



## **The United States and Iran: The Allocation of Weapon Systems as an Imperialist Tool to Protect Capitalist Interest**

Curriculum Unit 82.04.08

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This unit was started after a third world nation was selected. I utilized my school's library encyclopedia to begin my research, promoting the thought that, that's a good place to look.

I propose taking a brief history of Iran's struggle to become a nation, and abstracting major periods of time stated in its history to see whether the United States had allocated weapons during those periods and what capitalist interest was involved. My source for obtaining this brief history of Iran is Compton's Encyclopedia, 1973 Edition.

Iran extends north to south, about 860 miles; east to west 1,385 miles, with an overall area of about 636,294 square miles. Iran occupies the western and larger part of the high, dry Iranian Plateau. The western half of the Iranian Plateau raises from 3,000 to 5,000 feet. Crossed by numerous mountain ranges; salt and sandy deserts cover roughly two-thirds of the plateau area. Iran lies in southwestern Asia between the Caspian Sea to the north and the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman to the south.

The principal products of Iran are wheat, barley, cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar beets, dates, figs, opium, wool, Persian lamb skins, petroleum, iron, copper, lead, coal, turquoise, salt, rugs and carpets. The major cities in Iran are Tehran(the capital), Tabriz, Isfahan, Meshed, Abadan, Shiraz, Kermanshah and Ahwaz.

In 1935 the people of the land of the lion and the sun previously known as Persians by the west, now called themselves Irani(Aryans); and their country Iran. Tehran is the capital of Iran and is also second in size is Tabriz, in the northwest. It is the trade center country's chief oil port. Isfahan, the seventeenth century capital, is the art shrine of Iran.

The vast majority of it's people are Moslems of the Shiite sect. They regard Meshed, in the northeast, as a holy city.

The Iranians look back on 2,500 years of recorded history. As a modern state, Iran is young. In 1900 the Shah of Persia still ruled as an absolute monarch. In 1906 the Shah was forced to agree to grant the people a constitution and a legislative assembly. Before the end of that year the first parliament (Majlis) was called, and a constitution was adopted.

Great Britain and Russia had long wanted control of Iran for their own capitalist interest. In 1907 the two

powers agreed to recognize each other's 'sphere of influence'. Between the two, Iran was left with a 'Neutral Strip'—the desert. When World War I broke out, Iran became a battlefield, with Britain and Russia fighting Turks and Germans. In 1919 Britain drew up a plan to extend its influence over all of Iran. But the next year, Russian troops occupied the Caspian provinces. The mountain tribes revolted and anarchy reigned.

Iran was just about in ruins. Reza Khan, a colonel of a cavalry division, marched on Tehran in February of 1921. This emergency government quickly restored order to the country. He became Prime Minister in 1923. In 1925, the Majlis proclaimed Reza, Shah of Persia. He was the first of a new dynasty called Pahlavi.

Reza's government nullified Iran's agreement with Great Britain; persuaded Russia to withdraw from the northern provinces; and brought in American missions to reform finances and give technical assistance. Revenues were increased, the Trans-Iranian railway and highways were begun. In 1927, Reza abruptly dismissed the American mission and called in German experts. When Russia entered World War II, the Allies needed the Trans-Iranian Railway to Russia. In 1941, Great Britain and Russia invaded Iran. The Iranian army collapsed, and Reza Pahlavi abdicated in favor of his twenty-two year old son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

Iran declared war on Germany in 1943. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin conferred at Tehran. They issued a declaration guaranteeing Iran's independence.

In 1945, Russia aided the Iranian Communist Party, which started a revolt in Azerbaijan, in 1946. Iran protested to the United Nations and Russia withdrew its troops. In 1951 the foreign-run oil industry was nationalized by Premier Mohammed Mossadegh. He was ousted in 1953. In 1954, a French, British, Dutch, and American consortium assumed operation of the oil wells, paying Iran 50% royalties.

Iran signed the Baghdad Pact in 1955 and a defense pact in 1960 with the United States. The Shah ruled by decree from 1961 until the parliamentary elections of 1963, in which women voted for the first time. The highest dam in the Middle East was completed on the Dez River in 1963. Literacy rose from 17% in 1963 to 30% in 1968. The economic and land reform programs of the Shah, helped to make Iran's economic growth rate one of the highest in the world in 1968.

*Abstraction: Dates from Encyclopedia*

1900 The Shah of Persia was an absolute monarch.

1906 The people forced the Shah to have a Constitution and a Legislative Assembly.

1907 'Neutral Strip' of desert

World War I—Iran a battlefield caught between Great Britain and Russia versus the Turks and Germany

1919 Great Britain extends influences over all of Iran

1920 Russia occupied the Caspian provinces, the mountain tribes revolted—Anarchy reigned

1921 Reza Khan's cavalry division marched on Tehran in order to restore the government(emergency)

1923 Majlis makes Reza the Shah of Persia. A new dynasty called Pahlavi.

American missionaries called in to reform finances and to give technical assistance.

1927 Reza dismissed the US Mission in favor of German Experts.

World War II—Russia entered the war as Allies needed use of the Trans-Iranian Railway to Russia.

1941 The British invaded Iran from the south and Russia from the north. The Iranian army

collapsed. Reza Pahlavi abdicated in favor of his son, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi.

1943 Iran declared war on Germany. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin confer at Tehran. Iran's independence guaranteed.

1945 Russia aided Iran's Communist Party(Tadeh) in Azerbaijan.  
Iran protests to the United Nations.

1946 Russia withdrew from Iran.

1951 Iran's foreign-run oil was nationalized by Premier Mohammed Mossadegh.

1953 The Army ousted Mossadegh.

1954 French, British, Dutch and American Consortium assumed operation of the country's oil wells, paying 50% royalties to Iran.

1955 Iran signed Baghdad Pact.

1960 Iran signed a defense pact with the United States.

1961 Shah ruled Iran by decree.

1963 Parliamentary elections—women voted for the first time.  
The Middle East's highest dam was completed on the Dez River. 17% Literacy 1963.  
Economic and land reforms—Coronation of Shah

1968 30% Literacy—one of the highest in the world.

Iran is only one of many 'third world' countries with which the United States has made arms trade agreements. From 1900 to the late 1940's, the United States had little involvement with Iran, but, both recognized that indeed the United States with its growing power would come to play some special beneficial role in rescuing Iran from its humiliating servitude and restore it to some semblance of its past history. During this period the United States had little national interest in the resources of Iran.

It was only after the mid 1950's that the United States began major arms shipments to Iran. Perhaps it was a matter of strategy as proported by John L. Sutton and Geoffrey Kemp in *Arms to Developing Countries 1945-1965*, which states: "Only Iran confronts the Soviet Union directly, a fact which has been recognized in the supply of American aircraft to Iran as part of the American 'forward defence' strategy, through military grant and aid programmes."

Major increases in arms to Iran from the United States is evidenced by listings in the *Arms Trade Registers*, a publication of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute(SIPRI). "This SIPRI publication is a register of deals in major arms with 97 third world countries. The information is as complete as the open literature allows up to 1 January 1974 and there is preliminary information on deals and orders up to mid-1974." Below are some of the listings of aircraft, Naval vessels, and armored fighting vehicles sent to Iran by the United States.

#### *Arms Supplied to Iran by the United States*

*(figure available in print form)*

The Middle East from the period 1950 to 1974, was the largest importer of major weapons from the United States. Iran imported some 35 percent; second was the Far East which imported 19.7 percent. In the Middle East, Iran is the most powerful militarily, among the Persian Gulf States.

The arms traded to Iran, listed previously, in the early stages (late 40's and early 50's) were chiefly traded because, ironically, the major powers, in particular the United States, Britain and Russia, which have consistantly argued for restrictions and the dissemination of nuclear weapons have at the same time pursued large military aid and sale programs of conventional weapons to countries outside the direct East-West confrontation and in areas where active or potential local disputes exist.

"There are many reasons why the distribution of armaments should have been pursued with such vigor by the industrial powers", says Lewis A. Frank, in *The Arms Trade in International Relations*. He states, "They have argued that military aid and sales programs indirectly benefit their own security; provide a lucrative source of income, win economic and political influence, stabilize the balance of power in a given area, spread the increasing capital costs of their own military equipment programs, or work towards the standardization of equipment, communications and procedures throughout alliance structures."

The recipient countries such as Iran have been, for years, eager to accept foreign aid. The number of independent sovren states has increased over 100% since 1945; Iran among them. The possession of modern arms is a symbol of power and prestige. Iran was simply able to reassert its independence with an influx of jet aircraft, missiles and tanks from 1950, up through the 1970's, basically supplied by the United States.

The United States's position in Iran was not so much as a Capitalist; but rather that of a power nation, wanting a balance of power with other power nations in the Gulf region. The United States would share influences, while preventing excessive infringements on Iran's sovereignty.

By the end of World War II, relates Barry Rubin in *Paved With Good Intentions* , “American policymakers became convinced of the Soviets aggressive designs towards Iran and Iran became a testing ground for the containment policy and a key experience in persuading Americans at home of Soviet bad faith.” The post war attitude of the United States towards Iran was not as a capitalist nation. But more as a big brother, assuring Iran that the United States would go as far a necessary to maintain its independence. Of course, this was twofold—Oil must flow. The United States chiefly wanted to stabilize the Gulf region to assure the oil supply without interference. Each of the Gulf States were supplied with various types of arms and equipment to resist interference by any of the great power nations.

This unit is designed to be used by the teacher exposing the student to spot research at a beginner stage—most likely grades 7 through twelve. This unit will enable the teacher to transmit methods involved in basic research, to the students, such as: Topic selection, selection of a thesis statement, and methods of obtaining information to achieve proposed goals.

If this unit is used as a model; the following should be done:

1. Select a subject, topic or area.
2. State what your class is seeking as a learning experience.
3. Write a unit topic that will explain to all, your subject, topic or area and specific information desired.
4. Select one Resource to extrapolate basic information(I recommend an encyclopedia copy of the same edition for all students involved in the study).
5. Make a list of events, dates, changes, etc.; that is stated in this one information source.
6. Assign these events, dates, changes, etc.; to see what they can find that will satisfy the class topic.
7. Place all collected information from students in order that all might see what conclusions can be reached and or stated that will explain the goal of the thesis.

Note\*\* Students should make an annotated bibliography as they gather their information.

## NOTES

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F. E. Compton Company, Compton’s Encyclopedia. 1973 Edition.

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Sutton, John L. and Geoffrey Kemp, "Arms to Developing Countries 1945-1965" The Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1966.

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