1996

Diplomatic efforts in Iran prior to the hostage crisis

Bruno Tom
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Tom, Bruno, "Diplomatic efforts in Iran prior to the hostage crisis" (1996). *Master's Theses*. 1337.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.h4ut-6dr4>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/1337

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

**DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN IRAN
PRIOR TO THE HOSTAGE CRISIS**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Bruno Tom

August 1996

UMI Number: 1381448

UMI Microform 1381448
Copyright 1996, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

© 1996

Bruno Tom

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter M. Buzanski", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Peter M. Buzanski

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stanley J. Underdal", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Stanley J. Underdal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Engelmann", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Larry D. Engelmann

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Serena J. Stanford", written over a horizontal line.

ABSTRACT

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN IRAN PRIOR TO THE HOSTAGE CRISIS

by Bruno Tom

This thesis covers diplomatic events prior to the 4 November 1979 hostage crisis in Iran. It discusses communications from the Carter administration to the government of Iran at the peak of the Monarch's downfall and how the Shah came to believe that the Western world and President Carter created the Iranian uproar that led to his abdication. Ironically, the Shah speculated that the United States had a grand design to save the Shah's throne.

Detailed examination of National Security Council records reveals that disagreement between the Department of State and the Department of Defense played a major role in confusing the Shah about Washington's intention. As Washington's disagreement trickled its way to the United States Ambassador to Iran, the Ambassador became frustrated and lost the respect of the President resulting in the Ambassador's valuable suggestions going unheard.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (UNITED STATES)	vi
LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND TERMS (IRAN)	vii
TIME LINE	viii
MAP	ix
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Investment of Hardware and Strategic Versatility	
2. ANALYSIS OF THE 1979 PRE-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN	26
Diplomacy through Conventional Channels	
3. WASHINGTON'S SECRET EMISSARY	55
4. CONCLUSION	75

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (UNITED STATES)

JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JTF	Joint Task Force
NID	National Intelligence Daily
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NSA	National Security Agency
NSC	National Security Council
SCC	Special Coordinating Committee

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS AND TERMS (IRAN)

Ayatollah	High ranking Shi'ite religious authority
Daneshjuani-Ialami-Khati-Imam	Islamic student followers of the Imam
Fedayin-Khalk	Leftist organization; Marxist
Hojat al-Islam	Title given to leading ulama
Imam	The highest honorific title given to Khomeini
Komiteh (Revolutionary)	Ad hoc Committees created by Iranian clergy
Mujahedin-Khalk	Leftist organization; Socialist
Murabitun	Men in religious military organizations
Mullah	A scholar less than a Hojat al-Islam
Pasdaran (IRG)	Iranian Revolutionary Guards
SAVAK	Iranian Secret Police under the Shah
Shi'ite	Followers of the Imam
Surah	Chapter or Section of the Koran
Tudeh Party	Pro-Soviet Communist Party in Iran
Ulama	The learned men of religious law
Velayat-e faqih	Rule of the religious jurist

TIME LINE

24 Dec 78	Incident at the United States embassy gate
04 Jan 79	General Huyser arrives in Iran
06 Jan 79	Eliot mission was to take place
16 Jan 79	Shah leaves Iran
01 Feb 79	The Ayatollah Khomeini arrives in Tehran, Iran, from Paris
03 Feb 79	General Huyser leaves Iran
04 Feb 79	Khomeini makes Mehdi Bazargan the Provisional Prime Minister
14 Feb 79	Fedayin Coalition leftist group seizes the US Embassy
01 Apr 79	Khomeini proclaims Iran as an Islamic republic
20 Oct 79	Decision to admit Shah to the US for medical treatment
22 Oct 79	Shah enters the US
04 Nov 79	Militants seize US Embassy
22 Sept 80	Iraq invades Iran

Microsoft Encarta Map of Iran

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Recently the Shah went to the United States. They have accepted him there under the pretext that he is suffering from cancer. I hope, God willing, it is true...It is all right if he dies, but what will happen to our money?¹

February 1994 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. During a mass rally President Hashemi Rafsanjani of Iran said that the Islamic revolution was "here to stay."² Rafsanjani told diplomats that the Republic of Iran would like to have good relations and eliminate tensions with all countries except Israel and the United States. Rafsanjani claimed that Iran's enemies accused Iran of supporting terrorism. He called them hypocrites for having the blood of the Bosnians and Palestinians on their hands.³ Rafsanjani made it clear that the negative relationship between Iran and the United States was still just as bad as during the pre-Revolutionary years of Iran. Recently the United States lifted its trade embargo with Vietnam to develop better relations and mend old wounds. In July of 1995, President Bill Clinton opened up diplomatic relations with the Republic of Vietnam. Unlike Vietnam, Iran retains tense and antagonistic feeling towards the United States.

The U.S. has always failed to realize the realities of Iran's Islamic revolution and is still living in the past when it considered itself the master of this country. The Iranian

¹ The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Speech to a group of workers from Islamshahr in Qom, on 25 October 1979, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Middle East and Africa, Vol. 5, No. 209, quoted in Stansfield Turner, "Our Embassy Is Taken," in Terrorism and Democracy, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 26.

² "Revolution 'Here to Stay' Despite U.S.," Middle East Economic Digest, 21 February 1994, 1.

³ Ibid.

people will vigorously face the hostile policies of America. Israel was illegitimate and did not want peace that would ensure Palestinian rights. Nobody can support the peace talks as long as the fate of millions of Palestinian refugees is unclear... The latest tactic was to pressure Iran's economy by lowering oil prices. They would fall in this and would see the opposite result.⁴

Traditionally, Iran's government has been a monarchy headed by a Shah (King). The most recent Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, promulgated land reforms that became dominant issues that divided the clerical and governing bodies of Iran. In November 1960, the Shah's May 1960 land law order caused massive uproar led by three Ayatollahs. The title Ayatollah literally means "Allah's examples" and is an honorific title created in the nineteenth century for high-ranking clergy in Iran. The three clerical leaders opposed to the land reform were Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani, Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, and a cleric who previously had good relations with the Shah, Ayatollah Haj Hosayn Burujerdi. The clergy had become opposed due to the loss of income that their land generated and because the land could not be used any longer for religious educational purposes.⁵ In order to stimulate the pro-Soviet communist Tudeh party of Iran, the Soviet Union joined in and denounced the land law order. The land reform opposition in 1959 and events in the early 1960s resulted in massive clerical rebellion to the Shah's government and to the United States. Riots broke out in many cities in June 1963. The Shah used his military to put down the riots. At least one

⁴ President of Iran, Hashemi Rafsanjani, Speech at Azadi Square Rally, Iran, on 11 February 1994, quoted in "Revolution 'Here to Stay' Despite U.S.," Middle East Economic Digest, 21 February 1994, 1.

⁵ Rouhollah K. Ramazani, United States and Iran, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 75.

thousand people died in Tehran and the Shah had three Ayatollahs arrested. The Ayatollah's opposition to the land reforms resulted in uniting the entire clerical body of Iran against the Iranian monarchy. Since it was against Islamic law to execute an Ayatollah, all the Shah could do was to exile Khomeini. The exile of Khomeini gave the Shah complete power during the 1960s and 1970s. From 1956 to 1976 Iran's urban population increased nearly three times.⁶ All these growing urban areas experienced an increase in religious activity beginning in the late 1960s. Literacy in Iran developed and religious material began to circulate rapidly.

There are two Islamic doctrines, the Shi'ite and the Sunni. Iran adhered predominantly to the Shi'ite branch of Islam. In the Sunni sect there is a hierarchy, but the community of clergy does not exert force or power, the individual does. Communication between Allah and the individual is not dependent on a mediator. Khomeini wanted to enforce the Shi'ite doctrine, which states that governing authorities must be under the guidance of religious leaders.⁷ Supreme power and judgment in the Shi'ite sect came from the highest authority, the Imam. Ultimately Allah would reveal his will through the Imam, which the Shi'ite sect considered to be infallible. The institution of the Imamate was an issue over which the Shi'ites and Sunnis disagreed. The Shi'ites believed that the Imam was infallible whereas the Sunnis relied upon the entire clerical community for

⁶ Said Amir Arjomand, The Turban for the Crown, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 91.

⁷ Shahrugh Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, (New York: State University of New York Press Albany, 1980), 8.

perfection.⁸ Originally there were twelve Imams. The twelfth Imam disappeared at age four some time between the years of 260 and 873. The legend states that he made miraculous reappearances. He remains hidden by supernatural forces and will reveal himself at the end time to make known his dominion and bring order and justice in the world by vengeance upon the enemies of God. The Shi'ites believe that the "Hidden Imam" illuminates men and is an intermediary with God on the behalf of the people. The Hidden Imam heard the prayers of believers and at the moment of their death, they would see the him in a vision. The Ayatollah Khomeini had taken the title of Imam but did not proclaim to be the "returned Hidden Imam," thus, a new doctrine evolved. The Imamate doctrine attributed the Imam as a divinely inspired arbitrator on earth.⁹

Khomeini backed the Shi'ite doctrine with a verse in the Koran, Surah 4:59, "Oh, those who have believed obey God and obey His Messenger and those who have authority from them. Then if there is disagreement between you, pass it on to God and the Messenger."¹⁰

Khomeini wanted a new Islamic state free from western influence and the Iranian monarchy. Khomeini interpreted the Shah's alliance with the United States as submission to United States--Israeli influence. While exiled in Iraq, Khomeini exported his revolution to Iran by means of the clergy and by distributing his teachings on cassette tapes. People

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam, 1989 ed., s.v. "Hidden Imam."

¹⁰ Dehqani-Tafti, H.B., The Hard Awakening, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 4.

began to donate more to the religious shrines of Iran. Publication of religious books and periodicals increased, as did visits to Mecca. In the 1970s there was such a demand for preachers that the clergy could not fill the religious vacuum in Iran. The inability to fill the religious needs of the Iranian people caused an urgency for teachings on cassette tapes. This worked in Khomeini's favor as his organized network distributed the cassettes using thirteen recording centers to maximize circulation.¹¹

Khomeini denounced the Iranian Constitution and wanted nothing but one-hundred percent reform. He believed that the Shah had sold Iran out to the United States and Israel by draining Iran's resources. Khomeini harbored much bitterness toward America and spread hatred in his speeches. United States demands and the Shah's compliance to them gave Khomeini opportunity to condemn the Iranian Parliament's bills. In his 26 October 1964 speech, he expressed his intense repulsion.

The world must realize that all the difficulties faced by the Iranian nation and the Muslim peoples are because of aliens, because of America. The Muslim nations hate aliens in general and Americans in particular. The misfortunes of the Islamic government stem from foreign interference in their destiny. It is America that supports Israel and its friends; it is America that gives Israel power to displace the Muslim Arabs; it is America that imposes the parliamentary deputies on the Iranian nation; it is America that considers Islam and the Holy Koran detrimental to its interest and is detrimental to remove them; it is America that considers the Islamic clergy as the obstacle to its exploitation [of Iran and other Muslim countries], and it feels it must cause them pain, imprisonment and insult; it is America that pressures the Majlis and the Iranian government to approve and implement such a bill; it is America that treats the Islamic nation barbarously. It is incumbent on the Iranian nation to tear up these chains....¹²

¹¹ Said Amir Arjomand, The Turban for the Crown, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 92-3.

¹² Rouhollah K. Ramazani, United States and Iran, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 78. Ramazani's Translation from the text of the declaration in *Ettela 'at* (regular edition), 26 October 1980.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s airline high-jacking was frequent and became a diplomatic tool for terrorists. The Baader Meinhof Gang and the Red Brigade created havoc for West Germany and Italy. United States officials were complacent that not much terrorism affected the United States. They were concerned that someday America would be caught by surprise.¹³ Early in the Carter administration, the National Security Council established a group to counter terrorism. It made almost no progress and did not even discuss a contingency for a hostage crisis. From 1972 - 1976, United States military officials began to be assassinated.¹⁴ In 1975 two colonels were killed in Tehran. In 1976 three American civilians working on a secret electronics project by the Rockwell Company, under contract for the Shah, were ambushed and assassinated as the three were driving to their jobs. Different factions in Iran were responsible for these plots. Most of the violent acts were committed by an opposition force trained in Lebanon and Libya called the Mujahedin (Fighters for the People).¹⁵ Tehran and Washington failed to understand the significance of these early signs and saw them as minor acts of terrorism. President Carter and the Shah did not realize that they were more than acts of terrorism, but rather the surface of a deep opposition to the Shah and the United States. In his autobiography, the Shah of Iran wrote, "True, I had eyes and ears among the population, but they brought me little in the way of conclusive information so that I was unable to

¹³ Stansfield Turner, Terrorism and Democracy, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 19.

¹⁴ Rouhollah K. Ramazani, United States and Iran, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), 88-90.

¹⁵ Ibid.

discern the deeper meaning of the cessation of terrorism.”¹⁶ The Shah interpreted the violent acts as a need to develop and change Iranian society at a faster rate; thus, after 1977 the Shah’s reforms increased drastically. In speeding up reform, the Shah thought his opposition would have no way to claim a need for Iran to implement radical changes. The Shah claimed to have tried to build a democracy tailored to fit Iranian needs. All the steps toward liberalization did not satisfy the situation. The Shah commented about how the opposition perceived his efforts toward democracy as weaknesses rather than reform.¹⁷

The Iranians wanted to cleanse themselves of the Soviets, the British and the United States. No nation understood their culture, religion and interests. Khomeini rallied the college students of Iran to join his cause. Traditionally, many Iranian students joined political groups. To the Iranians, it was analogous to American students joining fraternities or sororities. These Iranian students became known as the *Daneshjuani-Islami-Khati-Imam*. In 1977, President Carter proclaimed Iran as an island of stability. Intelligence reports during the Ford administration said that Iran would remain stable under the leadership of the Shah for the next several years. At the beginning of the Carter administration an intelligence report stated, “the Shah will be an active participant in Iranian life well into the 80’s and there will be no change in Iranian political behavior in

¹⁶ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 149.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the near future.”¹⁸ In 1977 masked student militants attacked dormitory buildings and set fire to buses. Some institutions could not hold classes for days or weeks.

The Shah tried to solve his own problems by unpopular methods. He relied on his secret police, *Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar* (SAVAK), to curb domestic opposition. In spite of the Shah's unpopularity, terrorist attacks on United States officials and a previous embassy seizure, the Carter administration somehow missed or ignored the early warning signs. Carter had no way of knowing what really was taking place within Iran. On 14 February 1979, an Iranian revolutionary leftist group called the Fedayin seized the American embassy for a few hours until Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan returned the embassy to the American ambassador.¹⁹ The Central Intelligence Agency informed its agents in Iran to lie low in fear of exposure. The seizure of the embassy brought the Central Intelligence Agency's intelligence apparatus to a halt. Although the Iranian government regained control of the situation, eight months later Khomeini's militants would seize the embassy for four-hundred-forty-four days.

In spite of the 14 February warning, the second seizure of the United States embassy appeared to catch the Carter administration by surprise. There seemed to be little concern after the incident on 14 February which is discussed in the next chapter. The Carter administration did not see the incident as a warning and hoped that the Iranian

¹⁸ U.S., Congress, House, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Iran: Evaluation of U.S. Intelligence Performance Prior to November 1978, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1979), 6.

¹⁹ Stansfield Turner, Terrorism and Democracy, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991), 20.

revolution would take a milder course. Washington officials and the Pentagon were reluctant to acknowledge that Iran would not reform the new government to be an American ally. To a large degree, the Carter administration seemed to have waited for the best outcome believing that the worst had passed. On 2 September 1979, Colonel Charles Scott, former American hostage, became the military attaché assigned to Iran. He attended four days of briefings in Washington with the Air Force, Navy, National Security Council staff, State Department and Central Intelligence Agency.²⁰ Colonel Scott had already served a tour of duty in Iran and had first hand knowledge of the present situation in Iran. His prior experience and qualifications made him an appropriate choice for the position of military attaché. He was appalled by the misunderstanding of the very anti-American attitude of the Iranian revolution. The Department of State's Iran desk officers gave Colonel Scott the impression that the Iran situation would eventually return to normal. They told Scott that the embassy staff in Iran had a "siege mentality."²¹ Unfortunately, many high ranking officials were overly hopeful about a faltering situation.

The Shah raised the status of women, attacked illiteracy, launched educational reforms, industrialized Iran and took a staunch anti-Communist stance. All of this would satisfy any American foreign policy maker. Iran occupied a key strategic location on the Soviet border. Therefore, the United States could not afford to give up its stronghold in the Middle East. Under the leadership of the Shah, Iran resisted Soviet expansion in the

²⁰ Colonel Charles W. Scott (Ret.), Picces of the Gamc, (Atlanta: Pcachtrec Publishers, 1984). 147.

²¹ Ibid., 149.

mid 1970s by assisting the Sultanate of Oman to stop a Marxist rebellion. Iran did not participate in the Arab oil embargo against America in 1973 and also settled its quarrel with Iraq peacefully. As a statesman, the Shah gained the respect of his American allies and heightened Iran's prestige in world affairs.²² The Shah appeared to be the best answer for American interest in the Middle East.

Interrogation of some of the seized terrorists divulged that they were resisting corruption, torture and killings by the Shah's government. One terrorist claimed that he was not a member of any particular organization. He simply was a regular Iranian citizen protesting against the Shah and the United States. The wishful thinking of the Carter administration led to its belief that these acts of violence were acts of terrorist groups that represented an insignificant minority and not the entire nation.

The Shah had a history of killing political opponents, even those who never committed any acts of violence. The Shah had his own agenda of national development and did not concern himself with domestic opposition.²³ The Shah wanted Iran to have a strong economy with modernization and industrialization. While the Shah's programs changed Iranian society, he was not able to compete with Khomeini's religious influence on the Iranian people. The United States was more concerned about Iran's oil capacity and its strategic location with respect to the Soviet Union. To the United States, Iran was a strategic listening post to monitor Soviet activity.

²² George Lenczowski, American Presidents and the Middle East, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 185.

²³ H.B. Dehqani-Tafti, The Hard Awakening, (New York: The Seabury Press, 1981), 4.

INVESTMENT OF HARDWARE AND STRATEGIC VERSATILITY

The largest contingent of the Americans in Iran was a cadre of military advisors and instructors. Many United States military personnel in Iran served a one-year tour of duty to train the Iranian military on the use of the sophisticated American weaponry.²⁴ During the Nixon Administration, President Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger invested huge amounts of military hardware and munitions in Iran to maintain security and stability in the Middle East. Selling military hardware to the Shah was one of the first products of the Nixon doctrine.²⁵ During Jimmy Carter's campaign for the presidency, he criticized Presidents Nixon and Ford for their lack of control in arms sales policies. Carter believed that the increase in arms traffic would be detrimental to world peace as well as counter productive towards America's desire for world peace.²⁶ On 19 May 1977, President Carter stated that the policy of the United States would be to transfer arms only if it could prove that the arms sales would benefit American national security interest. Carter believed that the United States would have great influence for world peace if it could demonstrate by example.²⁷ President Carter displayed his

²⁴ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 39.

²⁵ Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History, (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1983), 594.

²⁶ U.S., Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer policy, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 95th Cong., 1st Sess., December 1977, VII.

²⁷ Ibid.

intentions of developing world peace by regulating arms sales, but the draw-back to his policy was that there was no specific guideline on how to implement the arms restraints.²⁸

During the first four months of Carter's administration, the President asked Congress to authorize forty-five weapons sale negotiations to eighteen countries totaling 4.1 billion dollars. The administration also predicted that it would need to strengthen South Korea's defensive system over the next five years by introducing a 1.8 billion dollar arms package while the United States withdrew its army. Carter's new policy made his administration a victim of its own policies and could not reduce its efforts of weapons transfers at the beginning of its term.²⁹

The goals of the United States arms control policies are minimizing the chance of war, reducing its destructiveness, and minimizing military expenditures. Once two countries engage in a recipient-seller relationship, the connection develops a particular bond between the two countries. When the supplier makes a product available for a recipient nation, the recipient becomes dependent on the supplier nation for its technical support, spare parts, and training. Once the recipient purchases a product, the buyer is still at the mercy of the supplier. The advantage for the supplier is influence over the recipient in exchange for the support of the product. The disadvantage to the supplier nation is the tendency to become involved in the recipient nation's domestic problems.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., VIII.

²⁹ Ibid., VIII-X.

³⁰ Ibid., 35-6.

If the recipient nation becomes engulfed in domestic problems or local conflicts, the supplying nation becomes entrapped as it attempts to fulfill its obligation to support its product. If the supplier nation sells to a recipient nation, the recipient must be an ally of the supplier. If the supplier nation involves itself in the recipient's local conflict, it would not be in the best interest of the supplier nation to abandon its commitment.³¹ If the supplier nation disassociates itself from the recipient nation, it may well condemn that country to be defeated internally or by external foe. At a minimum, the supplier nation would have to continue its presence in a foreign nation to maintain technical support and upgrade its product. In a December 1977 report, the House of Representative Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance reported its concern about the potential for United States personnel to be held hostages if the United States attempted to influence Iran. The Carter administration accepted the risk of becoming entangled in another nation's affairs by continuing to use arms sales agreements as a tool of foreign policy.³²

Iran's arsenal included U.S.-manufactured F-5 Tigers and F-14A Tomcats along with other assorted top-of-the-line munitions. The Iranian military also had many technical manuals to operate the equipment and munitions. Had Iran allied to the Soviets, the American military equipment and technical manuals would have fallen into the hands of America's premier enemy.³³ It was the responsibility of all administrations to make

³¹ Ibid., 36.

³² Ibid.

³³ U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Policy Toward Iran, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 96th Cong., 1st Sess., 17 January 1979, 54.

sure the Soviet Union did not obtain American equipment and technical manuals. The following four charts represents American military hardware sold to Iran prior to Jan 1979.

Table 1.--U.S. Army Transport Vehicles, Armor and Artillery³⁴

Ground Forces Equipment	Quantity
Armored Cargo Carriers	435
Armored Personnel Carriers	878
Armor (Tanks)	461
155 mm Howitzers	440
175 mm Guns	37
8 inch Howitzers	51

Table 2.--U.S. Army Surface to Surface/Air and U.S. Navy Air to Air Ordinance

Munitions (Missiles)	Quantity
TOW (Surface, Tube launched, Optically tracked, Wire guided missile)	Classified
Dragon (Surface, Attack Guided Missile System)	Classified
Hawk (Air Defense Artillery, Surface to Air Missile)	Classified
Harpoon (Air to Surface Long Range Active Radar Missile)	Classified

³⁴ Ibid., Tables 1 to 4 include only major items sold and delivered to the Government of Iran under foreign military sales procedures. Additional quantities of some aircraft were sold directly by private companies and are not included. Since delivery, attrition and usage have reduced the quantities available to Iran. 67-8.

Munitions (Missiles)	Quantity
Maverick (Air to Surface Medium Range Inferred Seeking Missile)	Classified
Phoenix (Air to Air Long Range Active Radar Missile)	Classified
Sidewinder (Air to Air Short Range Inferred Seeking Missile)	Classified
Sparrow (Air to Air Low to Medium Altitude Missile)	Classified
Standard (Surface to Air Missile)	Classified

Table 3.--U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force

Aircraft	Quantity
C-130 (Transport Plane)	13
KC-707 (Air Fuel Tanker Plane)	13
F-4 Phantom (Fighter)	209
F-5 Tiger II (Light Fighter Bomber)	217
F-14A Tomcat (Fighter Interceptor)	80
P-3 Orion (Large land-based Naval Patrol Aircraft)	6
RF-4 Phantom II (Reconnaissance Fighter)	12
AH-1 Helicopter (Cobra, Attack)	202
UH-1 Helicopter (Troop and Medivac Plane)	56

Table 4.--U.S. Navy Vessels and Boats

Naval Vessels	Quantity
Destroyers	5
Patrol Boats	20
Submarines	1

Since 1973 the Middle East has been the largest recipient of American weapons and munitions. Iran and Saudi Arabia received 44.7 percent of the 8.7 billion dollars in American weapons sales for fiscal year 1973.³⁵ The arms sales assisted the United States in maintaining its influence in the Islamic nations of the Middle East.³⁶

The United States foreign policy objectives in the Middle East have includes the following: support of indigenous regional cooperative efforts, collective security, economic progress, and stability in the region; encouragement of peaceful resolution of territorial and other disputes among the region's states and widening channels of communication and consultation between them; effective recognition of nation's support for a peaceful, rational resolution of the Arab-Israel dispute; expanding diplomatic, cultural, technical, commercial, and financial presence and activities so as to achieve the best possible bilateral relations with all states in the region; maintenance of steady access by ourselves and our friends to this area's energy supplies at reasonable rates; assisting and encouraging the oil producers in the region to recycle their surplus revenues into the world economy in an orderly and non-disruptive manner.³⁷

At the time of the report, the objectives mentioned dominated the policies of the United States. The three prominent Moslem nations most receptive to United States policies were Iran, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.³⁸ Of the three, only Jordan received military grant

³⁵ U.S., Congress, Senate, The Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer policy, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 95th Cong., 1st Sess., December 1977, 27.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations, part 5. Hearings, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 94th Congress, 1st session, December 1977, 217.

³⁸ U.S., Congress, Senate, The Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer policy, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 95th Cong., 1st Sess., December 1977, 27.

aid from America as of December 1977. Saudi Arabia and Iran pursued major military growth and modernization programs prior to 1977. These two nations were dependent on the United States assistance for their military proliferation programs.³⁹

America had not only helped to create a massive and technological military might, but also had placed highly sensitive monitoring equipment in Iran. This was a radar system to verify the Soviet Union's accordance with arms limitation treaty. The first strategic-arms treaty expired in 1977 and was extended by the Carter administration; thus, America needed its ground-based electronic tracking and surveillance radar system to monitor the Soviet Union's agreement with the treaty. The Central Intelligence Agency used the electronic tracking and surveillance radar systems in Iran to determine the test flights of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).⁴⁰ Intercontinental ballistic missiles can contain multiple, independently targeted, re-entry vehicles (MIRV), thus multiplying the amount of warheads in each missile. Whenever the Soviet Union would conduct missile tests, the Central Intelligence Agency's radar system would monitor the Soviets' electronic ground control systems that measured missile performance, range and multiple vehicles of missiles. These Soviet test sites were in the deserts of Soviet Kazakhstan.⁴¹ One of the American ground radar systems was a line-of-sight radar system that needed to be as close as possible to the Soviet Union's test sites.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Drew Middleton, "Loss of Devices Watching Soviet A Serious Casualty of Iran Crisis," New York Times, 18 January 1979, p. 14(A).

⁴¹ Ibid.

Turkey and especially Iran contained ideal locations for the United States to maintain surveillance during Soviet missile testing. Government officials acknowledged that the Soviets had not fully complied with the first strategic arms treaty. If the United States lost its monitoring capabilities in Iran, the Carter administration would have a difficult time persuading the Senate to approve a new arms treaty with the Soviets. Should the American electronic tracking and surveillance system be dismantled, the United States would need to undergo a costly upgrade in its satellite surveillance system.⁴² During the Carter administration, satellite surveillance systems could only report the numbers of missiles and the location of missile sites while the ground radar facilities could provide an abundance of data. The electronic surveillance systems in Turkey would also have to be upgraded to suit the technology of the mid 1970s. The loss of an effective method to confirm the Soviet Union's adherence to the arms limitation treaty concerned many intelligence and military officials.⁴³

Geographically, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey blocked the Soviet Union's avenue of approach to the Persian Gulf. Afghanistan is a landlocked barrier that is on the eastern border of Iran. The Soviet Union attempted to dominate Afghanistan after the Shah fell. Had the Soviet Union succeeded in assimilating Afghanistan, the Soviets would have shortened their distance to the Arabian Sea and thus, extend its empire to the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. When the Shah visited the United States in 1977,

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

he explained Iranian and American interest in protecting Afghanistan. According to National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, a powerful Iran would deter a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was imperative that the United States assist Iran in maintaining a military deterrence.⁴⁴

In the Shah's autobiography there are comments about the Soviet Union's desire not only to control Iran but also covertly to take control of Afghanistan. Westerners were unaware that communist insurgents had already taken over the Afghan government. The Shah had warned Western leaders about the Soviet Union's hostile takeover of the Afghan government.⁴⁵ The Shah commented that the Western leaders ignored his warnings. Had American relations continued with the Shah, Iran's army would have increased from 540,000 to 700,000 men. By 1982 Iranian industry would have been able to produce its own artillery capable of matching the artillery armament of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Iranian army would have had a complement of the latest American equipment for long and close range tactical support. The Shah boasted that had he stayed in Iran as its leader, the Soviets "would not have dared invade Afghanistan."⁴⁶

According to the Shah, America's loss of friendship with Iran resulted in massive executions and Iran's potential to become an industrial nation. If Iran no longer continued its protective role in the Persian Gulf region, the United States would end up spending

⁴⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 356.

⁴⁵ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 155.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

billions of dollars more for security in the Gulf.⁴⁷ Had Pahlavi Shah remained in power his projected military strength would have been formidable. The following four tables represent Iran's military potential for 1982.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 294.

⁴⁸ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 196-98.

Table 5.—Projected Number of Armor and Mechanized Vehicles in Iranian Army for 1982.

Armor	Quantity
Lion of Iran (British built customized Tank)	1500
Chieftain (British built Tank)	800
M-60 (American built Tank)	406
M-47 (2½ ton Truck)	400
Scorpion (Reconnaissance Tanks)	250
APC (Armored Personnel Carriers)	3000

Table 6.—Projected Iranian Air Strength for 1982.

Naval and Air Force Craft	Quantity
F-14 Tomcat (Fighter Interceptor)	178
F-4 Phantom (modernized version)	250
F-5E Tiger II (Fighter Bomber)	100
F-16 Falcon (Fighter Interceptor)	106
AWACS (Airborne Early Warning Control System)	7
747 and 707 (Air Fuel Tanker Planes)	24
C-130 Hercules (Transport Plane)	57

Table 7.—Projected Iranian Ordinance Strength. All quantities are unlimited since Iran would assume manufacturing capabilities by 1982.

Munitions
SAM 7 (Anti-aircraft Soviet Union Surface to Air Missile)
Maverick (Air to Surface Medium Range Inferred Seeking Missile)
TOW (Improved Iranian Supersonic Laser Version Missile)
RPG-7 (Soviet Union Anti-tank Grenade Launcher)
Dragon (Attack Guided Missile System)
Oerlimpon (Anti-aircraft Gun)
35mm Gun (Twin Barrel Anti-aircraft Gun)
20mm Gun (Anti-aircraft Gun)

Table 8.—Projected Iranian Naval Strength.

Seaborne Vessels	Quantity
8,000-ton Cruiser	4
Destroyer	12
Combattant II (French built)	12
Submarine (American built)	3
Submarine (West German built)	9
RH-53 (Helicopter, United States Naval)	50

Since December 1976 there had not been an American ambassador to Iran.

President Carter appointed the former American ambassador to the Philippines, William H. Sullivan, as the new ambassador to Iran. Before sending the new ambassador, President Carter met with Sullivan and Brzezinski for briefings on Iran's strategic role. Carter made it clear that America needed to support the Shah in order to maintain security and stability in the Persian Gulf.⁴⁹ President Carter authorized Iran to purchase 1.2 billion dollars worth of newly developed airborne early warning and control system aircraft (AWACS). One restriction that the Carter administration had placed on arms transfers was a prohibition against selling new weaponry to a foreign nation until the weapon has been deployed in the United States armed forces. This policy would discourage the promotion of foreign sales with the intent to lower the unit cost of the weapon for Department of Defense acquisition.⁵⁰ The United States Congress criticized President Carter since the sale of airborne early warning and control systems conflicted with the President's new policy.⁵¹ The airborne early warning and control system was a radar system that could be mounted on a Boeing airplane. The terrain features of Iran were mostly mountainous regions with many inaccessible areas. Iran did not have an adequate radar defense system that could detect enemy aircraft. In order to build a ground-based radar system, Iran

⁴⁹ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 20.

⁵⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, The Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer policy, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 95th Cong., 1st Sess., December 1977, 42.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27-8.

would have to spend billions of dollars on a network of radar stations located on mountain tops to cover all enemy avenues of approach.⁵² The Shah's most cost-effective method for securing Iranian air space was to purchase the American airborne early warning and control system airplanes. When the United States Air Force assessed Iran's situation, it agreed with the Shah. The Shah decided to order ten American airborne early warning and control system airplanes and ground radar.⁵³ Carter committed the United States to deliver seven airborne early warning and control system airplanes to Iran over the period of two years. The sale would require support from four hundred American contractors in Iran for six years.⁵⁴ President Carter's policy on 19 May did not define a method by which the administration would restrain arms sales. Iran's neighbor, Iraq, conducted a large military build up during the mid 1970s. The United States Congress believed that the American sale of weapons to Iran was justified because it would counter Iraq's

⁵² William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 79.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ U.S., Congress, Senate, The Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer policy, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 95th Cong., 1st Sess., December 1977, 37-9.

military build up.⁵⁵ In July 1977 Iraq contracted to purchase thirty-six F-1 Mirage fighters, a new sophisticated fighter developed by the French. Since Iraqi air power would soon improve, the Carter administration saw it necessary to grant the Shah's request for the AWACS.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., 30

⁵⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS OF 1979 REVOLUTION

DIPLOMACY THROUGH CONVENTIONAL CHANNELS

President Carter knew that SAVAK was ruthless in dealing with dissidents and had imprisoned twenty-five hundred political prisoners. Carter's intelligence reports stated that the Iranian standard of living had improved, but opposing parties wanted more participation in Iranian politics.¹ On 15 November 1977 the Shah of Iran visited the White House. The Shah impressed President Carter by briefing him with a superb analysis on Middle East issues in the Persian Gulf. The Shah provided statistics demonstrating Iran's improvements in the standard of living, housing, education and unemployment.² President Carter's intelligence officers informed him that three elements of Iranian society were a potential threat to the Shah's government: the clergy, students, and the middle class. Carter privately complimented the Shah, but also discussed complaints from religious leaders, students, and the new Iranian middle class. President Carter told the Shah that "Iran's reputation in the world is being damaged by their complaints." With tactfulness Carter asked, "Is there anything that can be done to alleviate this problem by closer consultation with the dissident groups and by easing off on some of the strict police policies?"³ After a brief moment of silence, the Shah answered,

¹ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 435.

² Ibid., 436.

³ Ibid.

No, there is nothing I can do. I must enforce the Iranian laws, which are designed to combat communism. This is a very real and dangerous problem for Iran--and, indeed, for the other countries in my area and in the Western world. It may be that when this serious menace is removed, the laws can be changed, but that will not be soon. In any case, the complaints and recent disturbances originate among the very troublemakers against whom the laws have been designed to protect our country. They are really just a tiny minority, and have no support among the vast majority of Iranian people.⁴

President Carter became convinced that the Shah would not change his policies. The human rights issue was a sensitive topic for the two leaders because news reports claimed that the unrest in Iran originated from President Carter's human rights policy. Carter believed the talks with the Shah had gone well and the personal visit seemed to put the two leaders at ease about human rights.

The Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Harold H. Saunders, knew that the government of Iran was abusive in its domestic policies, but that the Shah was willing to make changes to satisfy the Iranian people. United States policy was not to dictate to the Shah or other potential Iranian leaders. America wanted Iranians to choose their own future without external influence.⁵ The United States supported any changes in the Iranian constitution that the Iranian government believed to be appropriate. An important objective for America was that no outside power or country should exploit instability in Iran.⁶ Many people in Iran also were familiar with the United

⁴ Ibid., 436-37.

⁵ U.S.. Congress. House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Policy Toward Iran, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 96th Cong., 1st Sess., 17 January 1979, 24.

⁶ Ibid., 24-25

States involvement in the failed coup attempt by Prime Minister Mossadeq in 1953.⁷ Such interference was not the policy of the Carter administration⁸

Ambassador Sullivan told President Carter that the Shah was losing popularity to a growing movement to establish an Islamic republic. President Carter soon disliked Sullivan's performance enough to want him dismissed in January 1979. Fortunately for Sullivan, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance persuaded the President not to do so. Before Khomeini's February 1979 arrival in Iran, the revolutionary climate would convince Sullivan that the only way to maintain diplomatic channels with Iran would be to negotiate with members of the revolutionary forces.⁹ Before Sullivan arrived in Iran, he had no knowledge of the Iranian language, Farsi, nor did he possess any experience in an Islamic country. It may seem as though the Carter administration had picked the wrong person to serve in Iran. After his appointment, Sullivan studied Islam, Iran, and Farsi as much as possible.

In 1977 there was a massive infrastructure of thirty-five thousand Americans living in Iran with the majority of them working for private American firms.¹⁰ One of Sullivan's first contacts with the private American firms was with Bell Huey. Bell Huey created and

⁷ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 172.

⁸ U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. Policy Toward Iran, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 96th Cong., 1st Sess., 17 January 1979, 36.

⁹ Gary Sick, All Fall Down, (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1985), 159-160.

¹⁰ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 28.

manufactured the Huey helicopter (UH-1) used in Vietnam to revolutionize modern warfare. Bell Huey conducted an aggressive sale of military equipment with plans to manufacture and assemble helicopters in Iran. When the company's president met with Sullivan, there was no indication of Bell Huey turning over its operation to the Iranians. It appeared to Sullivan that Bell Huey planned to stay indefinitely. Sullivan expressed his concern about Bell Huey's desire to stay in Iran permanently. The president of Bell Huey became defensive and Sullivan strongly suggested that Bell Huey establish a deadline when it would turn over its operation completely to Iranian management.¹¹

Ambassador Sullivan paid attention to the Iranian economy. The Shah wanted to assure every Iranian citizen adequate health care, clothing, food, education, and housing. He had decided to implement his plans rapidly, calling these changes a "White Revolution." He wanted to end exploitation, injustice and base the nation on the spiritual principles of individuality and social freedom.¹²

In 1953 the Shah started to change the system of land ownership and in 1963 he passed a new law limiting the amount of privately owned arable land. Some of the private owners were tribal khans who lived in Tehran or abroad and cared little for the peasants living on their estates. The Shah believed that the landowners exploited the peasants working on the land.¹³ The Shah also launched a massive campaign to develop education

¹¹ Ibid., 29.

¹² Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 101.

¹³ Ibid., 102.

with the result that the number of students increased from one-and-one-half million in 1963 to over ten million in 1978. In that same period nursery schools increased over one thousand percent, secondary schools over three hundred percent, and professional schooling over one thousand percent.¹⁴ This rapid increase of the educated portion of Iranian society was unsettling to many adherents to an older order. This resulted in the rejection of the Shah's programs. Ambassador Sullivan contrasted between what he experienced in the Philippines and what was taking place in Iran. In the Philippines there was a shortage of liquid capital and a large educated labor force. A country with less money and a large well-educated work force would be able to absorb a fast-growing industrialized economy. Iran was the opposite of the Philippines. Iran was earning twenty-three billion dollars a year from petroleum revenues.¹⁵ Although education was on the rise, Iran did not possess a well-educated labor force to keep up with the rapid industrialization program that the Shah implemented.

Half of Iran's population of forty million people was under the age of fifteen. According to the Shah's education system, they were not allowed to enter the work force. Half of the pool of potential work force was female and, according to Islam, it was taboo for women to work in an industrial job. The only available pool of men to work consisted of nine million men, half of whom were semiliterate, conservative, rural men.¹⁶ Many of

¹⁴ Ibid., 114.

¹⁵ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 31.

¹⁶ Ibid., 65-6.

these men were conservative Moslems who took offense to the western dress of female foreigners. What was worse for the conservative Iranians was the fact that much of the younger generation of urban Iranians began to develop a taste for western culture.

Although the men from the rural areas made much more money than before, they were unable to spend it satisfactorily because of the surplus of the liquid capital and lack of goods and services.¹⁷ Ambassador Sullivan knew that the Iranian economy was in no shape to cope with the Shah's plans for massive industrialization. Iran's infrastructure could not keep up with the rapid growth of the economy. The transportation system could not keep up with the demand for supply, which slowed down materials for housing. Iran's construction industry could not build houses fast enough to satisfy the rapid rate of urban growth.¹⁸ Although the Shah said there was no unemployment in Iran, there was still a shortage of skilled labor. Prior to the Shah's departure from his country, Iran had more than one-million foreigners assisting in training Iran's work force. Iran grew so rapidly that the trainees could not get out into the work force fast enough to meet the country's needs. In his autobiography the Shah wrote

These weaknesses in our infrastructure played a role in the deterioration of our social and political climate. They contributed to our inflation problem, which we constantly sought to control. I believe these bottlenecks were temporary and that by 1982 Iran would have had the necessary infrastructure to meet its needs.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 140.

¹⁸ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 123.

¹⁹ Ibid.

If only the temper of Iranian society had held out a little longer, the Shah believed that he could have made Iran a great civilization.

Sullivan frequently discussed issues with the Shah, and on at least one occasion the Shah was honest and open. The Shah trusted and depended on Sullivan for guidance and Washington's opinion. The Shah accused the Russians of taking the northern half of Iran while Great Britain took the southern half of Iran as a result of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 30 August 1907.²⁰ This colonialism lasted until Reza Shah, Mohammad Pahlavi's father, reunited Iran after World War I. The Allies attempted to impose the same arrangement by offering Stalin a proposal to divide Iran in December 1945 during Pahlavi Shah's reign. The Shah explained that these two events were proof of failed attempts to destroy the integrity of Iran only to be followed by a third attempt in 1979 engineered by the West.²¹

The Shah and his adversaries paid much attention to America's Vietnam policies. Pahlavi Shah commented in his biography that he was haunted by the American handling of Vietnam.²² The Shah had less respect for America than for France when comparing their policies toward Vietnam. The Americans wanted to mold Vietnam in their own image, whereas the French knew when to quit. The Shah particularly remembered America's leader for South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem who served as president of South

²⁰ Ibid., 77.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 27-8.

Vietnam in 1963. Diem was not able to placate South Vietnam's dissident groups while facing the increasing communist threat supported by North Vietnam.²³ Because of his inability, President Diem could not satisfy President John Kennedy's desire to see South Vietnam's dissident groups take a more docile stance. If South Vietnam's political turmoil continued, Kennedy believed that President Diem would not be an effective leader. Kennedy arranged to have the United States ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, encourage the generals of Diem's government to conduct a coup d' etat.²⁴ Journalists reported that Diem would not conform to the democratic desires of the Kennedy administration. He commented that Diem's removal was authorized by the Kennedy administration. The Shah believed that Diem had done a fine job of combating communist incursions and had held the initiative against the Viet Cong. He interpreted Diem's removal as a turning point in the Vietnam era; South Vietnam lost the initiative to the Viet Cong after Diem's assassination and never regained it.²⁵

Pahlavi Shah believed that members in the Carter administration, especially State Department members close to Senator George McGovern, preferred Iran to be controlled by an Islamic republic. According to the Shah "McGovernite State Department" members wanted the Shah to leave Iran. The media also pressured the Shah to reform his government according to the desires of human rights advocates. The Shah believed that

²³ Stanley Karnow, Vietnam A History, (New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1983), 277.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 28.

the West had a double standard and expected Iran to conform to a Western democracy that was not compatible for his country.²⁶ The Shah admitted that he had made mistakes while governing Iran, but commented that they alone could not have contributed to the loss of his throne. Western culture did not have a good understanding of Iranian culture and history. The West ignored Iran for centuries but saw it as a corridor between India and the Near East. Russia's long desire was to gain warm water ports in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf, which the former Soviet Union could easily obtain by a thrust south from the Soviet-Iranian border.²⁷

The Shah had always had differences with the media and at times they were not sensitive to Iran's culture. When President Eisenhower visited the Shah in 1959, the ruler followed the Iranian tradition of posting an honor guard from the airport to the palace for visiting heads of state. The media did not understand the meaning of this Iranian custom of honoring the President of the United States and reported that the Shah placed troops along the President's route to protect him from possible threats. During the Shah's annual move to his summer palace on the Caspian Sea, Western news reporters said that the Shah fled Tehran to take refuge in Northern Iran.²⁸ On many occasions the Shah tried to explain his position to foreign news agencies in news conferences, interviews, and appearances on American television. His goal was to help Western journalists understand

²⁶ Ibid., 21-3.

²⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁸ Ibid., 147.

Iran's history, culture and problems. The Shah commented that he thought that his style and personality might have been a little too over confident and may have been interpreted as arrogance. The Shah said the problem with Western journalist was that their perception of Iran was driven by their Western frame of thought. "They never looked at Iran as a Middle Eastern nation bordering on the Soviet Union and with a vastly different cultural and religious value system. Thus, they unfairly categorized my regime as repressive."²⁹

The Shah was appreciative about a November 1977 report in Time Magazine about Iran being less of a police state and permitting greater individual freedom. The Shah appreciated the deep friendship the United States had with Iran during the Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford administrations. President Carter made a favorable impression on the Shah during his visit to Tehran. Carter called Iran an island of stability, expressed his gratitude, friendship, and complimented the Shah, which he deeply appreciated.³⁰

As the Shah's throne crumbled, he expressed his frustrations with the American leadership to Ambassador Sullivan. The Shah spoke to Sullivan about assaults on governmental authority and defiance towards law and order. Much of the rebellion came not only from university students, but from religious factions, merchants, and industrial workers.³¹ The Shah believed that the wide-spread rebellion was not just a spontaneous

²⁹ Ibid., 148.

³⁰ Ibid., 152.

³¹ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 156.

outbreak of insubordination, but proof of a sophisticated conspiracy planned by a foreign government. The Shah told Sullivan that the Soviet Committee for State Security (KGB) was not capable of forming a revolution of that magnitude. Therefore, the British and the American Central Intelligence Agency had to be involved.³² The Shah broke down in a very emotional state and asked why President Carter would sponsor rebellion in Iran. The Shah asked Sullivan what he might have done to offend America. He asked why Carter had turned against him and reminded Sullivan of his visits to Washington and Carter's to Tehran.³³ Finally, the Shah told Sullivan that America had made some kind of deal with the Soviets in order to divide Iran between the two superpowers.

During the conversation, the Shah lost composure and became engulfed with confusion and anxiety. Sullivan later reported, "The Shah was clearly distraught, his whole manner pleading--almost pathetic. I was frankly astounded by what I had just heard."³⁴ Shocked and staggered by the Shah's outburst, Sullivan reassured him that it had always been the policy of the United States to support the Shah.³⁵ To convince the Shah that America had nothing to do with Iran's domestic problems, Sullivan thought it would be appropriate to share United States embassy staff reports pertaining to Iranian dissident incidents. Ambassador Sullivan traced each incident and concluded that the they

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., 157.

³⁵ Ibid., 157.

could not be caused by the United States or any foreign conspirators. In his autobiography he did not state exactly what the incidents were or how the embassy staff obtained and analyzed the information, but Sullivan believed that the Shah took his conclusions as factual. The Shah paid careful attention to Sullivan and appeared amazed about the embassy's knowledge on Iranian dissidents. Neither Iranian nor foreign newspapers published information about these particular incidences. The Shah thought some organization had to be responsible for financing the dissidents' campaigns against the government. He knew that the Iranian clergy did not have enough money to finance the dissidents; therefore, a third party must have been involved.³⁶ The Ambassador did not know the specifics about financial transactions, but he concluded that the Iranian bazaars provided funds for the dissident groups.

Traditionally bazaars have been an integral part of trade, commerce, and Middle Eastern society. Bazaars are primitive structures with small booths selling a large variety of goods that attracted large crowds. The Iranian bazaars had association with politics and have been the center of finance and social reform throughout Iran's history. Financially, the bazaars had a direct link with the Shi'ite clergy.³⁷ The Shah was shocked that the bazaars would turn against him since they had supported his father in the past. Again the Shah's reform and westernization of Iran contributed to the opposition of the bazaars. Because they had little ventilation or sunshine, the Shah believed that the bazaars

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 100.

were unhealthy, old and no longer fit modern Iran. In their place were to be supermarkets that would match the modernization and evolution of Iranian society. Knowing that the bazaar merchants would not give up their locations and cash flow, the Shah continued to build new supermarkets. During the Shah's exile he wrote in his autobiography, "moving against the bazaars was typical of the political and social risk I had to take in my drive for modernization."³⁸

At the end of their conversation, Sullivan became acutely aware that the Shah was limping. The Shah might have been showing the first signs of impaired health.³⁹ The Shah may not have fully disclosed his political and health problems early in the Carter administration. If that was the case, he certainly was not covering up his political turmoil or misleading Sullivan into believing that Iran's domestic problems were of no concern. While the Shah may have intended to hide his physical ailment, the ruler shared his domestic problems and even volunteered to negotiate with Khomeini.

The Shah had planned to meet with many political leaders of Iran's past. One of the most distinct figures was Ali Amini, a former prime minister and a favorite of the Americans.⁴⁰ Amini was to act as a mediator between the Shah and the Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah was willing to delegate authority to a prime minister who would operate in same way as a Western European nation, and he would allow the Iranian

³⁸ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 156.

³⁹ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 158.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 186.

parliament to nominate the prime minister.⁴¹ Authority delegated to the prime minister would include full management of Iranian petroleum, restoration of constitutional powers to the parliament, and more democracy in Iran's political structure. However, the Shah was not willing to release control over the military and its budget. The Shah believed he was responsible for the defense of Iran, so he stated that the Iranian armed forces were an "instrument of the king." Disagreeing with the Shah's desire to retain control of the military, Amini left for Paris to see if Khomeini's followers would agree to a compromise.⁴² When he returned to Tehran to meet with Sullivan, Amini reported that the Ayatollah would not accept any compromise and that the Shah would need to take an extended vacation from Iran. At first the Shah was unenthusiastic about leaving and reluctant to hand over the military's budget to the parliament, but he soon gave in to the two demands. The Shah did make the right moves, but Sullivan thought they were too little and too late.⁴³

In the beginning of November 1978, President Carter began receiving reports from Sullivan expressing the need to hear revolutionary leaders. Carter did not dismiss his concerns, but informed Secretary Vance to instruct all State Department officials to assure the Shah on Carter's support. President Carter was concerned that the Soviet Union would exploit the Iranian crisis. The Soviets had already attempted to control Iran on

⁴¹ Ibid., 186-187.

⁴² Ibid., 187.

⁴³ Ibid., 189-190.

three different occasions this century. The Soviet Union accused Carter of tampering with Iranian politics. Through public news broadcasts as well as private conversations, President Leonid Brezhnev and President Carter warned each other not to intervene in Iran's internal affairs.⁴⁴

In Washington, National Security Advisor Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski reported to the President that the Shah was becoming discouraged while the President insisted on implementing liberalization in Iran. Brzezinski then held a meeting with the Special Coordinating Committee (SCC) telling its members that the Shah might abdicate. Brzezinski said the ambassador from Iran, Ardeshir Zahedi, reported that Sullivan's reports to the Shah were vague. Brzezinski proposed that they send Sullivan a cable re-emphasizing President Carter's support. The meeting closed with the committee agreeing that the Shah needed clarification of America's strong support. Cyrus Vance also supported the Special Coordinating Committee's message. Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski signed the White House cable and sent it on 2 November 1978.⁴⁵

On the highest authority and with Cy Vance's concurrence you are instructed to tell the Shah as soon as possible:

1. The United States supports him without reservation in the present crisis.
2. We have confidence in the Shah's judgment regarding the specific decisions that may be needed concerning the form and composition of government; we also recognize the need for decisive action and leadership to restore order and his own authority. With respect to the coalition government alternative, our position is that this is up to the Shah if he feels that such an alternative is viable and preferable. We are not pressing for it. The same applies to a military government. Whichever route he goes

⁴⁴ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 440-41.

⁴⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 362-63.

we will support his decision fully. (FYI: in response to your question: a military government under the Shah is overwhelmingly preferable to a military government without the Shah.)

3. That once order and authority have been restored we hope that he will resume prudent efforts to promote liberalization and to eradicate corruption.⁴⁶

On the next day Brzezinski spoke directly to the Shah by telephone. He reiterated United States support, for restructuring of the government, should the Shah decide to do so. Lastly Brzezinski strongly reassured the Shah by stating that the Carter administration would allow him freedom to develop his own solutions. The Shah asked if Washington had briefed Sullivan about Washington's support. Brzezinski reassured the Shah that Sullivan received the cable of instructions and that the President thought it would be a good idea to act with force before the situation became uncontrollable.⁴⁷ The Shah's generals were persuading him to use the Iranian armed forces to restore order by arresting the dissidents, but the Shah was not convinced that a military government was an effective alternative.

Washington sent at least three emissaries to reassure the Shah that the United States had not changed its policy, that American support for the Shah was the same as in the past. Washington informed Sullivan about the plan to send emissaries to speak with the Shah, but it seemed that Washington did not want to work with the Shah through Sullivan.⁴⁸ One of the emissaries was Robert C. Byrd, Senate Majority Leader. Robert

⁴⁶ Ibid., 364.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 365.

⁴⁸ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 193-196.

Byrd had a long interest in Iran and he actually had a son-in-law from Iran. When Senator Byrd asked Sullivan about his assessment of the Shah's situation, he was surprised at Sullivan's negativity. In a briefing led by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Byrd was informed that the Shah was ready to resolve the political turmoil. According to what Byrd learned from the briefing, the Shah was confused by conflicting instructions from Washington's State Department and the American embassy in Tehran.⁴⁹ By not working directly with Sullivan and using Byrd, Carter undermined Sullivan. Byrd's mission was to tell the Shah that the United States encouraged him to defend his throne and that America would support his efforts.⁵⁰ Sullivan was not informed about Byrd's mission until he met with Byrd. Believing that the Shah could not survive politically, Sullivan encouraged him to appease Khomeini and then salvage some American influence on Iran's military power. Sullivan thought the best outcome of the crisis would be a compromise with Khomeini since the revolution would prevail. The Shah had developed a special relationship of trust with Ambassador Sullivan. It was a good idea for Carter to send emissaries to the Shah in order to restore his confidence in the United States; however, by not restoring his confidence through the use of Ambassador Sullivan, the Shah was left confused as to what actions America wanted him to take.

If the Shah were to use his military and SAVAK, the revolution would still continue and terrorism would grow. In Sullivan's assessment, a compromise would result

⁴⁹ Ibid., 197.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

in worsening American--Iranian relations, but a continued joint effort to deter Soviet control of the Persian Gulf.⁵¹ Iran would turn anti-Israel and American influence on Iran's military would drop considerably. Iran would end up creating a parliament and making a new constitution. Not knowing fully about the Ayatollah's intentions, Sullivan assumed Khomeini and the religious leaders would be satisfied with this outcome because they would have achieved their goal of eliminating the Shah and gaining control over the military.⁵² On 9 November 1978, Sullivan cabled his prognosis and proposed compromise to Washington entitled, "Thinking the Unthinkable." Various administration officials, including Zbigniew Brezinski, tried to prove that the Shah could survive and that Sullivan was wrong. In Zbigniew Brezinski's memoirs, he explained that supporting a coalition government would undermine the Shah's alliance with the United States and would not reflect American support of such a strong ally. His interpretation of Sullivan's cable was that Iranian military officers and Khomeini were anti-Communist and that the junior officers were pro-Western. Therefore, Iran would still have strong ties with America. The Iranian clergy would most likely retain the armed forces instead of dismantling them since the clergy would need a tool to control order. Khomeini would inevitably return to Iran as a "Gandhi-like" figure to guide an election that would most likely result in an Islamic Republic.⁵³ Sullivan's cable led decision makers in Washington to believe that the

⁵¹ Ibid., 202-203.

⁵² Ibid., 202.

⁵³ Zbigniew Brezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 367-68.

Ambassador was not encouraging the Shah to remain in power. Vice President Walter Mondale asked if Sullivan was the right choice to carry out American policy in Iran. Cyrus Vance commented positively by pointing out that Sullivan had been in difficult situations. In reference to Sullivan's prior service in Laos, Mondale responded by saying, "He has lost all of them, hasn't he?"⁵⁴

Sullivan thought that he would gain the attention of Washington and that the Administration would promptly instruct him to carry out a new policy towards Iran. After waiting two months, Sullivan did not receive any answer from Washington.⁵⁵ The Iranian economy, rejection of the influx of western culture, and the massive rioting should have been ample proof of more than mild political unrest, but the potential for enormous change. Experience in Iran and his growing friendship with the Shah convinced Sullivan that Iran was in a pre-revolutionary state with an irrevocable progression towards revolution. The Carter administration did not take Sullivan's warnings seriously and never offered an explanation of Washington's nonchalant attitude. The only instruction that Carter offered to Sullivan was to assure the Shah of America's support for his monarchy. Other than that, Washington gave Sullivan very little instruction. For the most part, the Shah wanted to rely on America for guidance. As he stated in his autobiography,

Whenever I met with Sullivan and asked him to confirm these official statements, he promised he would. But a day or two later he would return, gravely shake his head and say that he had received "no instructions" and therefore could not comment. Sullivan appeared to me always polite, always grave, always concerned. He came to see me

⁵⁴ Ibid., 368.

⁵⁵ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 204.

several times a week. He seemed to take seriously everything I said to him. But his answer was always the same: "I have received no instructions."⁵⁶

The Shah delegated governing authority to his chief of staff and Prime Minister, General Gholem Reza Azhari, but was still reluctant to grant him authority to use military force to regain control of Iran. On 21 December 1978, an important communiqué from Azhari reinforced Sullivan's opinion about the Iranian armed forces which would create division in Washington. Azhari's doctors had confined him to rest after a mild cardiac problem. Prime Minister Azhari told Sullivan of his problems carrying out the Shah's order of martial law.⁵⁷ The Shah permitted soldiers only to fire warning shots in the air as their last resort. Azhari explained to Sullivan that the military had been in streets for four months and dissident groups seemed to be taking advantage of the soldiers' limits. According to Azhari, the soldiers were being abused and all they could do was fire in the air, yet they still tried to enforce martial law. At the end of their meeting Azhari said, "You must know this and you must tell it to your government. This country is lost because the king cannot make up his mind."⁵⁸

When Sullivan had become convinced that the Shah had lost confidence in his own ability to restore order in Iran, the Ambassador decided to continue meeting with the leaders of the Iranian military and the Shah's opposition. Sullivan intended to prevent the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 191-192, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Answer to History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 161.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 210-12.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 212.

disintegration of the Iranian armed forces that America had built. Sullivan again reported to Washington that the Iranian military had failed to restore law and order and that the Shah would inevitably lose power. He believed the Iranian military was impotent and he was going to carry out his 9 November 1978 contingency plan of speaking to the Shah's opposition and seeking a compromise. Washington informed Sullivan two days later that the policy of the United States was to continue supporting the Shah. According to Sullivan, Washington did not instruct him not to talk with the Shah's opposition.⁵⁹

On the Washington end Zbigniew Brzezinski spoke to the President about the need to give the Shah guidance. On 28 December 1978, Brzezinski met with Secretary Vance, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, Deputy Secretary of Defense Charles Duncan, and Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner. The four convinced Vance to send a strong message of support despite Vance's skepticism. Vance sent the message to Ambassador Sullivan, and instructed him of the need to discontinue the Iranian military's unclear role.⁶⁰ If at all possible, the administration would prefer a moderate civilian government that could work with the United States and the Shah to preserve civil order. If the Iranian government could not achieve stability or the army continue to loss continuity, the Shah should immediately install a decisive military government to end violence, disorder, and bloodshed. As Vance instructed Sullivan to relay the message to

⁵⁹ Ibid., 212.

⁶⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 375.

the Shah, he added that American support would be steady and that it was essential to end Iran's uncertain trend.⁶¹

Sullivan was convinced that the Shah would fall and knew that the Iranian armed forces had already failed to restore law and order. He also knew the Shah wanted to find an opposition leader to assume the role of Prime Minister. Among the Shah's top choices was Dr. Shahpour Bakhtiar of the National Front. Dr. Bakhtiar, educated in France, was articulate and charming, but Sullivan's staff did not believe that he would be an effective political leader. Strangely enough, although Bakhtiar was the Shah's choice, the ruler actually agreed with Sullivan about Bakhtiar's lacking political potential.⁶² Bakhtiar served as vice-president of the National Front organization consisting of men who were affiliated with the Social Democratic party led by the 1953 coup leader, Mohammed Mossadeq. In 1978, the Iranian police arrested many members of the National Front. The members of the National Front did not claim to be communists, but the Shah treated them as tools of communism and had many imprisoned.⁶³

Sullivan communicated with Washington by teletype and recommended that an official be sent to Paris to negotiate with the Ayatollah Khomeini.⁶⁴ While relaying this new proposal to Washington, Sullivan personally spoke with Secretary Vance on a secure

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 213.

⁶³ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 214.

telephone to explain it. Vance later informed Sullivan by teletype that the Department of State accepted his proposal. Vance chose a career foreign-service officer, Theodore L. Eliot, to be Washington's representative to negotiate with Khomeini. Theodore L. Eliot was the Inspector General of the Foreign Service and had just finished four years as the ambassador to Afghanistan. Eliot, who spoke fluent Farsi, had previously served as economic counselor in Tehran. Sullivan knew that Eliot was the right choice and that he would be able to deal positively with Khomeini. Washington instructed Sullivan to inform the Shah of the intention to communicate with Khomeini and to let the Shah know that he was free to object to the proposed plan. The Shah did not object to sending Eliot and expressed his desire to be updated as to the results of the mission. Sullivan cabled the results of his meeting to Washington and the Eliot mission was to begin on 6 January 1979.⁶⁵

Brzezinski believed that the Shah still kept open the option of a stiff military government; yet, because of the Shah's continued indecisiveness, Washington needed clearer analysis. The Carter administration concluded that it would be best if the Shah left, but an American military official would enter Iran to stabilize the armed forces and act as an emissary on behalf of Washington. Sullivan inquired whether he should ask the Shah to leave Iran to give Bakhtiar opportunity to lead the country. On 3 January 1979, Dr. Brzezinski met with the Special Coordinating Committee to decide how to answer

⁶⁵ Ibid., 223.

Sullivan's question.⁶⁶ Vance and Turner agreed that the Shah should leave Iran, but Brzezinski believed that asking the Shah to leave would undermine the United States alliance with the Shah. If the United States reacted hastily, other American allies would not respect America's commitment during a crisis. Brzezinski believed that the Iranians depended on America for psychological support; if the United States pulled out, Iran would move toward civil war. President Carter wanted the message to Sullivan worded in such a way that the Shah would know that the United States approved whatever the Shah's decision may be.⁶⁷ Carter said that the Iranian parliament and Bakhtiar might not necessarily be anti-American. In fact, President Carter thought that there was a chance that the change could stabilize Iran. Brzezinski added that if the Shah did leave, the United States should make a clear commitment that it would support the Iranian military.

The committee agreed that the Shah should leave Iran and that he would be welcomed in America. Another result of the meeting was to have Air Force General Robert E. Huyser, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army European Command, sent to reassure the Iranian military of American support.⁶⁸ General Huyser's mission was to keep President Carter informed about the integrity of the Iranian armed forces. Secretary Brown and President Carter decided that Huyser would give the Iranian generals encouragement and confidence. Huyser was to stay in Iran even if the Shah left.

⁶⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 376.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 377.

General Huyser would also give President Carter a day-to-day description of the military's needs. President Carter did not assign Ambassador Sullivan this task because the President believed Sullivan was unable to present accurate reports about the Iranian military.⁶⁹ Brzezinski told Carter to expect political and domestic repercussions after America's evacuation of American citizens. Brzezinski did not want either the Iranian government or the generals to interpret the evacuation as America's intent to withdraw support. National Security Council Advisor Brzezinski figured that if the administration gave the Iranian generals a clear green light, one of the generals would take the initiative and emerge as a strong leader. Carter and Brzezinski worded the cable to the Iranian military and the last cable to the Shah. Brzezinski did not say to order a coup d'etat, but he wanted to let the Iranian generals know that the United States would support them. Once the Shah left, he would no longer be a player in Iranian politics. The fear of Carter and the Committee was that the top military leaders might also flee the country when the Shah departed. Should that take place, they believed that a civil war might erupt which the Soviet Union would exploit. Iran under the influence of the Soviet Union and Khomeini was a primary nightmare for President Carter.⁷⁰

On 4 January 1979, Vance phoned Carter to relay an urgent message from Sullivan. The Iranian generals did not want the Shah to leave Iran, so they planned to

⁶⁹ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 443.

⁷⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 378-79.

seize control. Mondale and Vance were against a military coup and wanted Carter to soften Huyser's message to the generals. To avoid future repercussions, Brzezinski urged Carter to encourage the generals to conduct the coup. President Carter did not take sides with Mondale, Vance or Brzezinski. Carter's decision was to keep Huyser's original message to the Iranian generals. The coup turned out to be a bluff by the Shah to pressure Bakhtiar.⁷¹

President Carter sent General Huyser to Iran on 4 January 1979. He spent his first day in Iran with Brigadier General Howie Stone, Army Section Chief of the United States Military Assistance and Advisory Group. General Huyser was to meet Ambassador Sullivan at the American embassy in Tehran on the next day.⁷² During the early morning of 5 January 1979, the American embassy duty officer woke up Sullivan to give him a cable from Washington. The cable stated that President Carter had canceled Theodore Eliot's mission and that Sullivan was to inform the Shah. The Washington cable did not explain why the mission was canceled and did not invite Sullivan to offer a response. Sullivan cabled a short message to Vance saying that President Carter was making a big mistake and that he should reconsider the cancellation.⁷³ Sullivan's reply to Washington did not find favor with the administration or the President. Brzezinski showed the telegram to Carter. Sullivan said the President's decision was "insane," and requested that

⁷¹ Ibid., 380.

⁷² General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 21-23.

⁷³ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 224.

Vance and Brown ask the President to reconsider. Ambassador Sullivan's behavior during the formulation of possible negotiations with Khomeini was described as "erratic." Sullivan's language about the President created animosity in their relationship and diminished Sullivan's standing.⁷⁴

After Sullivan sent his reply, General Huyser arrived at the American embassy. Sullivan gave him a cable from Secretary Vance instructing Huyser to disregard all previous instructions and to wait for new orders from Washington. Huyser's intuition told him that the Department of Defense, Department of State and Executive Branch must not be in agreement. Disagreement over his mission was not a good sign and the only thing he could do was to await further instructions and to be briefed by Sullivan.⁷⁵ Sullivan briefed Huyser about the current status of the Iranian military and the potential of the new government that was to take office after the Shah left Iran. The Shah was to appoint Shahpur Bakhtiar as Prime Minister of Iran. Sullivan said that the Iranian military was already impotent and that a new government led by Shahpur Bakhtiar should not even be considered. Sullivan believed that the United States should contact Mehdi Bazargan, head of the National Front. Bazargan was Khomeini's top representative and was most likely to be approved by Khomeini as Iran's Prime Minister once Khomeini returned to Iran.⁷⁶ Huyser and Sullivan agreed that only Huyser would contact the Iranian military and only

⁷⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 381.

⁷⁵ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 23-24.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 24, 191.

Sullivan would contact Bakhtiar who represented the political body of Iran. Huyser later regretted making that agreement since it limited direct contact with Bakhtiar.⁷⁷

The following day, 6 January 1979, Secretary Vance sent a cable informing Sullivan that the Vice-president, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Treasury, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the National Security Advisor agreed with the President's decision to cancel the Eliot mission. Because there was no detailed explanation, Sullivan believed that Washington did not have a policy pertaining to Iran, except to wait for the Shah to restore order.⁷⁸

One of the Carter administration's earlier misconceptions was the assumption that the Shah could endure the political turmoil by using his military and SAVAK. Time after time the Carter administration ignored Sullivan's advice and instructed the American embassy to wait patiently for the Shah to restore order. Carter ignored Sullivan's proposals preferring to believe that the Shah would miraculously prevail. In the end the Shah believed that America had some kind of big surprise that would ultimately save his throne. During one of Sullivan's meetings with the Shah, Sullivan informed him that Washington had canceled the Eliot mission to speak with the Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah was surprised and concluded that America had abandoned him.

When I told him of the instructions I had received from Washington, he became agitated. He asked why the mission had been canceled. I said I had received no information on that score. He then asked how we expected to influence these people if

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁸ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 224-25.

we would not even talk with them. He threw up his hands in despair and asked what we intended to do now. I had no answer.⁷⁹

The Shah thought America would save his regime, while the Carter administration believed that the Shah could handle the problem himself. Even after he was exiled, the Shah still believed some kind of grand design would put an end to the Iranian rebellion. Because the Shah thought there was a link between the communist world and the Iranian revolutionaries. He admitted that he was convinced the Western powers would not allow such a vital area of interest as Iran to be lost to communist expansionists.⁸⁰

The first major incident that directly involved the American embassy should have led Washington to expect a seizure of American hostages. On Christmas eve of 1978, a mob burned an embassy vehicle outside the front gate and threw objects over the front wall. The American embassy Marines launched tear gas to disperse the mob. A few energized individuals stayed and attempted to break down the gate while some climbed up the walls. The only thing that stopped the pandemonium was automatic weapons fired in the air by an Iranian army unit detailed to guard the American embassy.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibid., 226.

⁸⁰ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 13.

⁸¹ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 217-18.

CHAPTER 3

WASHINGTON'S SECRET EMISSARY

General Huyser's mission was to convince the Shah's generals that President Carter supported Prime Minister Bakhtiar and the Iranian military. Huyser was to stay until the Iranian generals convinced him that they would support Bakhtiar and not flee the country when the Shah departed. Huyser was to make sure that Iranian armed forces maintained cohesion.¹ On 7 January 1979, Huyser saw a headline on the bottom front page of the Tehran Journal stating, "Top U.S. Military Officer Here."² According to the article, diplomatic sources said General Robert Huyser was to down-size American military advisors.

The British Broadcasting Corporation speculated that Huyser's job was to inform the Shah's generals that America would support Bakhtiar and that the generals should do the same. Huyser looked at a different newspaper and it had a similar headline with the same content in its article.³ By the third day his secret mission had been publicized throughout the Iranian press and by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

One of the main problems of the Iranian military was its philosophy of leadership. The Iranian military modeled its equipment after the United States, but not its leadership. In the United States military, officer candidates are taught to take initiative. During

¹ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 65.

² "Top U.S. Military Officer Here," Tehran Journal, 7 January 1979, 1.

³ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 43.

training, the United States army would rather have its junior officers make mistakes than be passive in leadership. If communications are inoperative in the heat of a battle, the ideal American officer is expected to be innovative and complete the mission rather than claim no orders were given. During the Shah's reign, Iranian officers were taught to wait for further guidance rather than take the initiative. Not just the military, but all Iranians had a history of waiting for the proper guidance from leaders. When the Shah's father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, ruled Iran, he was a thorough inspector. The Shah commented in his biography about his father's leadership. "As a ruler, he was out with his people all time. He inspected everything, not just the armed forces. Sometimes I thought he supervised every stone put atop another."⁴

In his autobiography, Huyser explained that the Shah was very disappointed that Washington did not make any diplomatic efforts directly with the Ayatollah Khomeini. The economic infrastructure of Iran was collapsing because of massive strikes and food was not getting through customs. The Shah thought that Khomeini could be reasoned with to reduce suffering and hunger in Iran. The Shah also believed the Bakhtiar government would not succeed without support from Khomeini. Ambassador Sullivan, General Huyser and the Shah wanted Washington to negotiate directly with the Ayatollah Khomeini.⁵ Like Sullivan's, Huyser's suggestions were ignored without explanation.

I reported that we had not yet had any success in arranging a meeting between the military and religious leaders. The military had tried, that same day, but without

⁴ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 53-4.

⁵ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 80.

success. I thought it was essential to have contact so as to establish ground-rules for the demonstration two days hence. I reminded the Secretary that it would be directed by Khomeini and said it was my opinion -- and that of the Shah, the Iranian military leaders and the US Ambassador -- that Washington should make direct contact with Khomeini. Harold Brown [Assistant Secretary of Defense] said there were doubts in Washington whether this would be the proper thing to do. I acknowledged that there might be a good reason for this, but said that I would welcome some clue as to what the objection was, because we needed to give some explanation to Tehran. Again, I got no answer.⁶

Huyser received messages repeating that his mission was to support an Iranian government friendly to the United States. In one message over a secure phone, Washington anticipated that a coup would be appropriate if Iran did not have a government sympathetic to America.⁷ The Chief of the Iranian Air Force, General Amir Hossein Rabii, continued to express a desire for a coup. Huyser recommended that the Iranian generals conduct a coup provided that a well-thought-out plan be drawn up, but the Bakhtiar government must first be given a chance.⁸

General Huyser had complete confidence that the military and Bakhtiar could gain control of Iran, and relayed this confidence to Washington. Huyser's reports to Secretary of Defense Harold Brown stated that a military coup would work if need be. Sullivan's faith in the military and Bakhtiar was not as optimistic as Huyser; Sullivan was more comfortable with the United States negotiating directly with Khomeini.⁹ The Iranian

⁶ Ibid., Huyser to Brown, 134.

⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁸ Ibid., 93.

⁹ Ibid., 99.

generals also wanted the United States to talk with Khomeini directly. General Huyser believed Khomeini's return could result in serious repercussion if the United States did not first reach an understanding with Khomeini.¹⁰

President Carter and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski attended a summit meeting with leaders of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom on the island of Guadeloupe. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance contacted Carter and Brzezinski several times to pass on Sullivan's request for direct contact with the Ayatollah Khomeini. President Carter and Brzezinski discussed Sullivan's request with the result that Brzezinski instructed Vance to see if the Shah would agree. When Vance called again, he reported that the Shah approved Sullivan's request. Brzezinski believed that speaking to Khomeini directly could shape the confidence of the Iranian generals. Brzezinski thought a decision this important needed more study; therefore, he asked Vance to wait until President Carter returned to Washington.¹¹ The President assigned Vance and Mondale to stay in Washington to monitor the Shah's situation. Carter became disturbed by Ambassador Sullivan's behavior and desire for the Shah to abdicate. Carter stated in his memoir that he later learned that Sullivan's reports were not balanced or precise.¹²

Carter wanted a broader variety of opinions, but as time passed, Huyser's judgment and calm demeanor gained the respect of Carter. The Iranian military leaders

¹⁰ Ibid., 99-100.

¹¹ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 380.

¹² Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 444.

informed Sullivan that they intended to put the Shah on an Iranian island, take over the government, and clean up Iran. Sullivan believed that the Shah was behind the plan and deliberately made himself unavailable to avoid admitting his knowledge of a coup attempt. Carter instructed Vance to preserve the United States' relationship with the Shah in order to obtain better information about Iran's outcome.¹³

During the Guadeloupe meetings, Carter consulted with the leaders of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. All three leaders thought that the Shah should leave Iran as soon as possible and that a civilian government should take his place. They also supported preservation of Iran's military forces. The three European leaders did not support the revolutionaries or the Ayatollah Khomeini. The President of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, told Carter that he decided to deport Khomeini to save France from appearing as a cause of negative diplomatic efforts and contention. What stopped the deportation was the Shah's request to keep Khomeini in France. He believed that Khomeini could be a bigger threat from Libya or Iraq.¹⁴

Brzezinski, Deputy National Security Advisor David Aaron, Brown, Vance, Mondale and President Carter met on 10 January 1979 to discuss Vance's options. Secretary Vance had become convinced that Sullivan's request for negotiations with Khomeini should be approved. Brzezinski believed that Khomeini would not be flexible and that American public opinion would not approve. He also feared the Iranian military

¹³ Ibid., 444-45.

¹⁴ Ibid., 445.

would dissolve if it interpreted a communiqué with Khomeini as the end of American support. Such an initiative would also undermine the Bakhtiar government. At the end of the meeting President Carter decided to ask the French government to contact Khomeini.¹⁵ Because of his calm demeanor, General Huyser became the President's primary source. President Carter considered diplomatic efforts with Khomeini, but decided against them since such efforts would weaken the Bakhtiar government. For this reason, President Carter asked President Giscard to see if Khomeini would consider supporting Bakhtiar. Khomeini's answer was that Bakhtiar's government was not acceptable.¹⁶

Khomeini believed that a military coup d'etat could take place, but he did not publicly express much concern; he referred to the coup "as a last brick thrown by the regime against the people."¹⁷ Khomeini believed that the Iranian people would fight any regime until an Islamic republic was in power. Khomeini was not satisfied with the Bakhtiar government because it was the product of the Shah and the senate and parliament had not approved the new cabinet. He stated that only the clergy could authorize a new cabinet and that he did not want to hold any office, but would act as a guide for Iran. If the United States did not intervene in Iranian affairs and would remove its military

¹⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983), 380-81.

¹⁶ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 446.

¹⁷ "Army Coup Last Brick: Khomeini," Tehran Journal, 10 January 1979, 1.

advisors, Khomeini commented that those actions would be appreciated. Khomeini told reporters that he wanted Iran to have good relations with all nations including the Soviet Union so long as they would not intervene in Iranian affairs.¹⁸ Without explanation Khomeini said Iran would not sell oil to Israel and South Africa because the two nations had unjust policies. In explaining his position towards the Americans, Khomeini stated, “The United States evidently wants to have all countries under its influence...but in following the example of our people, other countries will rid themselves of colonialism.”¹⁹ He believed he had enough authority to create a “Council of Islamic Revolution,” for the purpose of establishing a provisional government.

In accordance with the rights conferred by the law of Islam and on the basis of the vote of confidence given to me by the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people...a temporary council has been appointed, to be known as the Council of the Islamic Revolution. Composed of competent, committed and trustworthy Muslims, it will soon begin functioning. The composition of this council will be disclosed at the first appropriate occasion. Well-defined and specific task have been assigned [sic] to this council. It has been entrusted with the task of examining and studying conditions for the establishment of a transitional government and making all necessary preliminary arrangements. The composition of the transitional government will also be disclosed at the first opportunity and appropriate moment.²⁰

The Iranian generals feared that Khomeini would undermine the Bakhtiar government and establish Iran as an Islamic republic. Some Iranian generals contemplated destroying Khomeini’s plane or diverting it to a different country. Secretary Brown was

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, (New York: State University of New York Press Albany, 1980), 172-73.

certain that Khomeini would return once the Shah left Iran. If Khomeini should return, the fear was that the generals' actions against the Ayatollah could lead to civil war. To prevent Iranian civil disorder, President Carter desired that a coup attempt be only an alternative should the Bakhtiar government fall.²¹ Huyser had noticed that there seemed to be two different views in Washington, that of the Department of State and of the National Security Council Advisor. Vance and Brzezinski differed considerably in their policy toward Iran. General Huyser was convinced that Brzezinski by-passed Ambassador Sullivan when communicating with officials in Iran.²²

Sullivan negotiated with the Iranian political body while Huyser negotiated with the military. During debriefing in Washington, Sullivan reported to Under Secretary of State David Newson or to Assistant Secretary Harold Saunders. Huyser reported to Secretary of Defense Harold Brown or to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General David Jones. Since Huyser lodged at Ambassador Sullivan's home in Tehran, they would often compare notes after dinner.²³ After reporting to Washington, Sullivan believed that "we must have been talking to two different cities."²⁴

On one occasion an incoming cable to Sullivan from the State Department read, "We hope you are in a secure room alone. This is for your eyes and not for the eyes of

²¹ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 100.

²² Ibid., 100-01.

²³ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 230.

²⁴ Ibid.

General Huyser.”²⁵ Huyser understood the confidentiality involved and was willing to leave the room. However, both men were appalled by the division in Washington. Huyser would like to have worked with Sullivan on the same course and in more assertive and direct roles.²⁶ He commented that the United States should have been more active in supporting the Bakhtiar government.

Huyser, optimistic about the Iranian armed forces, denounced the news media’s reports of two to three thousand desertions per day. A more accurate number of desertions was one or two hundred per day. Since Iran had a force of four hundred and fifty thousand, two hundred a day would be four-hundredths of one percent.²⁷ A military take-over would not necessarily require policing every city in Iran, but only defending installations. If the Iranian generals had good planning, a small number of troops would suffice.²⁸ The Department of Defense displayed confidence with Huyser’s assessment of the potential of the Iranian military.

On 17 January 1979, one day after the Shah departed Iran, the New York Times reported on President Carter’s news conference. Stating that it was the United States’ desire to maintain good relations with Iran’s government, the President insisted that Iran’s change in government would not necessarily mean a change in Iran’s role as a power in

²⁵ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 124.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 160

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the Persian Gulf. Ironically, Carter told the press that he dismissed the idea of Iran being an important power in the security of the Gulf region. Carter said, "Well, I am not sure the presumption that one nation has to be the policeman for a whole area is sound."²⁹ Carter believed that there was no need for a policeman in any area, and no region should be dominated by a large military force.

In an interview with John Chancellor of NBC News, President Carter said that he hoped that Iran remain free from external influences such as the Soviet Union, but he would not speculate on the longevity of the Bakhtiar government.³⁰ In his biography, Huyser expressed disagreement with Carter's news conference. Nobody could believe Iran was not crucial to the security of the Gulf region. Huyser thought that President Carter's comments in the news conference made no sense.³¹

On the same day that the New York Times printed the text of President Carter's news conference, the Tehran Journal reported the Ayatollah Khomeini's desire to create a provisional regime. Khomeini stated that the departure of the Monarch was the first step in ending fifty years of totalitarianism and above all an end to foreign domination. Khomeini congratulated the people of Iran and stated that his provisional government would endorse a new constitution.³² Khomeini called the Shahpour Bakhtiar government

²⁹ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Officials React Warily; Put Bakhtiar Odds at 50-50," New York Times, 17 January 1979, 10(A).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 148.

³² "Khomeini to Set Up Provisional Regime," Tehran Journal, 17 January 1979, 1.

illegal and urged the unification of all dissident groups to rebuild Iran. The first goal was to de-throne the Shah's dynasty. The second goal was to reform Iran by making it an Islamic Republic. Third, the new Islamic Republic would not to be dominated by foreign governments and the people of Iran would own the vast resources of oil.³³ Khomeini did not want to hold any government office, but he planned to supervise Iran's new government.³⁴

An Iranian newspaper, the Khayan, reported that former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark said ninety-nine percent of the Iranians supported Khomeini. Following a pro-Bakhtiar rally, Huyser estimated that the supporters were three-hundred-thousand to three-hundred-and-fifty-thousand strong. Huyser mentioned that the number of volunteers at the rally was impressive considering the short notice of planning. Out of thirty-four million people in Iran, the highest estimate of pro-Khomeini supporters was three million.³⁵ Clark made an eight-day visit to Iran and claimed that Khomeini's support was obvious. Clark made his statements after spending one and a half hours with the Ayatollah Khomeini. Clark said that Khomeini warned him of danger for Iran in the future. Ramsey Clark said that Washington was violating American principles of freedom by supporting the Bakhtiar government.³⁶

³³ Ibid., 4.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 201.

³⁶ Ibid., 192-93.

On 26 January the New York Times reported that President Carter held meetings regularly with his Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and National Security Advisor to discuss the Iranian crisis. The article said,

A key role is being played by Gen. Robert E. Huyser, the deputy commander of American forces in Europe, who had been in Iran since the Shah decided to leave. General Huyser has been working closely with the Iranian military, urging them to support the Bakhtiar government. His daily reports to the White House are regarded as critical to the American understanding of the situation.³⁷

Huyser told Secretary Brown that the opposition used prior knowledge of plans for psychological warfare. Huyser pointed out that news reports indicated that Washington must have informed the news media of confidential material.³⁸

Sullivan informed Huyser about death threats on Americans if Huyser did not leave Iran. He believed Huyser should leave so that the Iranian military could not be accused of taking orders from an American. Embassy officials were no longer asking Americans to leave Iran, but were telling them to leave. One American described his bus ride to the Mehrabad airport. Armed Iranian soldiers and jeeps with machine-guns escorted the bus loads of Americans and set up a defensive perimeter around the airport.³⁹ Huyser noticed no change within the ranks of the Iranian military. The soldiers were alert and ready to defend. Sullivan's forecast of the Iranian armed forces was incorrect. As tension rose, the

³⁷ Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Encouraged by Firm Stand of Iranian Premier on Khomeini," New York Times, 26 January 1979, 6(A).

³⁸ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 207.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 257.

necessity for Huyser to leave became evident. In Huyser's opinion, it was quite possible that the Iranian armed forces could stage a coup. Sullivan wanted concessions with Khomeini while Huyser wanted more American support for Bakhtiar.⁴⁰

Huyser reported Bakhtiar's desire to remain as Prime Minister and said that the Iranian armed forces would back him up. The generals believed that if Khomeini declared Iran an Islamic republic, the communists would eventually take over Iran. When Secretary Brown asked Huyser what the chances were for the generals to conduct a coup with Huyser gone, he answered that there was no real way to predict. That evening, 3 February 1979, General Huyser departed for Washington, D.C. via Stuttgart, Germany.⁴¹

The Shah might have been able to use the military to correct his own problems, but the human rights issue made him hesitant. The only way the Shah would be comfortable in using the military was if President Carter ordered him to do so.⁴² If the Shah was keen enough to understand western public opinion, he most likely would have volunteered to be in temporary exile prior to conducting his own military coup leaving Carter the chore of managing and bearing the responsibility of the coup. President Carter rejected Zbigniew Brzezinski's call for a military takeover mainly because the United States would risk bearing the moral responsibility.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., 259-60.

⁴¹ Ibid., 267-69.

⁴² Gary G. Sick, All Fall Down, (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 200-01.

⁴³ Ibid.

President Carter wanted Ambassador Sullivan out of Iran, but Secretary Vance urged the President to allow Sullivan to continue since it would be a bad idea to change ambassadors this late in the crisis. Reluctantly, Carter permitted Sullivan to remain in Iran but relied on General Huyser for information.⁴⁴ When Huyser arrived in Washington, he spoke to the President alone before debriefing the Cabinet.

The President looked straight at me and said: 'What do you think I should do about Ambassador Sullivan? Should I relieve him and bring him home?' I said No; he was a capable and strong man, 'But,' I added, 'you should give him the same instructions.' The President said Sullivan had had the same instructions as I had: why hadn't he followed them? My reply was: 'Mr. President, maybe you didn't understand what I said. What I said was, *YOU* should give him his instructions.' I felt certain that the instructions I had received were exactly those prescribed by the president, but I was not sure about the Ambassador's.⁴⁵

Huyser knew that the Department of State's chain of command must have added to the President's directives when they passed the word to Sullivan. After his debriefing with the President and the Cabinet, Huyser commented in his biography that the Administration was not united in its policy on Iran.

Huyser gave the Administration both his own and Sullivan's assessment on Khomeini, Bakhtiar and the Iranian armed forces. Sullivan believed Brzezinski hoped for a coup d'etat lead by an Iranian military that could not even restore law and order any major city. Sullivan's argument was that the American consulates in Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz were all attacked at least one time. All three consuls had to close down their

⁴⁴ Ibid., 160-61.

⁴⁵ General Robert E. Huyser, Mission to Tehran, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986), 273.

consulates and move to Tehran. Iranian Air Force personnel attacked two American listening stations near the Soviet Union and briefly took the Americans hostage.⁴⁶

As the revolution progressed, Sullivan's priority was the safety and evacuation of American citizens in Iran. While managing the exodus, Sullivan informed Washington that he wished to resign and he recommended that the Deputy to the Ambassador, Charlie Naas, become acting ambassador. Sullivan also suggested that Naas return to Washington for one month before the transition.⁴⁷ By March 1979, there still were rival forces competing for control of the revolution. All the forces were armed and occasionally they fired shots into the American embassy compound. The revolutionary forces captured and controlled television and radio stations to broadcast anti-American propaganda and messages against those who were still loyal to the Shah. The revolutionaries frequently executed Iranians accused of being a part of the Shah's government or working with the Americans.⁴⁸ There was much speculation through indirect contacts about whether the Shah planned to return to Iran to reclaim his throne. The Shah was in Egypt and spent a large amount of time in Morocco. Sullivan feared repercussions if the Shah went to the United States.

So long as the Shah continued to give evidence that he wished to return to the country (Iran), it made our position less tenable. It would make it particularly difficult for us, in those circumstances, to take the Shah into the United States, because the general presumption in Iran would be that we were moving to assist him in his ambition to return to his throne. If he had come to our country at the outset with the obvious

⁴⁶ William Sullivan, Mission to Iran, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 271-72.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 275-76.

intention of abdicating, that would have been one set of circumstances. But for him to come with the apparent intention of rallying his forces for a return (to Iran) was a quite different situation.⁴⁹

On 26 February 1979, the American ambassador in Morocco suggested that President Carter renew his invitation to the Shah. Sullivan believed that the Iranian revolutionaries would interpret that action as American intervention to reinstate the Shah to power in Iran.⁵⁰ Sullivan told Washington that the only way to establish good relations with a new Iranian government was to force the Shah to choose a location other than America for his exile. Ultimately, Sullivan said, “...a move by the Shah to the United States would result in the personnel of the American embassy in Tehran being taken hostage.”⁵¹

When Charlie Naas returned to Washington, Sullivan asked him to reemphasize the warning about Iranian revolutionaries taking American embassy officials hostage.⁵² After Naas returned to Iran, Sullivan left for Washington to resign ambassador. Ironically, when Sullivan reported to the Department of State, Secretary Vance told Sullivan that President Carter wanted him to take another position as ambassador. Sullivan explained to Vance that he could not serve under conditions in which Brzezinski undermined the State Department.⁵³ Vance told Sullivan that he agreed with Sullivan’s prognosis about the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 276-77.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 277.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 285.

revolutionaries taking the embassy personnel hostage if the United States gave the Shah asylum. Vance asked Sullivan to help him shape a sound argument if Carter granted the Shah asylum. Sullivan's response was, "I agreed that I would be at his disposition if I was ever needed, but, in the event, he never did call on me."⁵⁴

The Carter administration had insisted the Shah to America before his exile, but he chose to stay in Morocco until asked by King Hassan to leave two months later. Carter wanted to ask the Shah to stay in America, but the hatred of the Iranian militants escalated the danger for Americans in Iran. To guarantee the safety of the American citizens, Carter believed the prudent choice would be to help the Shah find a home elsewhere.⁵⁵ The Shah chose the Bahamas for its resort atmosphere. After a ten week stay, the Bahamian government would not renew his visa. Bahamian officials did not give the Shah's staff any reason why he had to leave.⁵⁶ Many prominent supporters of the Shah, such as Henry Kissinger and David Rockefeller, asked Carter to grant the Shah asylum. Brzezinski believed that the United States should stand to its commitment and permit an old ally sanctity in America. For Brzezinski, national commitment was worth the risk.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Sullivan to Vance, 286.

⁵⁵ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 452.

⁵⁶ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 14-15.

So long as the Shah's health was not in danger, Carter chose not to admit the Shah in the United States, but he asked Vance to analyze repercussions should the Shah enter.⁵⁷ Ironically the Shah at first wanted to live in America, but by the time of his exile he had become bitter toward America. Eventually he went to America since only Houston and New York had the medical facilities to meet the Shah's needs.⁵⁸ There was no official communication between President Carter and Pahlavi Shah. The Chargé d' Affaires officer, Bruce Laingen, had become the new Ambassador to Iran. Laingen had an embassy with improved security and a staff of seventy-five instead of its normal amount of one thousand one-hundred prior to the revolution. The embassy staff in Iran had notified Washington that it would be in the best interest to not invite the Shah to America. The Bazargan government promised to maintain security for the American embassy while Laingen continued the exodus of Americans.⁵⁹

The Carter administration received a positive sign when Khomeini sent a representative to meet Vance. Khomeini wanted Carter to commit the United States to support the Bazargan government. Because President Carter was reasonably satisfied with the attitude of Bazargan's government, the Ayatollah Khomeini's diplomatic actions appeared acceptable.⁶⁰ The Iranian armed forces now found that they could not operate

⁵⁷ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 453.

⁵⁸ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Answer to History, (New York: Stein and Day, 1980), 14.

⁵⁹ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 453.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 452.

the highly advanced military equipment the United States had sold them. The new Chief of Staff General Mohammed Vali Qarani told reporters of the Tehran Journal that Iran would ask America to send back its military advisors. The Iranian armed forces had top-of-the line American Navy F-14 Tomcat interceptors and an American military arsenal worth seventy billion dollars. General Qarani admitted that Iran would not be able to maintain the F-14s without American advisors. Because the American military advisors were one of Khomeini's "most hated of all foreigners,"⁶¹ Khomeini's followers wanted the American military advisors ejected. Although most of them had left, the Bazargan government softened its hard-line stance on American military advisors.⁶²

If the Bazargan provisional government had remained in power, the desire for American assistance might have meant that relations with Iran would stabilize or improve. Ambassador Sullivan had always wanted President Carter to open a prudent diplomatic dialogue with Khomeini. Khomeini announced that the Islamic revolution would persist until the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union had no influence in Iran. He urged students not to tolerate foreign oppression. Khomeini wanted an Islamic society free of Western influence based on the principles of Islamic Democracy.⁶³ Khomeini sternly warned the Soviet Union not to intervene in Iranian affairs or world war

⁶¹ "Army Chief Foresees Return of U.S. Military Advisors," Tehran Journal, 21 February 1979, 1.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Khomeini Lashes US, UK, Russia," Tehran Journal, 21 February 1979, 1, 4.

could be initiated. Khomeini believed that all Iranians opposed both the United States and the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ "Soviet Meddling Will Spark off World War," Tehran Journal, 9 January 1979, 4.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Bruce Laingen reported to the Carter administration that the Iranian people in Tehran were still hostile toward the Shah and that the mullahs could create danger for Americans if the Shah went to the United States for medical treatment. Laingen reminded Washington of previous Iranian hostilities and said that the Shah's admittance, even for humanitarian reasons, could lead to a reaction worse than anything previous. Cyrus Vance received a report saying that the Shah, then in Mexico, had a serious disease that doctors could not diagnose. His physicians suggested that he go to the Cornell University Medical Center in New York which was better equipped for the comprehensive testing.⁶⁵

Vance suggested that Washington inform the Iranians of the Shah's visit and Carter asked his advisors if Iranian militants might react by capturing or killing Americans. President Carter asked Bruce Laingen and the State Department's Director for Iranian Affairs, Henry Precht, to discuss Washington's intention with Bazargan and Yazdi. The two leaders said there would be a reaction, but the Iranian government would still protect American citizens. President Carter took it for granted that the assurance came from Iran's leading governmental rulers and not from the religious rulers.⁶⁶

President Carter denied Iran's request that Iranian physicians examine the Shah for their own record. However, the Department of State would allow Iranian doctors to

⁶⁵ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 454.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 455.

confer with American doctors after the examination. Unfortunately, a New York journalist reported that the American physicians were not willing to discuss results with the Iranian physicians. The test results indicated that the Shah suffered from malignant lymphoma. He had been on a chemotherapy treatment, but the effect of the chemotherapy had decreased.⁶⁷ Mexico did not have the necessary equipment for diagnosing further chemotherapeutic treatments. Carter allowed the State Department to ask if Bazargan would object to the Shah's visit to the United States, despite Brzezinski's opposition to getting Bazargan's approval. On 22 October 1979, the Iranian government reacted mildly, Washington reassured the Iranians that neither the Shah nor Empress Farah would engage in any political activity.⁶⁸

On 23 October 1979, a radical Islamic revolutionary *komiteh* called the *Murabitun* received word that the Shah would enter the United States. *Hojat al-Islam* Musai Khoeiny, the leader of a fifty men *komiteh*, decided to seize American hostages. Khoeiny was not a member of the Revolutionary Council, but he had direct communication with Khomeini's son, Ahmad. The title of *Hojat al-Islam* was a scholarly position of Islam higher than a mullah and lower than an ayatollah. The *Murabitun* belong to the Revolutionary Council for student activities.⁶⁹ Iranian newspapers reported that the Shah would leave for America for medical treatment, but the *Murabitun* believed the Shah's

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 456.

⁶⁹ Charles W. Scott, Pieces of The Games, (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd. 1984), 151.

real intent was to gain support to reestablish his throne. By 24 October 1979, Washington heard that the Iranian newspapers did not indicate any reaction about the Shah's visit. Washington believed that the Bazargan government's announcement of the Shah's terminal illness must have calmed the Iranian masses. A demonstration by Tehran University students passed by the embassy on 26 October 1979. Other than the demonstration, Washington received no drastic reports from the American embassy.⁷⁰

The *Murabitun*, learning that Bazargan, Yazdi, and Brzezinski had met at Algiers, interpreted the meeting as an American attempt to subvert the Iranian government with the help of Bazargan and Yazdi. Supposedly the two Iranian officials were only to attend an Algerian Independence anniversary, not to meet with United States representatives. The *Murabitun* were outraged.⁷¹

At Tehran University, the *Murabitun* met with Khomeini to plan an attack on the American embassy. The initial assault force was at least five hundred strong while as many as three thousand other volunteers joined during the actual attack. The first objective was to locate key documents that could prove the United States planned to reinstate the Shah. On 4 November 1979, the militants stormed the American embassy and took hostages to hold as ransom until the Shah returned to Iran.⁷² Prime Minister Bazargan promised to restore the embassy and disperse the militants but his efforts were

⁷⁰ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 456.

⁷¹ Charles W. Scott, *Pieces of The Games*, (Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, Ltd. 1984), 154-55.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 155-56.

unsuccessful. Both Bazargan and Yazdi resigned to protest the embassy seizure, while Khomeini praised the militants' illegal actions.⁷³

⁷³ Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, (New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982), 457.

Bibliography

- Akhavi, Shahrough, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980.
- Arjomand, Said Amir, The Turban for the Crown, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Brzezinski, Zbigniew, Power and Principle, Toronto, Ont.: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1983.
- Carter, Jimmy, Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President, New York: Bantam Books Inc., 1982.
- The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam, 1989 ed., S.v. "Hidden Imam."
- Dehqani-Tafti, H.B. The Hard Awakening, New York: The Seabury Press, 1981.
- Hiro, Dilip, Iran Under the Ayatollahs, London: T.J. Press Ltd., 1985.
- Huyser, Robert E. Mission to Tehran, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986.
- Karnow, Stanley, Vietnam a History, New York: The Viking Press, 1983.
- Lenczowski, George, American Presidents and the Middle East, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Middle East Economic Digest, "Revolution 'Here to Stay' Despite U.S.," February 21, 1994: pg 1.
- New York Times, 17 January-28 October 1979.
- Ramazani, Rouhollah K. The United States and Iran, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982.
- Pahlavi, Shah Mohammad Reza, Answer to History, New York: Stein and Day, 1980.
- Scott, Charles W., Pieces of the Game, Atlanta, GA.: Peachtree Publishers, LTD., 1984.
- Sick, Gary, All Fall Down, New York: Viking Penguin Books Inc., 1985.
- _____. October Surprise, New York: Times Books, Random House Inc., 1991.

Sullivan, William H. Mission to Iran, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981.

Tehran Journal, (Tehran). 7 January-21 February 1979.

Turner, Stansfield, Terrorism and Democracy, Boston, MA.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991.

United States House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, The Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, Implications of President Carter's Conventional Arms Transfer policy, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1st Sess. 95th Congress, December 1977.

_____. Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Staff Report Subcommittee On Evaluation, Iran: Evaluation of U.S. Intelligence Performance Prior to November 1978, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, January 1979.

_____. Hearing before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, U.S. Policy Toward Iran, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1st Sess. 96th, Congress, January 17, 1979.