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## THE ARC OF CRISIS: ITS CENTRAL SECTOR

The "arc of crisis" has been defined as an area stretching from the Indian subcontinent in the east to the Horn of Africa in the west. **The Middle East constitutes its central core. Its strategic position is unequalled; it is the last major region of the Free World directly adjacent to the Soviet Union, it holds in its subsoil about three-fourths of the proven and estimated world oil reserves, and it is the locus of one of the most intractable conflicts of the twentieth century; that of Zionism versus Arab nationalism.** Moreover, national, economic and territorial conflicts are aggravated by the intrusion of religious passions in an area which was the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and by the exposure, in the twentieth century, to two competing appeals of secular modernization: Western and communist.

Against the background of these basic facts, postwar American policy in the Middle East has focused on three major challenges: security of the area as against Soviet threats to its integrity and independence, fair and peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and safe access to its oil. Two major policy formulations, the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, had the Middle East as their direct primary object; the Nixon Doctrine of 1969, while occasioned by the Indochina crisis, affected—however indirectly—the Middle East as well. Broadly speaking, each of these presidential pronouncements expressed a policy of containment of "international communism," but devised different methods of coping with it: while the Truman Doctrine aimed at safeguarding Greece and Turkey (later with an implicit Iranian extension) by means of economic aid and military advice and supply assistance, the Eisenhower Doctrine focused primarily on the Arab world and pledged direct employment of U.S.

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military power. The Nixon Doctrine put a limit on direct military intervention but, to compensate for this retrenchment, pledged other forms of assistance—including a clearly adequate supply of weapons—to those threatened countries which would henceforth assume greater burdens of self-defense.

The Middle East is not a political monolith. On the contrary, it is divided into a number of subregions along national, linguistic, religious, and ideological lines. The most obvious division is that which separates the Northern Tier (Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan) from the Arab core. American policy has faced different types of challenges in each of the two. Let us look first at the course of American policy in Turkey and Iran and the present situation in these two countries, and then focus on the implications of the Iranian revolution for the whole area.

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After World War II, Turkey and Iran were the two countries most immediately threatened by Soviet territorial expansionism and political subversion. In 1945, Turkey was confronted with Soviet demands for control of the Turkish Straits and cession of its eastern districts of Kars and Ardahan, and in 1945-46 Iran faced the danger of disintegration as a result of the formation on its territory, under Soviet sponsorship, of two separatist entities: the autonomous republic of Azerbaijan and the dissident Kurdish republic of Mahabad; Moscow's refusal to withdraw its Red Army from Iran's northern provinces in violation of wartime pledges; and infiltration of Iran's central government by the Soviet-sponsored Tudeh Party.

In what was undoubtedly one of the most realistic and imaginative eras of American foreign policy (with Dean Acheson its chief architect, consistently followed by John Foster Dulles), the United States launched a truly bipartisan policy, largely free of domestic sectarian considerations (except for marginal dissident groups), to safeguard the independence and territorial integrity of these two Northern Tier states. This policy was marked, in addition to the Truman Doctrine, by such steps as American encouragement to Iran in 1945-46 to resist Soviet pressures (and to refuse ratification of a northern oil concession obtained by the U.S.S.R. under blackmail conditions), inclusion of Turkey—along with Greece—in the NATO alliance in 1950-51, formation of the Baghdad Pact (later the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO) in 1955, and finally in 1959, conclusion of three bilateral

security agreements establishing virtual alliances with Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, through unilateral policy declarations, multilateral arrangements, and bilateral military assurances, the Northern Tier was assured of a serious and sustained American commitment to save it from sharing the fate of Eastern Europe. Naturally, support for independence and sovereignty of the Northern Tier states was logically linked to concern for their internal stability, the strength of their governments, and their determination to put the highest possible priority on resistance to Soviet expansionist schemes.

Ideally, the most desirable type of government in both countries would be one that was: (a) democratic, i.e., sharing America's basic values; (b) based on a free enterprise system; (c) committed to economic development and social justice both for their own sake and so as to reduce tensions leading to instability; (d) nationalist in the positive sense of the word, i.e., clearly perceiving its overriding national interest in terms of safeguarding its sovereignty and integrity from the danger that threatened it most, in this case Soviet imperialism. Political realism, however, dictated caution in expecting that all these four conditions would be fulfilled. Democracy is a system that is largely limited to the West European and North American areas; to expect its rapid transplantation to Afro-Asia where one or another form of authoritarianism has prevailed since time immemorial would be wishful thinking.

Similarly, developing countries, due to insufficiency of private risk capital and entrepreneurship, are often compelled to choose the path of a mixed economy combining the private and public sectors. There was no major problem with the two states' commitment to economic development: both ardently desired it. Its connection with social justice—a more equal distribution of wealth—presented a more complicated matter (as witnessed by the land reform issue in Iran and its negative effect on productivity), but the difficulty in slicing the pie could be overcome provided the pie was steadily increasing in size. Nationalism as defined above was, however, a condition *sine qua non*, a minimum

without which any U.S. commitment to assist and protect those countries would make no sense.

### III

In the first postwar decade (1945-55), of the two key Northern Tier countries Turkey emerged as meeting at least three, and striving to attain all four, attributes of an "ideal" government: with the advent of the Democrat Party to power in 1950, a single-party tutelage system was transformed into a multiparty democracy without revolution; a new government under Adnan Menderes was anxious to expand the private sector and encourage foreign investment; and Turkey's foreign policy priorities and determined resistance to communism dovetailed with similar American objectives. As a result, a period of close U.S.-Turkish cooperation, formalized through alliance links, followed. An impressive part of American foreign aid was, year by year, channeled toward Turkey. In return, Turkey maintained a big and steadily improving military establishment—in fact, with ground forces of nearly 400,000, the largest of any of the NATO members east of the Atlantic—and provided facilities for its allies in the form of bases, radar screens, missile sites, etc.

In the face of this show of strength and cooperation between Turkey and the West, in the early 1950s Moscow formally renounced its territorial and maritime claims and, after Stalin's death, embarked on an ostensibly conciliatory policy which involved offers (sometimes accepted) of economic and technical assistance. The Turkish coup of 1960 which resulted in the ouster of the Democrats, temporary military rule, and a period of shifting coalition governments did not change the fundamentally nationalist and anticommunist posture of successive Turkish cabinets, thus assuring the continuity of alliance with the United States.

Beginning with the 1960s, however, difficulties arose from the Greco-Turkish conflict over Cyprus. Twice restrained by strong (and deeply resented) American diplomatic intervention in 1964 and 1967, Turkey finally took matters into its own hands in the summer of 1974, invading and occupying large areas of Cyprus. The resulting arms embargo by the U.S. Congress was lifted only last fall, and the related denial of military facilities by the Turkish government only then relaxed. Even prior to the Cyprus crisis, Turkey had in 1973 denied the U.S. Air Force the right to overfly its territory during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War; lack of full cooperation has again been manifest recently in the negative Turkish reaction to the use of Turkish bases by a very small rescue

<sup>1</sup>As noted, Turkey was already a member of NATO, so the alliance relationship was complete, explicit, and in the form of a treaty ratified by the Senate. However, the United States did not join CENTO, and the assurances of American support to Pakistan and Iran conveyed in 1959 were in the form of executive agreements never submitted formally to the Congress and not imposing reciprocal obligations on Iran or Pakistan similar to those contained in the North Atlantic Treaty. Nonetheless, in the case of Iran, continued congressional support for actions taken pursuant to the 1959 agreements undoubtedly created—in practice if not in strict legal terms—the elements of an alliance relationship with the United States.

team of U.S. Marines earmarked to protect the U.S. Embassy in

Iran. In addition to these international strains, Turkey's internal politics entered a turbulent phase in the mid-1960s, with harmful impact on its foreign policy. Serious stresses were caused by the interlinked factors of: (a) poverty and, despite the advances of the 1950s, a general state of underdevelopment and the resulting unemployment; (b) political polarization, with the rise of new and militant forces on the left and right of the political spectrum; (c) inability to form a clear-cut governmental majority; (d) aroused expectations and frustrations of workers, especially in the mid-1970s on the part of those returning from Western Europe in the wake of retrenchment of the European economy. For the past ten years at least, Turkey has been plagued by sporadic urban guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

More broadly, much of this malaise and turmoil can be ascribed to the rise of a young politically awakened generation of students and workers. In the mid-1940s—the period of mortal threat to Turkey's survival—many of them were not yet born or were mere infants, and apparently the Turkish school curricula were deficient in providing pupils with solid knowledge of recent history. Certainly the incidence of Marxist groups and movements today (especially clustered around the Technical University in Ankara) is striking if we consider the historical record of Russo-Turkish relations. Recently there has been a revival of religious tensions (as between the Alevi minority and the Sunni majority, especially in southeastern Turkey) against the background of a broader struggle between theocratic and secularist orientations. Outbreaks of violence have led to the proclamation of martial law in 13 Turkish provinces.

Is Turkey then threatened with a revolution which, because of presumed popular support, might effect a radical change in its political system and foreign alignments? The answer should be cautiously negative—for Turkey has certain built-in safeguards that are likely to cushion it against abrupt changes. First of all, the country does not have a single elite group or power center symbolizing oppression against which popular grievances could be directed. Second, Turkey possesses, in periodic elections, a mechanism for peaceful change which (though subject to occasional military interference) still works: impersonal institutions (parliament, the electoral process, parties) have acquired legitimacy with major segments of the population. And third, the army has thus far proved to be a cohesive instrument, patriotic and

disciplined, serving as the ultimate guarantor of order and security.

Moreover, in spite of the tensions and irritations in American-Turkish relations, the two main Turkish parties, the Republican People's Party and the Justice Party, have never ceased to voice support for continued membership in NATO and, even at the lowest ebb of relations with Washington, were unwilling to burn their bridges with America. This of course does not mean that the U.S. government or Congress can afford to be complacent on the presumed assumption that logic dictates Turkey's alignment with the West. Domestic disarray, especially if fed by external stimuli (in this case resentment against U.S. policies fanned by communist agitation), may under certain circumstances generate so much emotionalism that rational considerations may be thrown overboard and a political group catering to mass passions emerge to dominate the scene. Should this happen, the strategic balance in the eastern Mediterranean as well as in the arc of crisis would be seriously affected.

#### IV

The Iran that had to deal with external pressures (and internal change) from 1945 onward stood in many respects in marked contrast to Turkey. Ruled by a monarchy with a longstanding tradition of authoritarian rule, Iran was nonetheless experiencing a democratic interlude that began in 1941 and was based on the constitution adopted in 1906-07. It represented a less cohesive society, divided into urban, rural, and tribal sectors and, though with Farsi as the dominant tongue, noted for its ethnic and linguistic pluralism. And its national unity had been subjected to serious trials as a result of the wartime occupation by Russia and Britain. Also, in contrast to Turkey, Iran saw the growth in the 1940s and after of a substantial Soviet-supported communist group, the Tudeh Party, which in addition to its hard-core Leninist cadre attracted some frustrated liberals and intellectuals. The Tudeh succeeded in penetrating labor unions, including the workers in the southern oilfields and the Abadan refinery. Less disciplined than the Turkish populace, the Iranian body politic exhibited centrifugal tendencies, with many elements prone to collaborate with one or another foreign power for selfish or ideological reasons.

And, while both countries had an Islamic past, Iran had a tradition of dualism expressed by the ancient (and semi-deified) institution of the monarchy side by side with the Shi'a religious

organization which, based on belief in the 12th Hidden Imam, has given only a grudging recognition to the legitimacy of any secular king. This dualism was expressed in Article 2 of the Iranian constitution, according to which a body of five learned theologians (*mujtahids*) was to make binding pronouncements on the conformity of the laws passed by the parliament with the sacred law (*sharia*) of Islam. This body, however, with powers comparable to the judicial review of the U.S. Supreme Court, was never established—a rankling point with the Shi'ite religious leaders.

The oil crisis and accompanying political turmoil of the Mosaddeq era (1951-53) almost toppled the Shah, who returned to power following a brief exile in 1953 only after an Army coup conducted with planning help by the CIA. Feeling that the parliament had proved itself unable to maintain stability, the Shah then embarked on a program to entrench his own power at its expense, and to use that power to create a modern state. By 1963 he had gained virtually total control of the country.

It is too early to judge the Pahlavi era. Historically, it must be compared with the preceding era of the Qajar dynasty, an era of weak but despotic power welded by a series of self-seeking and increasingly degenerate rulers, when Iran was more of a territory crossed at will by the armies of neighboring countries than a state in the modern sense of the word. Both in this light, and by comparison with its neighbors, Iran's Pahlavi dynasty, from 1925 onward, must at least be credited with bringing about major and positive changes. Its impressive record includes safeguarding of the national independence against repeated Soviet threats; building of a seemingly strong centralized state; modernization and development in the economic, technical, and social sectors; cooperation with the United States in preserving regional security; and the projection of a stabilizing influence in the Persian Gulf.

After 1963, the pace of internal change in Iran picked up, with the Shah carrying out a white revolution that included a major redistribution of land (including royal lands and also substantial holdings of the church), as well as measures for the emancipation of women, the spread of literacy, expansion and improvement of education, and giving workers a share in the profits of enterprises employing them. To achieve land reform (supervised by two energetic ministers, Arsanjani and Valian), the Shah had to suspend the parliament for two years inasmuch as the latter, dominated by the landowners, had repeatedly frustrated his efforts in this direction in the past. This suspension of constitutionalism expressed the reality of Iran's political process: to assure accel-

ated modernization, a concentration of power was needed. In effect, the regime returned to the authoritarian pattern of the pre-1941 period.

Moreover, the Shah justified his supremacy by national security considerations: in 1954 a Soviet espionage ring, involving 600 officers in the Iranian army (including 60 of colonel rank) had been discovered, while throughout the 1950s and early 1960s police repeatedly uncovered clandestine communist cells and printing presses. The reorganized security organization, SAVAK, grew in power and expanded its activities. The line dividing legitimate from subversive dissent began to be blurred and, with the passage of time, increasingly coercive measures were applied to active dissenters. Yet, with all this, much freedom was allowed to the people. This was especially true in the economy (where the private sector was dominant), in religion (the mullas continued their religious functions unimpeded, with ready access to thousands of worshippers in the mosques), and in freedom of movement (as attested by frequent travels abroad and the massive study in foreign countries by young Iranians—50,000 in the United States alone). In short, while this was an authoritarian state, it was not totalitarian.

By the mid-1970s the Shah seemed to have reached the pinnacle of power: his authority was uncontested by any overt opposition group, he led the successful OPEC fight for the quadrupling of oil prices, and his international stature was symbolized by the 1971 celebrations in Persepolis, marking 25 centuries of Iranian monarchy. The notion of the sacred kingship of the Achaemenian era was revived, notably in a speech delivered by the Shah in front of Cyrus the Great's tomb in Pasargadae, and respectfully listened to by foreign heads of state and numerous dignitaries.

In terms of essentials of political power, the Shah appeared to hold all the trump cards. He had full control of the organized state machinery, exercised direct command over the impressive military establishment (285,000 army, 100,000 air force, and 28,000 navy), had a ubiquitous security apparatus, and enjoyed unprecedented wealth from oil revenues (averaging nearly \$20 billion a year from 1974 through 1978). According to the political laws of the twentieth century, an authoritarian system was not supposed to succumb to civilian revolution short of a lost war with foreign powers.

And yet in the course of 1978 this imposing power structure crumbled with a speed that was truly astonishing. The Shah left Iran on January 16, 1979, after nearly a year of turmoil, ostensibly

on a vacation but with his future clouded. The Regency Council and the cabinet of Shahpur Bakhtiar which he left in a caretaking capacity lasted less than a month. By February 11 the regime collapsed and the army surrendered to the revolutionary group rallied around Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a 78-year-old religious leader just returned to Iran from a 15-year exile.

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It is not difficult to identify the four main opposition groups that formed a loose coalition that followed Khomeini's leadership exercised from afar (from Najaf in Iraq and subsequently from Paris).<sup>2</sup> These were in the first place the Shi'i religious leaders who resented the erosion of their authority as a result of modernization and secularization and who bemoaned the loss of economic power subsequent to the land reform. Allied with them were the bazaar leaders—merchants and entrepreneurs of a more traditional type—who were bypassed in the modern economic development, especially in the 1970s, when the norm became multimillion-dollar deals worked out with the government by a new breed of businessmen conversant with foreign languages and often with formal technocratic education. These two opposition groups were not noted for their democratic proclivities (the first had clearly a theocratic goal of establishing an Islamic republic based on the *shari'a*). But jointly they had the highest capacity for mobilizing mass support in the poorer and traditionalist districts in Teheran and other cities, where for 15 years at least the mullas—through their mosque-centered religious classes—had been indoctrinating young pupils in the spirit of hostility to the Shah.

The third group could be identified as the discontented intelligentsia, representing a segment of educated classes which somehow had not found a comfortable niche in the fast-developing economy and burgeoning bureaucracy. This group cultivated liberal and democratic ideas, clamored for political participation and a return to constitutionalism, was basically secular in its orientation and, broadly, carried the legacy of the late Premier Mosaddeq as attested by the revived name "National Front."

The fourth group was composed of the ideological Left and included the never fully suppressed Tudeh Party, the avowedly Marxist Fedayan-e Khalq, a variety of radical student groupings and urban guerilla bands, and activist elements among the

<sup>2</sup> The reader may wish to compare my analysis with that of Professor James A. Bill, "Iran and the Crisis of '78," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1978-79, pp. 323-342.

laborers and the big city proletariat. Committed to a class struggle principle, in some cases carefully indoctrinated, these various segments of the Left aimed at the "smashing of the bourgeois state," with some of them meaning, in effect, the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist regime allied to the Soviet Union. (Some years earlier, Communist China had had its ideological representatives in the Iranian Left; but in the 1970s, Peking began gradually to cultivate the Shah, viewing a strong Iran as one more obstacle to Russia's global "hegemonism.")

But to identify these opposition groups (of which not only Western intelligence agencies but also lay students of Iranian affairs were fully aware) does not in itself explain why the monarchy suffered such a stupendous defeat. The opposition groups had been there for a long time, partly suppressed and partly tolerated, depending on the degree of their militancy. The question is: What factors were responsible for the activation and mobilization of these dissident forces?

Post-mortem evaluations are bound to vary, and the objectivity of some judgments is likely to be influenced by the role some analysts have played in the U.S. policymaking process. In this writer's view it is useful to distinguish between the major and the contributing factors leading to the revolutionary mobilization. The major factors were undoubtedly the mistakes committed by the Shah's regime, notwithstanding all its merits in developing and modernizing the country. These mistakes could be listed as follows:

1. *Lack of an effective party organization.* Such an organization is required in any authoritarian system, if only to serve as a mobilizing and indoctrinating agency. The Shah's experimentation with such artificial pro-government parties as the Melloun, the Iran Novin, and finally the Rastakhiz-e Iran was clearly unsuccessful. He had to rely nakedly on the army, secret police, and bureaucracy.

2. *The spending spree* in which the government engaged on a massive scale, often without adequate preparatory study, especially following the big money influx after 1974. This produced a rampant inflation—between 35 and 50 percent annually—and deep discontent among the less privileged groups in the society. Paradoxically, great oil-generated revenues proved to be a mixed blessing.

3. *Questionable development plan priorities.* Excessive emphasis was put on industrialization (invariably favored by bureaucratic technocrats as tangible and visible) while agriculture was ne-

glected—at least on a comparative scale. As a result Iran changed from agrarian self-sufficiency into a food-importing country to the tune of some 50 percent of its requirements. This was accompanied by the exodus of the rural population to urban centers. As a result a new city proletariat, clustering in shantytown slums (especially in the south of Teheran) increased in size by leaps and bounds, providing typical “cannon fodder” for any skilled agitator with a demagogic appeal.

4. *Estangement of religious leadership.* Although the Pahlavi dynasty, with its modernization program, was basically in disagreement with the objectives of religious leaders, a major collision could have been avoided by the exercise of greater tact and diplomacy and possibly by the rational appeal that the religious establishment and the regime faced a common enemy, atheistic communism, and should cooperate for mutual protection. Instead, the government adopted a scornful attitude toward the ayatollahs and the mullas and, for unexplained reasons, in 1977–78 the cabinet of Premier Jamshid Amouzegar reduced an \$80 million subsidy given regularly to mosques and religious foundations to a reported \$30 million. After the land reform, this was the second financial blow suffered by the religious establishment.

Two further acts of unnecessary irritation deserve mention. In 1976 the Shī'a Islamic calendar based on the solar year since the Prophet's *hijra* was replaced by the Imperial calendar dating from the foundation of the Iranian Empire by Cyrus the Great. Thus the Islamic year 1355 became the Imperial year 2535, a difference of 1180 years. It was a grand symbolic assertion of the Achaemenian legacy of sacred kingship and a bold rejection of the Islamic legacy as the central spiritual fact in Iran's history. History teaches us that such attempts—as witnessed by Napoleon's abortive design—have little chance of success.

The second act of irritation was of a strongly personal nature: under the inspiration of the Minister of Information (responsible for the supervision of the news media), there appeared on January 8, 1978, in the major daily *Ettela'at*, an article attacking the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini and alleging that he was a homosexual and a British stooge. It was in fact the publication of this article that triggered the first massive antigovernment riots in the holy city of Qum that very month.

These then could be listed as major mistakes that could have been avoided had the Shah listened to the advice of more independent statesmen. In the prevailing climate of obsequiousness and conformity such independent advice was not encouraged and,

naturally, not forthcoming.

Next, there were certain contributing factors to the malaise and the turmoil. First, one should mention corruption which, with the surge of oil-based affluence in 1974, attained major proportions and compromised some very highly placed persons (such as the Commander in Chief of the Imperial Navy). Furthermore, the participation of relatives of the royal family in a variety of business ventures—even without resort to any illegal actions—had a demoralizing effect on the business community and officialdom, a fact recognized by the Shah himself when, in the early fall of 1978, he issued a *farman* banning any such participation.

The second contributing factor was the coercive methods applied by the secret police, an issue particularly publicized by liberal dissenters at home and abroad and often mentioned as one of the principal causes of violent resistance. Actually, there are good reasons to doubt whether corruption and coercion would in themselves cause so much revolutionary ferment. On a comparative scale they did not appear any more severe than in the adjoining countries, whether the oil-rich Arab monarchies or the one-party military dictatorships. In fact, secret police supervision, jailing on mere suspicion, long imprisonment without a court sentence, and executions after summary trials—acts that sharply contrasted with the due process of law in the West—were not uncommon in both categories of states.

Moreover, certain radical dictatorships were prone to resort to individual assassinations of their political enemies and those accused of deviation from the official party line. In short, coercion in these countries has often exceeded in crude brutality the measures applied by the Iranian security organs, and yet it seldom if ever led to massive revolutionary protests. Interestingly enough, however, Western news media seemed to concentrate with an almost sadistic persistence on these features of the Iranian regime, and the interviews liberally granted by the Shah to certain Western news commentators who specialized in provocative and insulting questions addressed to the monarch encouraged adverse publicity and, correspondingly, emboldened the opposition.

Another contributing factor was the presence in Iran of an American expatriate community composed of some 40,000 industrial, business, and military specialists. They were all prosperous, enjoying better housing, possessing more conspicuous automobiles, and thus forming a sharp contrast to the general population. Their very numbers—necessitated by the requirements of rapid technological development—were too large from the point of view

of social tolerance and their demand for consumer goods, services and amenities added another spur to the rampant inflation.

Undoubtedly, a major though hardly measurable factor could be clandestine and overt Soviet activities. The U.S. and other Western governments must have had some information on this point. To the lay observer, the following appear to be reliably reported and relevant: the importation of large consignments of paper to the Soviet Embassy in Iran (presumably to help print and distribute anti-Shah literature); heavy purchases by the Soviets of Iranian currency on the European markets; increasingly hostile (to the Shah) broadcasts during the fall of 1978 from the Soviet Union and from clandestine radio stations beaming "liberation" propaganda; official Soviet threats (including the invocation of Article 6 of the 1921 Soviet-Iranian treaty which authorized entry of Soviet troops into Iran should the latter become a base for foreign anti-Soviet aggression); and finally the recent surfacing of the suppressed communist groups, clearly well organized and equipped. This evidence does not clearly demonstrate a major Soviet role to this point—or negate the point often made that a true Islamic state in Iran might pose uncomfortable problems for the Soviet Union in relation to its own Muslims. But clearly the Soviets played at least a background role, and perhaps a more important and direct one than we yet know.

How the Left now behaves toward the Khomeini forces may throw the Soviet role and attitude into much clearer perspective. Even though communism and Islam are antithetical, Soviet theory and practice both attest that Islamic religious circles can and should be used under certain circumstances to achieve communist objectives and that they should not be antagonized by overt attacks on religion. In 1952-53, for example, there was a virtual tactical alliance between religious militants under Ayatollah Khashani and the Tudeh, in support of the Mosaddeq government. Last but not least, the posture adopted by the United States both before and during the crisis should not be ignored as a contributing factor. There is no doubt that the American stress on human rights had, however indirectly, an impact on the Iranian situation. As early as 1976, i.e., during the electoral campaign, slogans about human rights appeared to the Iranian Embassy in Washington as having inimical connotations regarding Iran and as dovetailing with the campaign of the American news media against the Shah. Thus, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Shah felt under some pressure in early 1977, when he adopted liberalization measures which gradually relaxed his hold on power.

Certainly the full-blown emphasis of the Carter Administration on human rights thereafter encouraged the opposition in Iran to believe it had a degree of American sympathy—and this basic impression was not sufficiently dispelled by the subsequent effusive remarks by President Carter about the Shah as an ally and Iran as an "island of stability" during their mutual exchange of visits.<sup>3</sup>

The accumulation and overlapping of these direct and indirect factors brought about an explosive mixture that proved easy to ignite. The arson-caused fire that engulfed several hundred people inside a movie theater in Abadan in August 1978 (and which was blamed by the opposition on SAVAK's provocation) triggered a new wave of riots more violent and more massive than those of the early part of that year. From early September onward the Shah's government was under siege. Its indecision must be counted as another crucial element in the direction and above all in the sweep of what took place in early 1979.

On the one hand, there were successive concessions to the opposition—restoration of the Islamic calendar; the ban on business activities of the royal family; quick acquiescence to demands for substantial pay raises of oil workers and other public employees; the recall from abroad and subsequent arrest of General Nasiri, former head of SAVAK; detention of former Premier Hoveyda on corruption charges; repeated releases of hardened political prisoners from prisons. But these were invariably taken by the opposition groups as signs of weakness and confirmed their resolve not to compromise but to press for complete capitulation.

On the other hand, the martial law decreed in early September was not consistently implemented. Hesitation to use force with firmness while the protesting crowds were still manageable and unarmed (although force was used on several occasions) had a snowballing effect on the size and militancy of demonstrations. The army might have kept its cohesion when it faced, say, a mob of 5,000. But it was much harder to expect the same loyalty from soldiers when confronting a mass of 100,000 or more.

<sup>3</sup> In my personal experience, Iranian government officials deplored what they believed to be a hypocritical manipulation of the human rights slogans by both the Ford and the Carter Administrations. They pointed out that, in practice, the main violators of human rights—the totalitarian communist states—did not feel adverse effects from such campaigns. The 1975 Helsinki accords which legitimized Soviet dominance over Eastern Europe without any substantial effect on the observance of human rights in the U.S.S.R. and the new warm relationship developed between Washington and Peking without questions asked about millions killed since the advent of communists in China—all appeared to the Iranians as examples of a policy that, in its ultimate effect, was designed to hurt America's authoritarian allies in the less-developed countries more than her real enemies.

To sum up, there were two courses of action open to the Shah: either to grant the return to constitutional rule early enough and thus, by voluntarily restricting his powers, save the monarchy; or to stop the protests decisively at an early stage before they gained momentum. In the event, he did neither. Whether his failure to act reflected the private advice (or absence of advice) of the American and British Ambassadors cannot now be known. Publicly, the posture of the Carter Administration was one of clear-cut support at least during September and October, when the possibilities of dramatic action, either to move to constitutional rule or to restore order firmly, seem in hindsight still to have existed. By November, both possibilities and posture were clouded, and Washington reports of divisions within the Administration surely did not help. While the National Security Adviser, **Zbigniew Brzezinski**, was reported to favor strong all-out support and kept in direct touch with the Shah and his close collaborators, other elements in the Administration seemed to be less sure of the propriety of such a course. The glare of publicity accompanying these differences proved very damaging to the execution of U.S. policy. **For the Shah, already suspecting some sinister double play by Washington (ever since he was advised earlier in 1978 to get rid of General Nasiri as chief of SAVAK), the reports from Washington had a devastating effect, to which much of his indecision in the last weeks before his departure could be traced.**

In January, as the Shah was about to leave the country, the American Deputy Commander in NATO, General Huyser, arrived and over a period of a month conferred constantly with Iranian military leaders. His influence may have been substantial on the military's decision not to attempt a coup and eventually to yield to the Khomeini forces, especially if press reports are accurate that he or others threatened to withhold military supplies if a coup were attempted. What such a coup would have meant by January is not clear even in hindsight, or whether by that stage it would have had as its objective the Shah's restoration or simply military rule. In any event, the Iranian military forces are at least temporarily shattered, with their combat effectiveness unlikely to be restored for a very long time, and even their capacity to assist in bringing about law and order highly doubtful for some months.

## VI

Whether or not American policy affected the outcome in this or other respects, a word is in order on some of the other criticisms directed at American policy. One of these is that American

diplomats in Iran tended in recent years to associate only with the upper crust of Iranian society, ipso facto loyal to the Shah, and that they avoided contact with dissident intellectuals and lower class groups; furthermore that this isolation from the "masses" made them oblivious to the depth of seething discontent.<sup>4</sup>

One cannot avoid the feeling of a certain naiveté in such an assertion. By virtue of his functions, a diplomatic representative has to associate primarily with members of the government and the ruling establishment. To seek deliberate contacts with the opposition in an authoritarian system is to court disfavor, accusations of double-dealing, and possibly an invitation to leave as a persona non grata. Moreover, it may plant a suspicion about the general policy of the diplomat's home government toward the country in which he is accredited.

As for the alleged isolation of American diplomats from the broader strata, available evidence does not seem to support this thesis. Members of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Information Service (not to mention other multifarious contacts in the business world, academia, etc.) were generally well aware of the sources of discontent and could identify various opposition groups. An extra social hour spent in the company of a well-known dissenter (a poet, a professor) would not have brought any major revelations—the themes of their grievances were so well known that they could have been predicted in considerable detail by such an American official. The only valuable piece of information that such a conversation might theoretically yield would be to learn of some actual conspiracy or plan for revolutionary action—but conspirators don't as a rule make foreign embassies privy to their plans.

A related complaint has been addressed to the inefficacy of our intelligence agencies in gauging the revolutionary mood in Iran. It seems evident that the political tidal wave of late 1978 surprised most political observers both foreign and domestic, and quite probably the revolutionary leaders themselves. But were its constituent elements not reported adequately by the CIA? And even if not, one is bound to ask whether the critics have faced up to the problems of conducting independent clandestine intelligence activities within a country that is America's formal ally—or to the disturbing question whether Congress, in a stampede of "anti-spying" puritan fervor, has not reduced, to a point of partial paralysis, the capacity of the CIA to operate according to the highest standards of professionalism.

The third controversy revolves around the **heavy U.S. arms**

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Bill, *loc. cit.*, pp. 339-340.

supplies to Iran, allegedly giving the wrong tilt to Iran's budgetary process and resulting in excessive concentration on unproductive weapons rather than on socially desirable programs. Considering the impressively high level of Iran's oil revenue (roughly \$20 billion a year, as previously noted), and the fact that annual arms spending never exceeded some \$6 billion—thus leaving a husky \$14 billion or so for development—this argument does not seem very persuasive. Iran was in a fortunate position to afford both guns and butter. The basic problems of overspending and lack of proper development priorities were essentially separate from the level of military spending.

There are doubtless many lessons to be learned from what happened in Iran. I have suggested that the major factors lay in the policies of the Shah's government itself, although U.S. policy and action also played a role. But any debate on "who lost Iran?" can only tend to exaggerate the extent of U.S. influence, at least since 1963 or so, and above all to obfuscate the essentials of the situation the United States is now facing.

## VII

Clearly, as of early March 1979, the final word has not yet been said in Iran. While Ayatollah Khomeini as a self-admitted "strongman" (a designation he acknowledged in a televised interview in Paris) has appointed a cabinet headed by Mehdi Bazargan, with three deputy premiers of whom at least one has a leftist background, his initial coalition already shows signs of disintegration. The communist-leaning elements, physically entrenched on the university grounds in Teheran, are making a bid for power through attacks on the radio station, power plants and other public institutions and facilities as well as mounting an invasion of the American Embassy. Moreover, certain diehard pro-Shah elements, especially in the provinces, have not yet fully capitulated.

Even assuming that operationally Khomeini's Islamic forces will prevail in the immediate future, the rift between theocratic, liberal, and communist-leaning orientations is likely to deepen and in due time lead to further turmoil. We also should not write off completely the elements that have had a stake in the Shah's regime. Although the time-honored Persian principle of *laktyeh* (concealment of one's true thoughts and outward conformity in order to survive under adverse conditions) may lead a good many people to offer their fealty to the revolutionary leadership, their

loyalty may prove of dubious value after the Khomeini-National Front coalition has made inevitable errors in governing and after the initial revolutionary ardor of the masses has cooled off. By the same token, there is a limit to the physical and mental durability of a leader who today heads the revolution at the age of 78. Should his charisma—which played such a major role in coalescing the disparate elements into a common front—no longer be there, it may prove very difficult to maintain not only the initial unity but power as well. Even such a seemingly far-fetched alternative as the restoration of monarchy under propitious circumstances must not be written off with complete finality.

The present change to a new regime is bound to have effects on the foreign policy of Iran, and its direction has already been foreshadowed during Premier Bakhtiar's transitional period. Iran will withdraw from the CENTO Alliance, will substantially reduce its military expenditures, and will abandon its role as a "policeman in the Persian Gulf." It will establish a closer relationship with a selective set of Arab radical and Islamic states, with Colonel Qaddafi's Libya (rumored to have supported Khomeini's campaign) enjoying a place of privilege. Similarly, we may expect a closer liaison with the Palestine Liberation Organization and a hostile attitude toward Israel, as attested by the declared intention to stop supplying it with Iranian oil. This will also mean that, in contrast to the Shah's policy of divorcing production and exports of oil from politics, a new era of interrelationship between petroleum and foreign policy may be inaugurated.

As for the attitude toward the United States, some ambiguities and contradictions have already become apparent. While Ayatollah Khomeini's public pronouncements have been characterized by marked xenophobia and dark hints at "cutting off the hand of foreigners" so conspicuous in Iran, Premier Bazargan has expressed regret at the massive exodus of American specialists (compelled to leave because of the inability of the new regime to ensure their safety), no doubt realizing that a substantial segment of Iran's economy will be paralyzed due to the absence of expert management.

Assuming that the new Bazargan government does not fall to communist subversion and that it has the national survival and interest of Iran as its goal, there is no reason why a normal relationship should not be established between it and the United States. On those issues likely to provide a contrast with the Shah's policy—such as CENTO membership, the Persian Gulf, American advisers, and levels of oil production—a *modus vivendi* can

certainly be found. CENTO as a collective security organization is useful but not essential. What counts more is the conceptualization of the bilateral relationship between the United States and each of its members—Turkey, Pakistan and Iran. In this relationship there is a natural mutual interest: for each of these signatory states to survive as an independent entity, the American protective “umbrella” comes into play, regardless of formal arrangements, to prevent absorption—direct or indirect—by the U.S.S.R. of these strategic territories. A change of government, however traumatic, provided it is independent, does not substantially modify this reality.

Renunciation by Iran of its hegemony over the Gulf may produce a dangerous vacuum. But this should only spur the U.S. government and Congress to give more urgent priority to strategic planning in the Indian Ocean-Gulf area and to the proper relationship with the riparian Arab states, as against the isolationist trends so conspicuous during the recent congressional debates on the Diego Garcia base and armaments.

Similarly, assuming that internal security in Iran is restored, a good number of American technicians are bound to return. Iran cannot afford to abandon half-finished projects or the already constructed factories because in the fervor of revolutionary struggle the Ayatollah opposed the presence of foreigners in the country. It has a continuing stake in employment of its workers and in development, and will be anxious to restore a respectable credit rating on international money markets. The issue of the functioning of banks—whose interest-taking is considered unlawful usury by Muslim fundamentalists—may prove thorny but not insurmountable, as the example of neighboring Saudi Arabia proves. As for oil, its probable politicization should provide a further stimulant to a rational American energy policy which, instead of imposing bureaucratic obstacles to the development of domestic resources, would encourage, through deregulation and favorable taxation, maximum efforts in the direction of research, exploration, and development.

Part of the difficulties in American-Iranian relations can be ascribed to the existence of two competing nationalist philosophies in Iran. At the time of Mosaddeq, it was claimed that he was a true nationalist while the Shah was described as a Western stooge by his Iranian and Western critics. Actually, a true nationalist is the one who not only works for the welfare of his nation but who realistically and accurately defines the greatest threat to its survival. Mosaddeq defined the empire-relinquishing Britain as Iran's

chief enemy; in a similar vein, Ayatollah Khomeini during his press interviews in exile concentrated on the United States (and Israel) as dangerous adversaries while passing under discreet silence the overwhelming presence of Russia to the north, as if Soviet encroachments in Gilan in 1920 and Azerbaijan in 1945 had never occurred. By contrast, the Shah identified the Soviet Union as the only real challenge to Iran's survival and, logically, sought help where it could be most effective—via close collaboration with the West.

In practice, however, Khomeini's verbal hostility toward America (attenuated by some qualifying phrases) need not be necessarily translated into sustained action. Moreover, his anti-American syndrome may be based not on a rational view of the United States as a really imperialist country bent on dominance of Iran and greedy exploitation of its resources, but rather on a broader religious-cultural foundation on which his dislike of what is foreign, secular, and modern is built. This syndrome may not be shared by such of his Western-educated collaborators as Premier Bazargan and Foreign Minister Karim Sanjabi.

Moreover, the behavior of Khomeini's communist allies even during the first weeks of the revolution would seem to indicate that the initial prudence and low profile (as enjoined by Stalin) during the period of struggle against the Shah has given place to more open assertion of their true nature. The Fedayan-e-Khalq and Tudeh groups have already presented demands for the formation of a “true people's army,” control by workers' committees (i.e., soviets) of the National Iranian Oil Company and the National Iranian Radio and Television, recognition of elected representatives of strike committees as the core of the revolutionary movement in Iran, and dismissal of the newly appointed commander of the air force, General Saïd Mahdudî, as “the pawn of the old regime.” This bold coming into the open (thus far, however, with no identified leadership) is bound to give some sobering thoughts to the new revolutionary government.

Much of this scenario of future American-Iranian relations is, as has been repeatedly stressed in these lines, based on the assumption that (a) the religious-National Front coalition will prevail in the contest for power with the Communists, and (b) order and tranquility will be restored to the country in a reasonably good time. At this stage it would be hazardous to make firm predictions with respect to both matters.

Even on the best (or least unfavorable) assumptions concerning the new regime in Iran and U.S.-Iran relations, there can be no doubt that the United States now faces serious challenges to its basic interests in the Middle East. The Northern Tier, toward which U.S. policy—having contributed to its freedom from Soviet encroachments and internal stability—could have been termed successful till the mid-1970s, is in a state of disarray, with Afghanistan subjected to a Marxist regime, Turkey suffering dissension, and Iran in the throes of revolutionary turmoil, the outcome of which was (and still is) difficult to predict.

Access to oil is now subject to double jeopardy, partly because of the politicization of oil policies by the producing states (as attested in differing ways by the 1973 Arab embargo and the 1978-79 Iranian stoppage), and partly because the main routes of access have become more vulnerable than ever: with Iran's power in safeguarding the security of the Strait of Hormuz seriously disrupted, with the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb dangerously wedged between the Marxist-dominated states of South Yemen and Ethiopia, the pipelines to the Mediterranean from Iraq and Saudi Arabia subject to the whims of transit countries, and the Suez Canal—despite its reactivation in 1976—still vulnerable to any new outbreak of hostilities should efforts at the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict fail. And behind all of this looms the power of the Soviet Union either directly, through the local political groups subject to its guidance, or through such proxies as Cuba and East Germany, both particularly busy in South Yemen and the Horn of Africa. One does not have to be a Saudi Arabian to view this increasing Soviet presence—direct and indirect—as an encircling movement stretching in a broad arc from Afghanistan to the southern reaches of the Red Sea.

Inevitably, the new situation in Iran, and in the Northern Tier of which it remains the keystone, is closely linked to events in the Arab world. There, in recent years, Saudi Arabia and Egypt—both under prudent and moderate leaderships—have emerged as two principal anchors of American presence in the Arab world. Each of them is playing its own specialized role in influencing the events in the region: Saudi Arabia with its religious posture, money, and oil; and Egypt with its manpower, military capacity, and cultural leadership. Since President Sadat's advent to power, both have tended to cooperate with each other, in contrast to the fratricidal conflict of the Nasser era. Together, they possess an impressive potential for stemming the tide of radicalism and

keeping the channels of contact with the West intact. However, both their mutual solidarity and their survival as regimes dedicated to peace and moderation are not assured.

A first essential for American policy is to convey the strongest possible assurances to both countries. The most immediate occasion for such action is the conflict between North and South Yemen, which apparently bulked large in Secretary of Defense Harold Brown's discussions of February 1979 with the Saudi government.

Unfortunately the problem of restoring American credibility in the Middle East goes far deeper than such measures, however useful they are in themselves. The overthrow of the Shah has dealt a further serious blow to that credibility, regardless of how one allocates the responsibility for what happened. But the roots of the problem go back to the proclaiming of détente in the early 1970s as a basic American policy. Fundamental causes of tension such as the Soviet consolidation of power in Eastern Europe and Soviet efforts to upset the status quo outside the extended Soviet empire through the support of revolutionary and "national liberation" movements have not only continued but, it appears, been ratified by the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and accentuated by subsequent Soviet behavior in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere. The United States, and the West generally, have appeared to extend a series of unilateral concessions, and have been unable to prevent or reduce Soviet advances in a number of strategic areas in the Third World, including Angola and Ethiopia.<sup>5</sup> And the picture has been compounded within the United States by the decrying of arms sales and by the all-too-effective campaign to discredit and dismantle American intelligence services—tools of policy the United States had employed constructively in the Middle East over the years.

The reversal of these trends, and the restoration of a strong American posture in the Middle East, will not be accomplished

<sup>5</sup> An Iranian newspaper publisher put these thoughts in the following way in a private conversation with the author in 1978: "We believed in and respected America for her ideals of human freedom, for her imposing achievements in providing the highest standard of living for the masses anywhere in human history, and for her firmness and resolution in dealing with threats to those values. We respected and admired America for your stand in saving Iran in 1945, in rescuing Berlin in 1948, in insisting that Israel should abandon its conquests in Sinai in 1956, in landing your troops in Lebanon in 1958, and in expelling the Soviets from Cuba in 1962. But since Vietnam we have witnessed in the last decade a series of retreats and defeats in many parts of the world." Even if this may appear as an oversimplified view of international politics after World War II, the point is that it largely reflects the current perception of America's power and influence among friends and enemies alike. The deteriorating position of the dollar—once an eloquent symbol of America's might—has further contributed to this perception.

overnight or by any single action. It remains of critical importance.

Finally, while the general malaise of the Arab world may be ascribed to a number of causes, the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to provide its central focus. In the spring of 1977, responsible Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, welcomed President Carter's outline of three basic principles for a peaceful settlement: (a) withdrawal of Israel from occupied territories with only minor modifications of the 1967 boundaries (thus echoing Secretary of State William Rogers' proposals of 1969); (b) full peace, including diplomatic, economic and cultural relations, between Israel and its Arab neighbors (thus exceeding U.N. resolution 242 which spoke only of the end to belligerent status); and (c) a "homeland" for the Palestinian people. The latter expression, though not devoid of some ambivalence, had nevertheless a connotation of ultimate self-determination, in consonance with the trends of the twentieth century, an era of decolonization and emancipation.

Unfortunately, to these same countries, the Camp David agreements seemed to represent a falling away from these principles. From this standpoint Premier Begin had emerged victorious in the contest of wills between him and the other two leaders. As an astute politician and tough negotiator, he could derive considerable satisfaction from seeing his own plan (initially presented to Sadat in December 1977) and that of former Foreign Minister Allon accepted in their essential parts: Israel would obtain a virtual separate peace treaty with Egypt, would merely grant internal administrative autonomy to "the inhabitants" of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, would only redeploy its forces in these areas without withdrawing them, would make no commitment as to the nonproliferation of Jewish settlements, and would retain the right of veto over Arab immigration into the stipulated autonomous territories. Moreover, there was no provision for a linkage between the agreement concerning Egypt and that referring to the Palestinian areas.

The rejection of the agreements at the Baghdad meeting in the fall of 1978 was predictable, and it was notable that Saudi Arabia voted for the Baghdad decisions despite its general position of support for Sadat as leader of Egypt. Inevitably, the Saudi position has tended to harden in the wake of the Iran revolution.

As of early March 1979, efforts to conclude an Egyptian-Israeli Treaty appear to be at a climactic stage. But even if this should be accomplished, it will only have moved the problem to a further stage in which the initial tests will include whether clearcut autonomy is granted in the West Bank and Gaza.

The basic option for the United States is whether to acquiesce in Israel's territorial acquisitions at a time when key Arab countries come forth with peace initiatives. As noted, the stability and survival of moderate Egyptian and Saudi Arabian leaderships may ultimately depend on the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. By the same token, a lasting settlement of the complex Lebanese imbroglio with its upsetting effect on the entire region is hardly conceivable without resolving the fate of displaced Palestinians. As for the latter, the major challenge for Washington will be whether to recognize the reality (admitted even by Israel's Moshe Dayan) of the Palestine Liberation Organization and, through diplomatic contacts, explore with it various avenues toward peace. The formalistic argument that any contact with the PLO is out of the question so long as it engages in terrorism and calls for the demise of Israel as a state should be subjected to close scrutiny. The United States has favored opening the channels of communication with various terrorist and guerrilla groups in North and Black Africa at one time or another, and the question arises whether the peace-making process would really gain by making the PLO an exception. It does not require prophetic vision to predict that public manifestations of cordiality between the non-Arab Ayatollah Khomeini and the PLO's Arafat are likely to put even greater pressures on Arab states in defense of the Palestinian cause.

In a broader sense—always accepting as a given that the existence and security of Israel are not in question insofar as the United States is concerned—the issue is whether American policy should or should not run counter to the principle of self-determination in the Middle East, a principle which is being supported vigorously in Africa. This appears to be a basic issue which, if mishandled by Washington, is likely to further estrange the Arab world from America, enormously complicate the position of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, deepen radical trends, and open more widely the gates to influences hostile to the United States and the Free World at large.

IX

So one returns in the end to the fundamental principles that guided postwar American policy in the Northern Tier and by extension in the rest of the Middle East—above all the principle of national self-determination.

With regard to the Northern Tier, much that has happened cannot be easily reversed, but there is no reason to abandon these

countries to their own fate and to signal in advance America's uncritical acquiescence to disintegrating trends or to communist penetration. In Iran the overriding issue today is whether the present government should be looked at as a mere Kerensky-style prelude to further deterioration or whether it will find ways of restoring order and stability under non-communist auspices. There is no doubt that with the departure of the Shah, the West has lost an ally whose concepts of international security closely coincided with its own and that, to borrow **George Ball's** phrase addressed to Israel, the dilemma for Washington and its allies will be "how to save Iran in spite of herself."

More broadly, in the Northern Tier any genuinely nationalist regime, i.e., a regime striving to safeguard its independence, should be considered eligible for normalization of relations with the United States and such cooperation as may be required to assure its orderly development. Should any violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity by its more powerful neighbors occur, no useful purpose would be served by concealing them—in the name of détente—from the American public or downgrading their importance.

And, in the same way, adherence to the principle of self-determination in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is basic to assisting the moderate leaderships in the Middle East to make themselves credible in the eyes of their people, and thus to beat back external or externally supported threats to their survival. The factors that have made the arc of crisis an area of vital national interest to the United States are, if anything, stronger today than they have ever been. The task of helping to restore fair peace and stability in the area is harder than it has been; it is critical that it be tackled anew from a firm basis of principle.

*R. K. Ramazani*

## SECURITY IN THE PERSIAN GULF

**W**ho should maintain the future security of the Persian Gulf? This question looms large in the minds of policymakers in the United States, Western Europe, Japan and, of course, the Persian Gulf states. The fact that this question is raised with a deep sense of urgency in numerous capitals of the world indicates the extent to which Iran was perceived as having ensured Gulf security before the outbreak of its recent revolution. Although American rhetoric spoke of pursuing a "twin-pillar policy," the United States itself actually relied primarily on Iran to perform the role of the "policeman" for the Gulf region.

Prior to the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the perception of Iran as the main protector of Gulf security was reinforced by the American reluctance to fill the power vacuum left by Britain as a result of its historic decision to withdraw forces in 1971 from the area "east of Suez," including the Persian Gulf. As the most populous and the strongest military power in the area and as the main country straddling the strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which some 57 percent of world oil trade must pass to world markets, Iran was willing to undertake the burden of responsibility for Gulf security—the immediate problem then being the creation of a federation of the Trucial and other small states near the entrance to the Gulf.

When Saudi Arabia emerged as a world financial power after the 1973 war, it seemed for a time to be regarded as the "linchpin" of American policy in the Persian Gulf. The Carter Administration in particular seemed to have some preference for the financial power of Saudi Arabia as contrasted with the military power of Iran. In fact, however, the idea died on the vine. Saudi Arabia lacked the population and military power necessary for playing a major security role in the Gulf region, and in any case Riyadh was unwilling to undertake such a role.

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