle East after the Iranian revolution. The relations between the USA and Saudi Arabia immediately after February 1979 should, therefore, be seen from that angle also.

There were certain areas where the USA and Saudi Arabia could cooperate, viz., in their anti-Soviet and anti-left policies. This was reflected in their joint approach to the dispute between the two Yemens. The USA openly offered its full diplomatic and military support to North Yemen and Saudi Arabia against the possible threat from South Yemen. The border conflict in the Asian littoral of the Bab al-Mandeb region as well as the Soviet and Cuban presence in South Yemen was used as a pretext to urgently

²¹“The fear about oil”, *Economist*, 270 (7070), 3 March 1979, 13.

dispatch arms and advisors to North Yemen. Twelve F-5 aircraft, fifty APCs, sixty-four M-60 tanks, some Vulcan AA guns, anti-tank weapons and 105 mm artillery pieces were reportedly airlifted directly from the USA to North Yemen. The American training team was supposed to consist of seventy members. Money for the military aid, approximately \$500 million, was provided by Saudi Arabia.

Some of the American decision-makers felt that they lost Iran because the USA failed to display sufficient military commitment towards the Shah when he was threatened. They did not want to take that chance in Saudi Arabia. Thus attempts were made to display the American military commitments to the Saudi regime. In January 1979, a squadron of the latest F-15 planes, consisting of twelve aircraft and the American crew, was sent on a five-day visit to Saudi Arabia. The USA offered to repeat the gesture in February also. Moreover, the fact that Saudi Arabia was the most dependable ally of the USA was proclaimed rather loudly. It was also suggested that the USA would depend upon it to fully support its policy about the enhanced oil production and also endorse its moves to bring about the Arab-Israel peace settlement, especially the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. The Saudis might have been willing to increase the oil production to offset part of the Iranian loss but, under the pressures that were being generated in the Arab World, it could not endorse the Egypt-Israel peace treaty as was being worked out at that time. The main reason for Saudi reluctance was that the Saudi rulers did not consider the USA as the ultimate guarantor of their continuity. Moreover, the overt US support to Saudi Arabia as well as the propaganda that Saudi Arabia was the closest ally of the USA in the region may prove, from the Saudi point of view, to be counter-productive. Nobody likes to be publicly proclaimed as a surrogate. Thus the period following the Iranian revolution witnessed a public cooling-off of relations between the USA and Saudi Arabia, which was taken by some Americans as a sign of further danger to the US interests in the Middle East. Israel was, therefore, projected as the ultimate guarantor of American interests in the region.

Saudi-American relations also caused a rift in the Saudi ruling circles. It was reported that Crown Prince Fahd and the Oil Minister, Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, who were considered

to be the closest to the USA, were losing their grip and that King Khaled, Defence Minister Prince Sultan, and the Commander of the National Guard, Prince Abdullah, who were reportedly pan-Arabists, were gaining more power. This might be one reason for the hardened Saudi attitude towards the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Though the Saudi stand was not as radical as that of some other Arab states, it was enough to cause some responsible American administrators to make threatening gestures towards Saudi Arabia. The Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, in a TV interview, said that the US stakes in Saudi Arabian oil were so important that it could justify a reversal of the post-Vietnam reluctance of the United States to become involved in military operations abroad.²² Senator Frank, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, was reported to have remarked that Saudi Arabian coolness towards the Middle East peace drive could cause the USA to reconsider the sale of F-15 jets to Saudi Arabia. He said that the special relationship between Saudi Arabia and the USA was a two-way street. He asked the Saudis not to sabotage the American peace efforts. What effect these blandishments would ultimately have upon Saudi policy remains to be seen.

Saudi Arabia is a part of the Arab World and the Saudi regime has not only to withstand the pressure from within the country but also pan-Arab pressure, especially on the Palestinian question. This led Saudi Arabia to take a posture that was contrary to that of the USA. Even in the past, it was the late King Faisal who threatened to use, and did use, oil as a political weapon against the supporters of Israel, including the USA. Iran did not have to work under that constraint. It not only refused to apply oil sanctions but even supplied oil to Israel. Iran could be much more openly pro-American than Saudi Arabia. Iran, under the Shah, was a member of the CENTO. It could permit the USA to install electronic surveillance facilities that were very significant for the USA in terms of its global strategic policy. It is reported that the loss of these bases now would seriously hamper the monitoring of Soviet rocket tests. Even the similar base facilities in Turkey would not replace the strategic bases lost in Iran. During the regime of the Shah, Iran acquired large

²²*International Herald Tribune*, 20 March 1979.

quantities of sophisticated military equipment that, in a way, fitted in the gaps in the US military presence in the area. The Orion anti-submarine and maritime reconnaissance aircraft, paid for by Iran, regularly patrolled the area which substantially reduced the task of similar aircraft operating from the base in Diego Garcia. Thus Iran contributed to the monitoring of Soviet activities in the Indian Ocean area. Iran also conducted joint military exercises with the USA and the CENTO members and thus, to some extent, legitimized the Western military presence in the area. It even operated openly with Britain in Oman to prevent the "radicals" from occupying the southern tip of the crucial oil lane through the Gulf. Saudi Arabia can never hope to fill these gaps and, therefore, can never replace Shah's Iran in the US scheme of things.

Changes in Iran also affected the world energy crisis. Iran was producing about 5.7 million barrels a day (mbd) of oil before the trouble started. Oil production virtually came to a standstill after October when the oil workers stopped cooperating with the regime of the Shah. Neither the military regime nor the government of Dr Bakhtiar could force the workers to produce more oil. With reluctance, and on an appeal from Ayatollah Khomeini, they accepted to produce about 700,000 barrels a day which was just enough for local consumption. By December, the Iranian oil exports stopped entirely and the Iranian crisis too began to take a serious turn which finally led to the end of the Shah's regime. The Iranian crisis led to a big gap in world oil production and consumption. Iran was exporting about 5 mbd. This shortfall could not be met immediately. It led to panic. But efforts were made to meet the shortage by increasing oil production in other fields. Saudi Arabian fields increased production by 1.7 mbd while others raised their production by 1.3 mbd. Yet there was a gap of 2 mbd which could not be met immediately. Mexico and China are potentially oil-rich states but their full exploitation would take time. Thus there were fears that the Iranian crisis would have a serious impact upon global energy resources. But this had only a short-term effect. The new regime in Iran promised to produce oil in sufficient quantity, approximately 4 mbd, which though well below the 1978 level, was enough to fill the gap of 2 mbd that could not be met other-

wise. By April 1979 Iranian oil production had risen to between 2.5 to 3 mbd. Of that, 700,000 barrels were for domestic consumption and 800,000 barrels went in to replenish the country's oil storage capacity (40 million barrels) that had depleted during the crisis. About 1.2 mbd was being exported. By the middle of 1979 Iran was able to export between 2 to 3 mbd without much difficulty which was sufficient to bridge the oil gap. Thus the world will not be exactly starved of oil, provided oil keeps its consumption in check.

The Iranian crisis was taken seriously in the USA though it was not directly affected to a great extent by it. It was importing only a negligible part of its total oil consumption from Iran, as compared to Japan which was importing between 16 to 20 per cent of its oil from Iran. Some American administrators, however, took a serious view of the new oil crisis. James Schlesinger, President Carter's chief energy expert, made a forecast that the loss of Iranian oil could prove more serious for the USA than even the Arab oil embargo of 1973-74. He also warned that the Americans would be paying fifty per cent more for petrol in three to four years' time, regardless of what happened in Iran. Despite the warnings in 1973, Americans were using more petrol and importing more oil than before and probably Schlesinger deliberately sounded an alarm note to shock the Americans to take the question of energy conservation more seriously. This statement, however, raised a controversy. Michael Blumenthal, the Secretary for Treasury, found his statement damaging to the American economy and the American dollar. On 12 February, President Carter tried to pour oil over troubled waters by saying that though there was no immediate danger, it would be better if Americans started thinking of conserving energy. The Americans were not only worried about the overall shortage of oil in the world market in the near future and its effect upon the USA but also about the price-rise that might result due to the oil policies of the OPEC states. They were worried about the new trend in these oil-producing countries which was more towards oil conservation than towards maximum oil production. One of the main reasons for this policy was that these countries had reached a saturation point as far as their capacity to absorb the petrodollars was concerned. The demand for reduced production was also accompanied with the threat to increase the oil price and

let the market economy play its role. These trends were there even before but the Iranian crisis had accelerated the pace as the October 1973 crisis had done five years earlier.

Undoubtedly the new regime in Iran is producing oil because it too needs the oil money for the stability of the regime. But there is no hope of production reaching the pre-1978 level. If the oil workers cooperate, production is expected to reach 4 mbd. The reduced oil production would *ipso facto* imply that the new regime would be forced to pursue a hawkish oil policy. Already it has plans to control all of its oil industries. Iran has announced that it would negotiate to buy out all foreign interests in the petro-chemical industry. This would affect several American and Japanese firms that own the petro-chemical complexes in Iran. Since Iran is going to produce less oil and would want all the money it can get, it is bound to support the demand for an increase in the price of oil. Thus Iran would continue to play the role of a radical in the OPEC, both in terms of higher prices and also decreased oil production which would complicate things for the west.

With the change of regime in Iran the USA was not only faced with an energy problem but it also lost most of its options in that country. Its bases have been closed. Iran is no longer a member of the CENTO. Even Pakistan has opted out of it, thereby creating a major gap in the US strategic perimeter around the USSR. It has also cancelled almost all the orders for arms that the Shah had placed with the west. Thousands of Americans who were working in Iran were forced to leave. Oil production has been cut down drastically and the question of recycling of petro-dollars would pose new problems. Yet, with the passage of time, the gloomy picture that was presented in February has changed slightly in favour of the USA. The venom with which Khomeini used to condemn America, is gradually losing its bitterness. The USA too is not dissatisfied with Dr Mehdi Bazargan as the Prime Minister and Dr Yazdi as the new Foreign Minister. The US experts have once again discovered the usefulness of the Islamic movement as a weapon against the USSR. Some Americans close to Carter began to praise Khomeini and Islamic revivalism. Andrew Young, the chief US delegate to the UN, praised Islam as a vibrant cultural force and said that

Khomeini would eventually be hailed as a saint.²³ Dr Brzezinski ordered a study on the potentials of fundamentalist Islam. Khomeini, therefore, can also become useful to the USA. The Islamic group in Iran, in its quest for power, is bitterly opposed to the so-called left movement both in Iran and outside it. The regime, therefore, would be more anti-left than even the Shah's new regime. The policies of the pro-Khomeini group and the US administration are, therefore, not antagonistic in some fields. Their response to the situation in Afghanistan is almost identical. In fact, the Islamic regimes in Iran and Pakistan are actively engaged in fomenting trouble against the leftist regime of Taraki in Afghanistan. Thousands of Afghan insurgents are being trained in bases in Pakistan and permitted to launch guerrilla attacks in Afghanistan. Also, Afghans in Iran are being mobilized by the pro-Khomeini group against the Taraki regime. It is also organizing anti-Taraki and anti-Soviet demonstrations in Iran.

The new regime, despite its anti-American posture, has no option but to fall back upon the west in general and the USA in particular for several reasons. Its educational, economic and military infrastructure has its roots in the west. It has no option but to go back to the west even to get things moving once again. Despite the bravado, the Iranians will need western help, both technological and personnel-wise, to put into gear their industry, especially the oil industry, and also their armed forces. In fact, the new Chief of Staff, General Qarani, indicated that hundreds of US military advisers would be asked to return so that Iran could once again start using even part of its military equipment. He admitted that Iran could not do without foreign advisers.²⁴

The drama that was staged at the US Embassy in Tehran also helped to melt the ice between the US government and the new Islamic regime in Iran.²⁵ On Valentine Day, a group of about 100 "leftists" attacked the US embassy in Tehran. According to *Time*, they were identified by the State Department experts as belonging to the radical wing, the

²³Ibid., 9 February 1979. The White House Press Secretary, Judy Powell, however, said that President Carter did not share Young's views.

²⁴Ibid., 21 February 1979.

²⁵For vivid details and first-hand reporting of the events see *Newsweek*, 26 February 1979, 14-9, and *Time*, 26 February 1979, 12-4.

Fedayeen Khalq. Only nineteen lightly armed marines held them off with nothing more than tear-gas shells for almost two hours, after which the armed Iranians entered the embassy. Ambassador Sullivan, with his staff, had retreated to his office on the second floor of the building. They had sufficient time not only to destroy sensitive confidential records but also to toast Valentine Day, unfortunately only with beer, which speaks either of their high-fighting morale or the assurance that they would not come to any serious harm. The attack ended when a band of pro-Khomeini Islamic militia came to the rescue. According to *Time*, it began random shooting in the direction of the US embassy "*apparently at the attackers.*" *Time* also added, "With all the shooting, it was impossible to tell exactly where the bullets were coming from or who was aiming at whom." Then several gunmen stopped firing and yelled to the others, "Stop! Orders from Khomeini." The firing stopped and the pro-Khomeini militia was able to reach the US embassy personnel and escort them out through a mob which, though unarmed, appeared to be more hostile towards the Americans than the armed leftist group that had captured the Americans. Several US embassy personnel were manhandled by the mob and they could be rescued only when the Islamic militia threatened to shoot at the mob. The whole operation, if it was indeed launched by the radical left group, seemed to be purposeless. Though heavily armed and in large numbers, they took almost two hours to rush through the tear-gas shell barrage. After entering the building they took all the precautions not to kill the top US personnel or even to hold them as hostages. Once the Islamic militiamen arrived they meekly surrendered and proved to be even less hostile than the unarmed mob outside the building. The whole episode smacked of a comic opera staged for the benefit, if not amusement, of someone.

Events in Tehran were contrasted by the Americans to similar events in Kabul. Almost at the same time, the American ambassador to Afghanistan was abducted by a small fanatic Islamic group. In the process of the rescue operation the American ambassador was killed. Whether he was killed by the Islamic gunmen or was accidentally shot during the rescue operations, is not fully ascertained. But the episode further worsened US-Afghan and US-USSR relations because the

American government blamed the Afghan government and the Soviet advisers, who were conducting the operations. It is interesting that while in Tehran the "leftists" attacked the ambassador, the Islamic group tried to save him, while in Kabul it was the Islamic group that abducted the ambassador and the leftist regime of Taraki that tried to save him. The Islamic group succeeded in both places but with drastic consequences in Kabul. The events in Tehran were used to highlight the good work done by the pro-Khomeini Islamic group in Tehran. It was reported by *Time* that when they took over from the "leftists" they assured the Americans, "You are our brothers, don't worry." This must be one of the rare examples of a sudden change of heart. The Iranian Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, also told Elaine Sciolino of *Newsweek* that he was very sorry about the attack on the embassy and added, "We have had friendly relations with the United States and would like to keep friendly relations with the United States and all other States around the globe." Anyway, the rescue operations launched by the pro-Khomeini group as well as the attitude of the Iranian government helped a great deal in improving Khomeini's image among the Americans, and the Islamic group, which was almost *persona non grata*, became gradually acceptable. To that extent, the "left," if it had really sanctioned the attack, was instrumental in bringing the USA and the Islamic group together.

Another index of growing American confidence in the Islamic group is the ease with which it was reconciled to the future safety and secrecy of its very sophisticated military equipment in Iran. The Americans were operating very sensitive electronic equipment at two surveillance bases in northern Iran. Both of them were closed down after the fall of the Shah. It was also reported that some equipment in one base had to be destroyed before it was occupied by the anti-Shah forces. Iranians were also operating modern aircraft like F-14 armed with the Phoenix missile, Orion anti-submarine and maritime reconnaissance aircraft, Harpoon missiles etc. There were also reports that besides the weapons the public knew about, the USA had sold to Iran about \$700 million worth of military equipment between 1975 and 1977 that was so sensitive that the Pentagon ~~would not~~

even identify it.²⁶ The US officials were worried lest some of these sensitive equipments fall into the hands of the enemies. It was even reported that some secret manuals used for servicing of the F-14 and the Phoenix missile might have fallen into wrong hands during the fighting at Doshan Tappeh airbase near Tehran in February 1979.

Despite the sensitiveness of the question the US officials were not unduly worried about the future of this equipment in Iran. It is possible that some of the top secret electronic guidance systems and other "black boxes" might have been removed well in advance. But the Islamic group was trusted to keep the US secrets and the offer of President Sadat during the first week of February that the Americans could remove their equipment to Egypt, was not taken seriously. The US officials instead voiced public confidence that the new regime would safeguard their secrets. The new regime cannot use these weapons effectively without once again permitting large numbers of foreign experts to return to Iran. It would be most reluctant to do so. Instead it offered, in March 1979, to sell this equipment back to America, a policy which America has approved, thereby further cementing the new understanding.

The new Islamic regime in Iran would have to overcome serious constraints if it seeks to develop close contacts with the Muslim countries. Some of these factors would be its belief in extreme form of Islamic fundamentalism, earlier pro-Shah policies of some of these states, secular and socialist beliefs of the others, etc. At the moment, the Islamic regime of Iran seems to be close to the ruling group in Pakistan, which is seeking to combine a strange mixture of militarism and militant Islamic fundamentalism. Supporting anti-Taraki elements among the Afghans also seems to be another binding link between the two regimes. As yet, there is no sign that these two neighbouring states, professing Islamic fundamentalism, have evolved a common policy *vis-a-vis* India. Under the previous regime, even during the height of the "encirclement" period of 1971-74, the Iranian regime had stopped short of *fully* supporting the Pakistani regime against India and the Shah was keen not to commit Iran irrevocably on the side of Pakistan in its adven-

²⁶*Newsweek*, 26 February 1979, 21.

turous policy towards India. India, despite its commitment to the principles of secularism, socialism and democracy, welcomed the changes in Iran because at that time they seemed to reflect public opinion. The Indian government was also keen to maintain normal relations with the new regime in Iran and a delegation was sent to that effect. But if the Islamic group in Iran succumbs to a narrow and short-term policy of supporting the Islamic government in Pakistan and thereby pursues a policy that might harm India's national interests, the Indian policy towards the Gulf would have to be reoriented and India might be forced to search for options.

Iran's relations with the Arab World would be conditioned by several factors like the attitude of Arab regimes towards the Shah, the role of the *Shii* population, the Palestine question, Islamic fundamentalism, questions of socialism and "left" orientation etc. In short, the Arab policy of the present regime in Iran would be conditioned, to a large extent, by its domestic policies. The Islamic group in Iran would, at least for some time, be very vocal in supporting the Palestinian cause. In return for the support given by the Palestinians, especially by the PLO, during the anti-Shah struggle, the Iranian regime has gone out of its way to please the Palestinians. Yasser Arafat visited Iran and even tried to mediate between the *Fedayeen* and the *Mujahedeen*. The new regime has ousted the Israeli consulate from its office in Tehran and the place has been handed over to the PLO for its office. Iran even broke off diplomatic relations with Egypt after it had signed the peace treaty with Israel. Another reason for its anti-Egypt and also anti-Morocco stance was that President Sadat and King Hasan had offered shelter to the Shah during his exile. King Hussein of Jordan, who was also close to the Shah, had offered to mediate between the Shah and the opposition. He spent three days in December 1978 in Tehran and was willing to go to Paris to meet Ayatollah Khomeini but the offer was not accepted. His position is, to some extent, better because of his Palestinian stand. Some Arab leaders like Qadafi of Libya were also alleged to be close to the anti-Shah movements, including the one led by Khomeini. But there is not much news of close contact between Qadafi and Khomeini now. It is possible that Qadafi's concept of Islamic fundamentalism does not tally with that of the Khomeini

group. It is also possible that Qadafi's popularity and "revolutionary" image among the Iranian youth, which was treated as a dangerous challenge by the Shah, is treated similarly by the Khomeini group as well. Moreover, Qadafi's friendly ties with the USSR might not be appreciated in Tehran now.

The new Islamic group in Tehran has not been able to generate a spontaneous favourable response in the neighbouring regimes in the Persian Gulf area. It should not be forgotten that though Arab-Iranian relations were not based on absolute friendship, almost all the Arab regimes, including that in Baghdad, had evolved some sort of detente and a working arrangement with the Shah's regime. The Iranian revolution disturbed the status quo and posed a new set of challenges to the different types of regimes in the Arab littoral of the Gulf. Absolute monarchies like in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE were afraid not only of the possibility of a mass upsurge growing out of control but also of the successful use of religious fanaticism as a political instrument for destabilizing the existing regime. This is especially true about a country like Saudi Arabia, where the regime depends for its legitimacy, among other things, upon its claims to represent a sort of fundamentalist approach—Wahabism. If the rulers of Saudi Arabia impose it strictly they antagonize the newly emerging educated class and if they do not they are open to the charges of deviating from their article of faith—Wahabism. Also, most of these oil-rich states had developed a rapport and a working alliance with the Shah's regime, especially regarding the threat from internal subversion as was reflected in their tacit support in containing the insurgency movement in Oman. Even Iraq, Iran's enemy for over a decade, had buried the hatchet and signed a detente with Iran in 1975. One of the results of that detente was that Ayatollah Khomeini, who was conducting an active anti-Shah campaign from the *Shii* holy places in Iraq had to leave and make Paris his new headquarters. With a large *Shii* population concentrated in southern Iraq near the Iranian border, and possibly attracted towards Khomeini, the Iraqi government might see the newly emerging Islamic group in Iran as a source of potential threat to the *Baath* socialist regime in Baghdad. The Iranian regime might also start visualizing Iraq as a place of refuge for its "left" group and it is possible that the Iraq-Iran detente brought about by the

Shah might be seriously jeopardized.

Does this mean that the policies pursued by the militant Islamic group controlling Iran today might ultimately not only isolate Iran in the Gulf but also once again initiate a new spiral of conflictual relationships that might resuscitate old problems like the Bahrain question, the question of Khuzistan, and that of the three islands in the Gulf that were occupied by force by the Shah in 1971, the *Shii-Sunni* conflict, the question of the Iranian population in the Arab littoral, the unresolved problem of the delimitation of the continental shelf in the northern part of the Gulf, and above all the controversy over the name Persian or Arab Gulf? It is quite possible that the Islamic group in Iran, to maintain itself in power and to suppress its opponents who might hope to gain support from some Arab quarters, might well play upon a xenophobic theme and even promote the Arab-Iranian confrontation. With the Arab-Israeli confrontation taking a more definitive shape, with the USA firmly committed to Israel, the prospects of an Arab-Iranian confrontation would only help to destabilize the area still further. This would have its repercussions, among other things, upon the vital oil question.

The Iranian revolution has radically altered the systemic structure in the country. Not only was the old system destroyed but a new set of variables have been introduced that would have a different perspective towards the entire spectrum of threat to Iranian security. The Shah's regime, before it was really threatened, was looking at the question of systemic security from three angles: the security of the regime, the security of national integrity from the centrifugal forces within the country, and finally the challenges from abroad. The new regime, at least for some time, would probably concentrate more on the first two angles and the third would only be incidental to these two. As events of the past three months had shown, the pro-Khomeini group that was in power was not firmly in the saddle and would be deeply concerned about the political threat from its opponents. The demand for autonomy raised by non-Persian minorities too would have to be taken into account in the light of the challenges it posed to national integrity as well as to the regime's stability because of its anti-*Shii* attitude in some places and also because the challenge it posed to the pro-Khomeini group in power in Tehran. There did not seem a real foreign military

threat and, therefore, whatever threat that might be perceived in that field would be linked to the challenges from these two above-mentioned perimeters.

The Islamic group ruling in Iran had to face the challenges from several quarters. Undoubtedly the old regime of the Shah had disintegrated but that is no reason why those who benefited from it have all been liquidated or have lost all hopes of recovering at least part of their power and prestige. It would not be difficult, therefore, to find these elements in the bureaucracy, army and business elite. Undoubtedly these groups cannot operate openly in the name of the Shah but they can work covertly either as clandestine groups or under the cover and patronage of other acceptable political groups that have emerged into prominence, like the old liberal-democratic forces and the wide spectrum of movements not only of the left but also of the Islamic groups. The mode of operations of some of these groups was overt but more and more of them were going underground because they probably felt that the political atmosphere was not yet conducive to open political participation.

Whether Iran would have an open political system or not depends upon the degree of freedom that might be permitted to the opposition. Not only was the new ruling group showing signs of authoritarian tendencies, especially through the operations of the Islamic Council, the peoples' courts, Islamic militia and the National Guard, but even the proposed constitution was hedged with several clauses that could be interpreted by the ruling elite to deny the opposition an open political forum to compete for power. For example, the proposed constitution guaranteed several fundamental rights but several constraints were imposed upon their use. Iranians were legally free to form political parties provided they did not violate the principles of Islamic Republic. Men and women were given rights but only within the framework of Islamic religious law. Press was free except where it violated Islamic morals. Also "subversive" literature was outlawed. The *Tudeh* Party would not be allowed to operate in Iran. Mehdi Bazargan, in one interview said, "*Tudeh* is illegal according to the existing law, and we will obey that law."²⁷ The pro-Khomeini group was

²⁷*Ibid.*, 22.

reportedly fielding a new political party called the Islamic Republican Party. This party would fight elections for the new Constituent Assembly (the *Majlis*), and also for the post of the President. If the March referendum on the question of the Islamic Republic was any criteria for judging "free" elections then this party would hope to win the elections with a thumping majority. Thus the pro-Khomeini group would have legitimized and institutionalized its rule through the constitutional process. But would it be acceptable to the opposition?

Some Iranians had already started complaining about the new type of terror and absolute power that was being imposed by the pro-Khomeini group, through its instruments like the revolutionary courts, Islamic militia, etc. Even the Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, had complained loudly about the erosion of his power but, unlike his other liberal-democratic colleagues like Dr Sanjabi, had not given up cooperating with the Khomeini group. Thus, despite his overt opposition to the pro-Khomeini Islamic group he was becoming their willing tool. To that extent his position was, in some ways, identical to that of another liberal democrat, Dr Bakhtiar. Ayatollah Khomeini was personifying political power in Iran. He was emerging as the sole leader. Whether he chooses or does not choose to become the new President, like Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus, he would continue to be the leader as long as he survived or the present regime lasted. His quest for supreme power had not been appreciated not only by the secular forces but also by a strong section of the Islamic leaders also. Some even looked at it as a violation of the principles of Islamic fundamentalism. Khomeini was aware of the new threat and had reportedly warned his supporters that he or his family members might be assassinated. One of his close supporters, Ayatollah Morteza Motaheri, was recently assassinated by a new group of Islamic extremists. Khomeini and his supporters had, therefore, every reason to take adequate precautions against the opposition.

The opposition to the ruling group was split into fragments. Not even the major groups like the liberal democrats, the left, the resistance, or pressure groups like the labour, student and army were united as independent political units. Even the anti-Khomeini movement within the Islamic group was not united. Under those circumstances, even a small but determined group,

if it was stronger than any other political group, could impose its will upon all other political groups since none could individually compete with it. That was also the case during the old regime. But once these small and fragmented groups, even without sinking their basic differences, would unite under a common programme of action, they would create a mighty torrent that might sweep away those in power. If the ruling group was fighting only for power it might give way easily but if it was also fighting for life then it might lead to bloodshed. In the case of Iran, decades of absolute rule had driven the opposition underground. Terrorism and clandestine activities had taken the place of normal political participation. This type of abnormal political system that had evolved over a number of years in Iran could not be replaced overnight by an open political system. Secrecy, clandestine activities, strict discipline, orders of hierarchy, and lack of tolerance towards opposition which had been the foundation of anti-Shah movements continued to influence Iranian politics even after his downfall. The forces that replaced the old regime continued to use the previous model. The main question that Iran faced after the overthrow of the Shah was whether the transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional democracy would be through a peaceful process or the Iranian revolution would have to go through cycles of political upheaval before finding its right moorings. Much depends upon the new leaders of Iran.

POSTSCRIPT

Events have moved further since the book was completed in May 1979. The developments in Iran have taken a more radical Islamic fundamentalist stance. Domestic and foreign policies as well as the question of the security of the new power elite and of the new system that is being evolved is seen by the new rulers from that angle. The newly emerging pattern in Iran can be defined under the broad framework of a theocratic state system. Undoubtedly, the broad framework is Islamic but Article 12 of the new constitution gives predominance to the *Jafari Asna Ashari* sect. Unlike the clergy in some other Islamic states, which are *Sunni* majority areas, the Iranian *Shii* clergy has sought to justify its dominant political role in Iran by arguing that in the absence of *Imam Mehdi* (the Twelfth Imam) they alone have the right and the competence to guide the destiny of the people of Iran. According to Article 5 of the Iranian constitution, the newly created institution of the Religious Leader (*wali faqih*) is based upon that principle.

It is interesting to note that though the dominant Islamic group in Iran is violently opposed to the western ethos, the newly emerging theocracy operates within the framework of a western-style political system. It is institutionalized through constitutional provisions which legalize the absolute powers enjoyed by the religious leaders. The constitution not only emphasizes the Islamic character of the new ruling elite but also lays down provisions under which the new rulers of Iran can constitutionally debar those who do not subscribe to these ideals from active and open political participation.

The main points of the new Islamic constitution began to be discussed in newspapers as early as February 1979. On 5 April Amir Entezam, the then Deputy Premier, announced that the election for the Constituent Assembly would be held within three months. The idea of a large body discussing in detail the new constitution was opposed by the pro-Khomeini group and finally it was decided to have a smaller 73-member body called the Constituent Council of Experts. That council was elected on 3 August. It was dominated by the clergy group. The Democratic Front, the clergy-group led by Ayatollah Shariatmadari, ethnic minorities like the Arabs and the Kurds, and several small groups boycotted the election. The council modified the draft constitution very radically. The referendum on the new Islamic constitution was held on 2-3 December. It too was boycotted by the opposition.

The new constitution emphasizes the Islamic principles as the bases of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to Article 4 all laws have to be based on Islamic principles and that article is supreme over all other articles. The implementation of this fundamental principle is to be entrusted to the Council of Guardians under Article 91. Six clergy members, nominated by Ayatollah Khomeini as the new leader of Iran, have the power to exercise veto over any legislation if they think that it violates the Islamic norms (Article 96).

The most important institution created under the new Islamic constitution is that of *wali faqih*. Chapter VIII was added to the draft constitution to elaborate upon that institution. Other articles were also suitably amended to incorporate that change. Article 5 says that in the absence of *Imam Mehdi*, leadership in national and religious affairs will be vested in a *wali faqih* who is "just, pious, well-informed, brave, sagacious as well as an efficient administrator, and who is recognized and accepted as the leader by the majority of the people." In case no single person is found qualified the leadership would consist of a council of three or five members (Article 107).

Ayatollah Khomeini is accepted as the *wali faqih* in Article 107. As the leader, he enjoys wide powers under Article 110. He has the power to appoint six clergymen to the Council of Guardians and also members of the highest judicial authorities. He is also the supreme commander of the armed forces and has

the power to appoint and dismiss the chief of the staff of the armed forces as well as the commander of the Revolutionary Guard. He is above the President of the Republic (Article 113). Thus the constitution gives supreme powers not to elected representatives but to non-elected and, in some cases, self-nominated religious bodies.

The constitution also provides a legal framework to control the dissent groups in Iran. The press, political parties and public demonstrations are subject to the Islamic interpretation of the constitution. Article 24 grants freedom to mass media provided Islamic norms are not violated. A new press law also came in force from 8 August 1979 which prescribed an imprisonment from six months to two years to those who published defamatory or untruthful reports about Ayatollah Khomeini, the President or the Prime Minister. Freedom of association is also limited. Under Article 26, Iranians are free to form political parties as long as they do not violate the Islamic norms. Thus, the left movement or any other "dissent" movement cannot be legal in Iran. The *Fedayeen* is banned. The *Tudeh* party is tolerated because of its open support to Ayatollah Khomeini, but it cannot be accepted by the clergy because communism is equated with atheism and, therefore, considered un-Islamic. The right to assemble and conduct peaceful demonstrations is limited under Article 27. They are not permitted if they contravene Islamic norms.

Iran, since the revolution, is not only progressing towards a theocratic, clergy-dominated system but also, under the new constitution, the elected institutions like Parliament and the President play a subordinate role to non-elected institutions like the *wali faqih* and the Council of Guardians. The Iranian President plays a role secondary to the leader and, at best, can act as a link between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary (Article 113). The election for the new president took place on 25 January 1980. Abolhassan Bani-Sadr was elected with more than 75 per cent votes. He obtained 10,747,345 votes. Rear Admiral Ahmad Madani, who was supported by the opposition, got 2,240,160 votes. Six others who were allowed to contest got very few votes. Several Iranians were not allowed to contest. Some of them were Dr Mehdi Bazargan, Dr Entezam and Massoud Rijawi, leader of the *Muiahedeen-e-Khalq*. Ayatollah Khomeini

was also restrained by Ayatollah Khomeini. Thus Bani-Sadr got elected with the blessing of Ayatollah Khomeini and can only survive as long as he enjoys it. There are reports that Bani-Sadr is fast losing that goodwill and might soon follow the Bazargan way.

The new Parliament too has been elected. The Islamic Republican Party has got substantial seats while the opposition is divided. Yet the appointment of the Prime Minister was delayed. If the laws were to be finally approved by the clergy and the President and Prime Minister were subordinate to the leader, there was no urgency to give a final shape to institutions that were any way ineffective.

Thus, Iran, after the revolution, presented an interesting case of two parallel administrations. The formal administrative apparatus, with its conventional bureaucratic base, was ineffective because of the lack of decision-making powers in the hands of their respective heads like the ministers, and even the President. But the parallel apparatus, based upon the clergy-dominated committee system, that had started operating during the last days of the monarchy, continued to function even afterwards. It developed its own vested interests and it will be difficult to make those groups surrender their powers to the formal bureaucratic apparatus. This concentration of real authority in the hands of the clergy-dominated group not only strengthened its power base among the masses but also discredited the formal administrative system, and the persons who were in charge of that system. Both Bazargan and Bani-Sadr complained about this.

This trend has further alienated a large section of Iranians from the ruling elite. It has even generated hostility among some which is reflected in the continuing confrontation between the pro-clergy groups, popularly known as the *Hizballahi* (Party of the God), and the opposition. Different groups among the opposition responded differently to this confrontation. Some liberal democrats like Dr Mehdi Bazargan, who finally resigned from his premiership on 5 November, continue their opposition but with a subdued voice. Others, like Matine-Daftari and his Democratic Front, are more vocal and hence find it difficult to operate openly. The armed resistance groups like the *Mujahedeen* and the *Fedayeen*, and their radical wings, are reportedly awaiting the days when they might, once again, have to resort to armed

struggle. The *Fedayeen* are actively supporting the Kurds who are fighting for their regional autonomy. The third clandestine group, the *Furqan*, has already resorted to a series of assassinations of high-level officials of the pro-Khomeini group.

The "secular" group in Iran is, at present, in a state of disarray. The liberal democrats are divided amongst themselves. The left too is not united. *Tudeh*, for its own reason, is vocal in supporting Islamic fundamentalism of the pro-Khomeini group despite the fact that under the present Iranian ethos it cannot hope for political legitimacy. There are several other leftist groups of various shades but they are small and divided to be an effective and viable force. The left-wing resistance groups like the *Fedayeen* are also operating independently. The working-class and the middle class is also gradually losing its enthusiasm under the growing burden of unemployment and inflation, and yet are not able to find a focal point in the opposition.

The ethnic minorities in Iran, like the Baluchis, the Turcomans, the Kurds and the Arabs are also unhappy at what they consider *Shii* and Persian dominance over Iran. Some of them had hoped that the new regime might permit them a greater measure of regional autonomy within the broad framework of the Iranian nation-state. The refusal of the ruling group to concede to their demand has led to continued armed resistance, especially in Kurdish and Arab-dominated areas. This has involved Iran in anti-insurgency operations. As yet no political and military solution is in sight. Hence the ethnic conflict also poses a threat to the stability of the new regime.

The clergy group in Iran does not even enjoy the full support of all the *Shii* leaders. Important religious leaders like Ayatollah Taleghani and Ayatollah Shariatmadari were opposed right from the beginning to the policy of direct control of the clergy over political institutions in Iran. Taleghani's death on 10 September 1979 removed an important religious figure from the scene but Ayatollah Shariatmadari continues to oppose the Khomeini group. He is also very closely connected with the newly-formed Popular Islamic Republican Party. Thus it will be wrong to assume that the ruling clergy in Iran enjoys total support among the *Shii* religious leaders in Iran.

The domestic policy of the new elite in Iran is also reflected in the foreign policy it pursues. Iranian foreign policy, as defined

in the new constitution, rests primarily upon the broad framework of pan-Islamism. An attempt has also been made to give this pan-Islamic ideology the colour of the struggle of the oppressed people. The preamble touches upon this theme which is articulated further in Articles 3 (para 16), 11, 152 and 154 of the constitution. Pan-Islamism is under-scored in Article 11, which says:

As laid down in the Koran, all Muslims are one nation and the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran is bound to base its general policy on the principles of the alliance and unity of Islamic nations. It must strive to achieve the political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world.

Article 152 says that Iran's foreign policy is based, among other things, on the defence of the rights of all Muslims. The support extended by the new Iranian regime to the Palestinians is a part manifestation of its pan-Islamic policy and a demonstration of the pan-Islamic solidarity of the new regime in contrast to the pro-Israeli policy of the Shah. Another example of that policy is the Islamic bias of Iranian diplomacy on the Afghanistan question and the active role Iran is playing in the pan-Islamic conferences.

Though the new regime has defined Iranian national interests within the narrow framework of Islam, yet it too has to operate within the broader framework of a global international system as well as the basic interests of Iran and of the ruling elite. Hence its attitude towards the super powers is governed by more fundamental interests though they too are defined within the narrow framework of Islamic fundamentalism and the basic tenets of the Islamic republican system.

Iran's relations with the two super powers are governed not only by the considerations of regime and national security but also by the response of the masses towards those two countries. Undoubtedly, both the USSR and the USA are considered a threat to Iranian security. Soviet-Iranian relations are governed not only by the antagonistic ideologies pursued by the two regimes but also by the traditional fear of Russian expansion and its capability to destabilize Iran by supporting the ethnic and ideological groups that are opposing the present regime. The

events in Afghanistan have heightened that threat perception. Yet the Iranian regime has not—as yet—taken any step to publicly antagonize the Soviet Union. The USSR is too powerful and dangerously close to be antagonized. Also, it is possible that the new regime might prefer to balance the growing presence of the two super powers in the region, especially when its relations with the USA are deteriorating very fast.

The US-Iranian relations are governed by equally complicated factors like the long history of active US support to the Shah, the deep-rooted systemic links that had been forged between them during those years, and, above all, the deep sense of fear and hatred for USA among the Iranian masses that is so well reflected in the hostages issue, and which no Iranian politician can dare to ignore.

Though the Carter administration had supported the Shah it finally switched sides and on 11 February extended support to the Bazargan government, hoping thereby to salvage part of its stakes in Iran. The new regime did work towards a new detente with the USA which assured the US administrators that its latest military hardware in Iran would be safe. The Iranian government also made pronouncements to the effect that it needed US help in the economic and military fields. The enthusiastic operation launched by the pro-Khomeini group to rescue the personnel of the US embassy when it was occupied by the “radicals” in February 1979 demonstrated the extent of mutual goodwill. But the relations between Iran and the USA deteriorated rapidly after the second occupation of the American embassy in Tehran in November 1979.

The question of the US hostages has to be analyzed in the context of two interconnected variables: the suspicion that the USA was interested in reinstating the Shah, and the demand, since the revolution, for the return of the Shah so that he could be tried in Iran. That was one reason why the USA was reluctant to grant an entry visa to the Shah. He was, however, allowed to enter USA on 22 October, on humanitarian grounds, for medical treatment. The same day, the spokesman of the State Department said that the Iranian government had been informed of those moves. The Iranian government reportedly gave an assurance that the US embassy in Tehran would be protected. Premier Bazargan and Foreign Minister Yazdi also repor-

tedly met Brzezinski in Algiers on 1 November. It is said that these developments were not conveyed to Ayatollah Khomeini. This lapse was partly responsible for the exit of both those politicians from the Iranian government on 5 November after the militant "students" stormed the US embassy and held the Americans there as hostages. This move had Khomeini's approval. They demanded the return of the Shah and of Iranian property taken out of Iran by his people.

The question of the release of these hostages assumed international significance because it touched upon the legal question of diplomatic immunities and the sanctity of the foreign embassy. Several attempts were made to mediate. Some of them deserve importance like the offer made by the PLO on 8 November, by the UN Secretary General on 9 November and by the Pope, which was turned down by Khomeini on 11 November. On 15 November the International Court of Justice also requested the Iranian government to release the hostages. All these efforts proved abortive.

The USA also brought economic and political pressure on Iran. Economic sanctions were imposed. The number of US warships in the region increased. Iranians threatened to try the hostages on charges of espionage. On 20 November the USA declared that it reserved the right to use force if the hostages were tried for espionage. In turn, the students threatened to blow up the embassy if the USA tried to rescue the hostages by force. The USA did attempt a commando-type operation but it failed when some of its helicopters and transport aircraft were destroyed in the accident in a secret air-base in Iran.

The question of hostages generated bitter hostility between Iran and the USA and negated, at least for some time, whatever efforts that were being made towards a mutual rapprochement. The tension was also politically useful to the clergy-dominated group. It further discredited the liberal-democratic leaders like Mehdi Bazargan, and strengthened the hands of the militant Islamic fundamentalists to push through an Islamic constitution in the Constituent Council of Experts and to get a massive "yes" vote in the referendum.

No solution to the hostages issue is in sight. Peaceful means of resolution have till today proved abortive. Even the commando-type operation has failed. There is an impasse. The USA

cannot afford to hand over the Shah to the militant Islamic group because of the damage such an action might cause to the US image in West Asia. No regime in Iran can release the hostages without a face-saving formula. Any such formula would amount to letting down the Iranian people and therefore, no group at the moment can offer such a solution. Attempts towards finding a compromise formula have been defeated by the militants. The Iranians are afraid of getting down from the tiger that they have jumped upon.

The Iranian policy towards the Afro-Asian states is governed on two levels by two sets of policy formulations. As far as the Islamic world is concerned it is explained in terms of pan-Islamism. Otherwise, non-alignment has now replaced the earlier policy of alliance partnership with the west that the Shah was following. Though Iran participated in the Havana summit of the non-aligned nations, its non-aligned policy has yet to take shape. Meanwhile, the new regime is putting a greater stress on the Islamic content of its foreign policy. Pan-Islamism, under the militant *Shii*-dominated Islamic fundamentalist group, as propagated by the present Iranian regime, might find tactical support on certain issues like the Afghanistan question, not only among a majority of the Islamic states but also in the west, but it will be difficult to sustain it as a major policy framework under the pressures bound to be generated, due to political contradictions, among the members of the Islamic bloc. Arab-Iranian relations since the overthrow of the Shah help to underline these limitations.

Arab-Iranian relations would continue to be governed, for some time at least, by several factors like the attitude of Arab regimes towards the Shah, the attitude of the present *Shii* clergy-dominated regime in Iran, the possibility of *Shii-Sunni* rivalry, and the leftist or socialist orientation of some Arab states. Despite Arab-Iranian differences, several Arab states, including Iraq, had developed a degree of detente and working relationship with the Shah's regime. Many of them supported the Shah till he was overthrown. Egypt, under the leadership of President Sadat, continued to support the Shah even after he was overthrown. In other Arab states the new Iranian regime was accepted but without much warmth.

The Iranian revolution disturbed the *status quo* and posed a

new set of challenges to the various regimes in the region. Some of them were conscious of the effects of the new wave of Islamic fundamentalism. The occupation of the Holy Mosque in Mecca by Islamic militants was a partial reflection of that trend. Others were afraid of the new *Shii* exuberance which had spread to *Shii* pockets in the Arab littoral of the Gulf. The revival of the old Iranian claims over certain regions, like Bahrain, by some *Shii* clergymen from Iran, also drew Arab protests. The present Iraq-Iran hostility once again reminds us of the pre-1975 situation when border skirmishes were common. The Iranian leaders have even threatened certain Arab regimes. The threat to use religion as an instrument of foreign policy is bound to bring Iran into conflict with some of its neighbouring states.

It is possible that the Islamic group in Iran, to maintain itself in power and to suppress its opponents, who might hope to gain support from some Arab quarters, might pursue policies which could lead to an Arab-Iranian confrontation. With the Arab-Israeli dispute still at its height and with the USA firmly committed to Israel, with the Soviet Union entrenched in Afghanistan and the super-power rivalry in South West Asia assuming a more aggressive shape, the prospects of a new Arab-Iranian confrontation would only destabilize the area still further. It would have repercussions, among other things, upon the vital oil question.

Even though the threat perceptions of the present regime and that of the Shah have, on many issues, basically remained identical, the responses in some cases have undergone a basic change. Both regimes were allegedly threatened by the liberal-democratic and the radical forces in Iran and their supporters abroad. Both followed identical policies of discrediting those forces and suppressing them by force if necessary. The SAVAK has been disbanded but it was announced on 2 August 1979 that a new security organization, called the Iranian National Information and Security Organization, has been created. It will operate both within Iran and also outside. The Shah used the police, the gendarmerie and the army for his regime's security while the new regime has strengthened the Revolutionary Guard (*Pasdaran*) to perform that function.

Yet, despite these similarities, there are also basic differences in the approaches of the two regimes to the responses to these

threats. While the Shah depended primarily upon the US political and military umbrella and also upon his armed forces to ensure security from domestic and external threats, the new regime has gradually rejected those options and, in keeping with the new national ethos, has depended upon the new wave of Islamic fundamentalism to ensure its overall security. The hate campaign against the Shah and, therefore, of the USA, is also a response to its threat perceptions because the Shah is still considered as enemy number one.

Unlike the Shah, the new regime, at the moment, has no intention of strengthening its conventional armed forces as a major security bulwark. The revolution destroyed the infrastructure of the Iranian armed forces. The exit of foreign military experts made the bulk of sophisticated equipments non-functional. Despite some earlier attempts to refashion the armed forces no concrete efforts have been made in that direction for two main reasons. Firstly, it would mean inducting foreign personnel in the armed forces which has been forbidden under Article 145 of the new constitution. Secondly, the new regime is, as yet, not sure of the overall loyalty of the armed forces. There have been reports of abortive attempts at *coup d'états* among army personnel. Thus a strong military establishment is seen as a potential threat to the regime's security. In the light of these developments the future of the stockpile of sophisticated arms, especially in the context of third-party transfer and Iran's commitments to pan-Islamism, poses serious challenges to arms-control measures in the region.

The main threat to the Iranian regime is, however, posed by the struggle on the ideological level between the forces supporting fundamental Islam and the opposition which believes in secularism. The issue of secularism in the Iranian context is more akin to the struggle between the temporal and the ecclesiastical forces in Europe during the medieval period rather than the modern concept of secularism under which religion is officially isolated from state politics. Most of the Iranians believe in Islam. But many of them would prefer not to be governed by the clergy. The Iranian clergy, for once, has tasted temporal power. What differentiates the Iranian regime today from other regimes in the Islamic world, is not its concept of Islamic fundamentalism as such but the fact that in Iran it is the clergy

which has emerged as the ruling elite. Even in Saudi Arabia, the ruling elite is a combination of the temporal powers of the Saudi dynasty and the ecclesiastical base of the Wahabi family. Thus a challenge to the ruling elite in Iran is seen as a challenge to the newly emerging theocratic system rather than to Islam *per se*. Since the new system in Iran is equated with Islam, those who challenge the system are accused of being anti-Islamic.

The secular groups opposing the present-day ruling elite in Iran are divided amongst themselves. But clergy-dominance is also not firmly rooted as yet. This group emerged into prominence as one of the components of the massive anti-Shah movement. The charismatic personality of Ayatollah Khomeini as well as the division among the secular groups enabled it to emerge as the most powerful single group in Iran. Given sufficient time and opportunity it might consolidate its position as the most powerful group in Iran. But it suffers from two basic disadvantages. Firstly, in its quest for absolute power it is gradually alienating those non-clergy elements which had supported it during the initial period. That would not only swell the rank of the opposition but also reduce the credibility of the ruling elite. Secondly, the superstructure of newly created Iranian theocracy rests upon the institution of *wali faqih*, which also gives it a constitutional legitimacy. Ayatollah Khomeini, because of his past nationalist background and his present public image, has been unreservedly accepted as *wali faqih* not only by a large section of the Iranian masses but also by a majority of the *Shii* clergy in Iran. But the constitution is very vague about the selection of his successor.

In the western-style democratic system, the procedure for the selection of the head of the state is primarily a game of numbers. The votes decide the issue. Under the new Iranian constitution it is a more personalized system and, therefore, more difficult to operate. Qualifications laid down under Article 5 say that the *wali faqih* has to be "just, pious, well-informed, brave, sagacious as well as an efficient administrator; and who is recognized and accepted as the leader by the majority of the people." Ayatollah Khomeini has been acknowledged as *wali faqih* even in the constitution, which solved the difficult job of the selection. But otherwise the constitution is rather vague about the procedure for the selection of the leader. It has a provision that if

no single person is found qualified to fill that post, a Council of Leadership, composed of three or five persons, can be formed. As far as the selection of a person or persons for that post is concerned Article 107 says that "experts elected by the people who have the capacity for leadership will be investigated and evaluated. Whenever a candidate is found to have outstanding characteristics for leadership, he will be introduced to the nation as the Leader." The selection of these experts will be made by the six jurists of the Council of Guardians and approved by Ayatollah Khomeini (Article 108). In the absence of an unambiguous constitutional directive, one can expect a struggle for succession. Reports are already pointing towards that. The question of political succession will not only split the clergy group but in the light of growing political alienation, might well lead to instability.

The growing economic difficulties will worsen the impact of political instability. The massive industrialization programme under the Shah's regime, despite its wrong priorities and lopsidedness, did provide employment. Now most of the foreign experts have left Iran. Many projects that were under construction have remained unfinished. In others, the production has been reportedly cut back. Even the oil production has not crossed the 3.5-million-barrels-per-day mark, with the result that the oil money too has declined. Unemployment and inflation are raising their ugly heads. Because of the lack of opportunity and because of the uncertain future, more and more trained Iranian personnel are leaving the country, thereby further undermining the socio-economic infrastructure of Iran.

It should not be forgotten that growing economic discontent among the middle class and the working class was a major reason for the growth of the anti-Shah movement in the second half of the seventies. If the economic conditions in Iran continue to deteriorate at the present rate, the regime will either have to find scapegoats or to answer to the people. Iranians, like all people, expected the revolution to deliver goods, and if the present leaders fail to do so they too will have to face the mob. Thus the gradually growing political and economic alienation will be a dangerous combination which the clergy-dominated group, with its ideology of Islamic fundamentalism, will find difficult to contain.

A democratic system, whatever be its format, is based upon the principle of active popular participation in the decision-making process. If the regime equates dissent with opposition and tries it then it deviates from the basic norms of democracy. The opposition to the Shah grew out of this sense of complete alienation. The present rulers of Iran also seem to arrogate to themselves the sole prerogative of decision-making, thereby sowing the seeds of future discontent. Slogans of Islamic fundamentalism have already antagonized a large section of the intelligentsia. Growing political and economic discontent, if not checked, would spread that sense of alienation among the masses, a combination that might prove dangerous for a regime that has yet to stabilize itself under new norms.

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