

Whitewashing the Shah:
Racial Liberalism and U.S. Foreign Policy During the 1953 Coup of Iran

by

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ABSTRACT

When the United States' Central Intelligence Agency recently declassified documents relating to the 1953 Coup in Iran, it was discovered that American involvement was much deeper than previously known. In fact, the CIA had orchestrated the coup against democratically-elected Mohammed Mossadegh. This action was sold to the United States public as being essential to democracy, which seems contradictory to its actual purpose. U.S. political leaders justified the coup by linking it to what Charles Mills calls "racial liberalism," a longstanding ideological tradition in America that elevates the white citizen to a place of power and protection while making the racial noncitizens "others" in the political system. Political leaders in the United States relied on bribing the American media to portray the Shah as the white citizen and Mossadegh as a racial other, the white citizen was restored to power and the racial other was overthrown.

DEDICATION

For my uncle, Thomas Williams:

“Nothing behind me, everything ahead of me, as is ever so on the road.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, an American Secretary of State met with an Iranian foreign minister for the first time since diplomatic relations were severed in 1979. At that time, Americans in the Embassy in Tehran were held as hostages for over 14 months by irate Iranians. That point was the culmination of years of anti-American sentiment and American meddling in Iran. This renewed effort to forge a relationship between the countries has resulted in a chance for détente in U. S. /Iranian relations.

The relationship between the United States and Iran is long and fraught with intrigue. The catalyst for the chilly relations was the Iranian Coup of 1953, wherein the democratically-elected leader of Iran, Mohammed Mossadegh, was dethroned by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in favor of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran. Both the United States and Britain were involved in the coup, though motivated by separate goals: “British officials planned to overthrow Mossadegh for political and economic interests centered on control of Iran’s oil reserves. U.S. officials became involved in Iran’s politics to satisfy their own post-World War II excitement (Pashai, 7).” In this instance, post-war excitement refers to the proliferation of Communism and the zealous efforts to defeat it.

This event, the involvement of British and American powers in Iranian internal politics, had far-reaching and long-lasting effects. The Coup initiated a domino effect through the region, the effects of which, including destabilization in the region and increased Islamic militantism, are still being felt worldwide today. In fact, according to Kerman and Wood, “[i]t has been argued that this event ultimately did more damage to

Iran than any singular event in its long history (p. 29).” Iranian citizens, who had long fought for democracy in their country, resented the installation of the Shah’s pick for Prime Minister, General Zahedi. In 1979, Islamic radicals, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, overthrew the Shah. The resentment of his collusion with the West had reached a fever pitch: when the Shah sought and was granted sanctuary in the United States, the Iranian people retaliated by holding hostages at the American Embassy in Tehran for 444 days. President Carter, the incumbent President of the United States, retaliated by seizing Iranian assets.

After the resolution of the hostage crisis, the animosity between the United States and Iran had solidified into a deep, mutual loathing and distrust. When Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, Islamic revolutionaries suspected American involvement (Amin, n.p.). In fact, the Carter administration had “provided military hardware to Iraq, including the basic raw materials that Saddam Hussein’s regime used to make chemical weapons (Amin, n.p.),” a major concern for the Western world in decades to follow.

Surprisingly, only eleven years before this event, Tehran had been bestowed upon the honor of hosting the 20th anniversary celebrations for the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the time, the deliberate choice of location signified Iran’s place in the upper-echelons of Third World elite. Iran, and the Shah himself, were lauded with praise. UN Secretary-General U Thant supported the choice of location, saying it was “very fitting that we should commemorate such an anniversary in a land whose culture and civilization are among the oldest in the world (Thant via Burke, 283).”

Yet this conference also signified a break between the Shah and his Western benefactors. In fact, the conference, with its sparse archives and few transcripts, was

considered by many in the human rights world, including the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), as “somewhere between a failure and an outright catastrophe (Burke, 276).” ICJ Chief Sean McBride elaborated: “the Proclamation [of Tehran, which has been largely omitted from U.N. historical documents] deals with less than half the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration. It goes no further in defining and enlarging these rights and in some cases may even be said to limit the pronouncements of the Universal Declaration (McBride via Burke, 276).” The conference was eclipsed by the second Conference in Vienna, which strengthened the original Declaration and resulted in “concrete proposals for the long debated Office of the High Commissioner (Burke, 276).” The disdain of the Universal Declaration expressed at the conference was the Shah and Iranian leaders effectively shedding the self-imposed “whiteness” they had assumed at the beginning of the Iranian revolution of 1953 (Burke, 284-5). Instead, the Shah and his sister, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, emphasized Iran’s place as a leader of the “South.” According to Pahlavi, “While the Western countries stressed the rights of the individual, developing countries were thinking of the rights of entire peoples (Pahlavi via Burke, 296).”

Since that point, the grievances the two countries have for each other are plentiful: Iran believes that the United States is too supportive of Israel and uses inflammatory rhetoric to cast Iran as the evil presence in the Middle East (Bush, n.p.). The United States, on the other hand, is “critical of Iran’s violation of human rights and repression of democratic opposition (Amin, n.p.).”

Perhaps the United States’ revulsion of Iran’s antidemocratic processes is to be expected. In the Declaration of Independence, the Founding Fathers professed the deepest

beliefs in these freedoms: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. The American Creed professes the importance of citizens' participation and consent in government. Democracy, life, liberty for all men – this is our creed.

Yet, as seen with their involvement in the Coup of 1953, the American leaders do not always defend these values for others in exchange for perceived self-interest: the destruction of Communism, the protection of property rights, and the preservation of alliances. During this event, incumbent President Eisenhower; the Dulles brothers, Secretary of State John Foster and CIA director Allen; and Kermit Roosevelt, a chief of the CIA's Near East and Asia Division and relative of both Roosevelt presidents orchestrated a campaign against the incumbent Prime Minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadegh. By bribing mobs and military officers, bribing both American and Iranian press to print CIA-approved propaganda, and convincing the Shah to dismiss Mossadegh, the United States and Britain achieved the double victory of preserving British oil concessions and fighting off the threat of communism. This coup was one in a long history of supporting the overthrow of democratically-elected regimes and/or defending repressive and authoritarian regimes. The next year, in Guatemala, the United States intervened in overthrowing another leader that threatened white property rights, Jacobo Árbenz. Though Árbenz was trained in the United States, he soon “attempted a series of land reforms that threatened the holdings of the U.S.- owned United Fruit Company,” and was subsequently overthrown (Suster, n.p.) The Congo, the Dominican Republic, and the Republic of South Korea were all treated to the United States' brand of leadership overthrow in the years after the Iranian Coup.

How do US political leaders justify the overthrow of democratically elected regimes to a public that is ostensibly and deeply committed to the ideals of liberal democracy? One possible explanation is that leaders highlight different foreign interests that outweigh those ideals, such as the defense against communism. In Iran, it seems, President Eisenhower and the CIA demoted democracy to a secondary concern in relation to the defeat of even the threat of communism in the Middle East. American media sources seemed to fervently support the actions of Eisenhower and the CIA. In the face of spreading communism, the American people, it can be argued, valued democracy less than a capitalistic society. However, this view is rather cynical in assuming that American citizens are simply willing to suspend their support for liberal democracy when it comes to US interests overseas. Their belief in the ideals of liberal democracy is deeper and more sincere than that. A better explanation must show how leaders frame these coups overseas as themselves extensions of liberal democracy. Liberalism is taken seriously in the United States, and has been etched into the collective values by its incorporation into the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Power is derived from the consent of the governed, with no caveats pertaining to communist threat or economic preservation. These values cannot be used cynically, they are much too dear to the fabric of Americanism. Therefore, they must have an ideological justification. This sets up the turn to racial liberalism.

In the coming pages, I argue that Eisenhower and other U.S. political leaders publicly justified the coup in Iran by linking it to what Charles Mills calls racial liberalism, a longstanding ideological tradition in America that elevates the white citizen to a place of power and protection while making the racial noncitizens “others” in the

political system. Realizing that these actions, which on the surface can seem so contrary to our professed values, are in fact in line with the American creed, can help us uncover a deeper understanding of our idea of democracy. Democracy is nuanced and leads to moral quandaries such as the involvement in the Coup. Due to the inherent racial structure of liberalism, not supporting democracy in Iran was an extension of American values, not a suspension.

This paper will take the theory of racial liberalism and explain how it manifests in American involvement in Iran during the Coup of 1953. By applying this theory, this paper will attempt to prove that U.S. political leaders draw on racial liberalism to justify foreign as well as domestic interventions to the American public. The Coup of Iran was chosen as a case study because it was a significant coup that the United States participated in and, until recently, American involvement been shrouded in secrecy. This case presents a clear case of perceived hypocrisy, yet can be easily reconciled with racial liberalism. This study will attempt to add to the conversation regarding racial liberalism by showing racial liberalism as an additional framework for which to view American support of the Coup and the Shah.

The theory explanation in Chapter 2 will analyze the theory of racial liberalism as put forth by Charles Mills and explain the concepts of the White Citizen and the Racial Other. The thesis will then move into a history discussion in Chapter 3. It will summarize the history of US/Iranian relations, the Iranian Coup, and the racialized environment of the Eisenhower administration at the time of the Coup. Chapter 4 will present the case study, beginning with the methodology used. I will present evidence in the form of newspaper and media articles regarding both the Shah and Mohammed Mossadegh,

highlighting the effects of racial liberalism on their individual portrayals. Finally, I will conclude with an insight to how racial liberalism has affected the United States' action during the Arab Spring.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY

The coup was reconciled with American values of democracy to the American public by understanding and applying Charles W. Mills's theory of racial liberalism as the framework in which these actions are undertaken. Racial liberalism suggests that liberalism and democracy are inherently racialized, with the benefits guaranteed for white men only. American intervention in democratic Iran, which seems counterproductive in the American quest for democracy, was sold to the American public by exemplifying the ideals of racial liberalism through the media, which helps us understand how democratic leaders can square these values at home with action abroad. "White citizenship...reconciles racially oppressive practices with democratic ideals (Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy*, 47)."

The concept of white citizenship stems from the theory of the Racial Contract, also by Mills. The idea of a racial contract, opposed to a social contract or gender contract, creates a "conceptual bridge between the world of mainstream white ethics and political philosophy and the world of minority political thought (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 4)," which emphasizes the view of the minority in the context of the majority point of view. In short, "White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 1)."

Unlike other social contract theories, this theory has historical evidence, rather than being prescriptive for the future or descriptive of the present. The ability to view

historical events through the lens of the Racial Contract is essential to this case study. As Mills explains:

“...[T]he Racial Contract...has the best claim to being an actual historical fact. Far from being lost in the mist of the ages, it is clearly historically locatable in the series of events marking the creation of the modern world by European colonialism and the voyages of “discovery” now increasingly and more appropriately called expeditions of conquest. The Columbian quincentenary a few years ago, with its accompanying debates, polemics, controversies, counterdemonstrations, and outpourings of revisionist literature, confronted many whites with the uncomfortable fact, hardly discussed in mainstream and moral political theory, that we live in a world that has been *foundationally shaped for the past five hundred years by the realities of European domination and the gradual consolidation of global white supremacy*. Thus not only is the Racial Contract “real,” but – whereas the social contract is characteristically taken to be establishing the legitimacy of the nation-state, and codifying morality and law within its boundaries – the Racial Contract is *global*, involving a tectonic shift of ethicojuridical basis of the planet as a whole, the division of the world, as Jean-Paul Sartre put it long ago, between “men” and “natives (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 19).”

Mills is suggesting that racial liberalism can be seen in practice in our own history. Such instances as slavery in the antebellum south can be explained through the framework of racial liberalism. According to Mills’s, “At the most basic level, liberalism is a political theory about the equitable treatment of individuals conceptualized as

morally equal, whose basic rights and freedoms should be respected (Mills, *Liberalism and the Racial State*, 45).” However, the definition above does not state “all individuals,” but those who are “conceptualized as morally equal.” To elaborate:

“The Racial Contract is that set of formal or informal agreements or meta-agreements...between the members of one subset of humans, henceforth designated by (shifting) “racial” (phenotypical/genealogical/cultural) criteria C1, C2, C3...as “white,” and coextensive (making due allowance for gendered differentiation) with the class of full persons, to categorize the remaining subset of humans as “nonwhite” and of a different and inferior moral status, subpersons, so that they have a subordinate civil standing in the white or white-ruled polities the whites either already inhabit or establish or in transactions as aliens with these polities, and the moral and juridical rules normally regulating the behavior of whites in their dealings with one another either do not apply at all in dealings with nonwhites or apply only in a qualified form (depending in part on changing historical circumstances and what particular variety of nonwhite is involved), but in any case the general purpose of the Contract is always the differential privileging of the whites as a group with respect to the nonwhites as a group, the exploitation of their bodies, land and resources, and the denial of equal socioeconomic opportunities to them. All whites are *beneficiaries* of the Contract, though some whites are no *signatories* to it (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 11).”

Race is a social construct, as described above. While it generally relies on the “phenotypical/genealogical/cultural” criteria to create a class of white citizens, it is fluid and “shifting”. This grouping of people into the citizen class creates an other class, that of

the racial other. Being a white citizen, however, does not mean that they agree with the structure, yet they ultimately benefit regardless of their personal acceptance of the racial contract. The racial contract creates a racial liberalism, in which freedom and privileges are reserved for the dominant, historically white, citizen class. As Mills states:

"Liberalism...has historically been predominantly a racial liberalism (Stokes and Melendez), in which conceptions of personhood and resulting schedules of rights, duties, and government responsibilities have all been racialized. And the contract, correspondingly, has really been a racial one, an agreement among white contractors to subordinate and exploit non-white noncontractors for white benefit (Mills, *Racial Contract*, 1381)."

The adoption of this racial contract, in turn, creates two political identities: that of the white citizen, who is a full rights-bearer in society, and that of the racial other. Joel Olson establishes the definition of whiteness as a social construct, distinguishing between white as a biological identity and white as a political identity. White does not refer to skin color, but to the dominant class, which is generally white. In creating a dominant class, the separation also causes an "other" group to materialize as those without privilege. According to Olson, citizenship is defined against slavery: the citizen is the nonslave (Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy*, 43).

In some cases, the privileges of the citizen class depend on the exclusion or exploitation of the other group. For instance, in the antebellum South, for white citizens to protect their economic participation and livelihood, they enslaved a race of 'others' to work their fields for no pay. To defend the white citizens' freedom was to defend the practice of slavery, and to defend property rights (a hallmark of a free citizen) was to

subjugate slaves as property. Therefore, to defend freedom and democracy for its citizens, the United States defended the oppression of the racial other.

Race, in fact, was invented to support the plantations of the South (Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy*, 37). By creating a racial other, even the poorest of whites felt unified with the rich sharecroppers and plantation owners. It “emerged from the needs of the Virginia upper class to craft a docile and productive labor force (Olson, *The Abolition of White Democracy*, 38).” Instead of binding with Black slaves to riot against the oppressive rich owners, the poor whites now found themselves on the same level as their white bosses. These whites, poor and rich alike, were guaranteed, “...the right to own property (including human property), the right to share in the public business, and a pledge to ensure the degraded position of all those defined as Black (Olson, *The Abolition of the White Democracy*, 38).”

Working within the framework of racial liberalism, U.S. political leaders could justify the overthrow of Mossadegh as a democratic act by linking it to the defense of the White Citizen. In more concrete terms, they would have to frame the Shah – Mossadegh’s primary opponent – as a stand-in for the interests of this citizen, by “whitewashing” the Shah to be perceived as a white citizen. The American media played a primary role in whitewashing the Shah, by responding to bribes by the CIA and reporting a very specific picture of both the Shah and Mossadegh to the public. Both Mohammed Reza Shah and the West “whitewashed” the Shah in adherence to racial liberalism. The West exploited these social constructs of race by placing two people from the same ethnic background into very different political categories: the Shah as “white” and Mossadegh as “other”. The Shah and his family claimed whiteness, investing in

maintaining whiteness and being a part of the citizen group, by aligning themselves with Western values and education ('Shah of Iran's a Very Modern Monarch,' S3). In the 1950s United States, whitewashing the Shah meant presenting him as a leader that exemplifies the following traits: support of capitalism, support of the West, and dedication to democracy. To be seen as white, the Shah had to align himself with a particular agenda that is associated with the White Citizen. The Shah had to shape himself to the image of a White Citizen to secure the privileges of citizenship: dominion over the other class and preservation of his throne. The Shah helped the British oil investors maintain their hold on the valuable oil in Iran. When Mossadegh's oil nationalization plan threatened oil profits for the British stakeholders, much like when the U. S. was threatened by expanding tobacco farms and dwindling servant force, the upper classes invented divisions to protect their wealth. In the case of the antebellum south, slave owners and other privileged groups invented the division between the white class and the racial other, the slave. In the case of Iran, U.S. political leaders pushed the viewpoint that the Shah was a Capitalist and white citizen, while Communist Mossadegh was a racial other. By emphasizing the Shah's connection to capitalism and Western society, such as visits to the United States and his education abroad, the Shah is effectively cast as a member of the white, dominant class, both by his Western allies and by his own positioning.

On the other hand, Mohammed Mossadegh refused to adapt white, Western values, most significantly by refusing to respect the capitalistic interests of Britain in Iranian oil. The CIA and MI5, British secret intelligence, denied Mossadegh and his supporters general access to the citizenry. They and their perceived Communist values

were a threat to some of the white class's property rights (namely, the British-owned AIOC's perceived rights to Iranian oil) and Capitalism, and therefore were a threat to the system as a whole. American news articles, which were heavily bribed by the CIA to print media in accordance with its goals, cast Mossadegh as a power-hungry communist and the Iranians as barbaric, with media coverage that focused on rioting Mossadegh supporters. Mossadegh also creates this image for himself, albeit with a more benign stated mission. He portrays himself as anti-Western, for the people of Iran. Both he and American media paint Mossadegh as unaligned with Western powers for different reasons: for him, to earn the trust and support of the Iranian people; for the West, to vilify an aggressive force.

To be anti-Western was to be anti-Imperialist, anti-Democratic, and anti-American. Unfortunately for Mossadegh, this action created a racial other of himself. The racial contract that established the United States society and government,

...thereby transforming abstract raceless "men" from denizens of the state of nature into social creatures who are politically obligated to a neutral state, becomes the founding of a *racial* polity, whether white settler states (where preexisting populations already are or can be made sparse) or what are sometimes called "sojourner colonies," the establishment of a white presence and colonial rule over existing societies (which are somewhat more populous or whose inhabitants are more resistant to being made sparse). In addition, the colonizing mother country is also changed by its relation to these new polities, so that its own citizens are altered (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 12)."

Involvement in the Coup was only justifiable by somehow altering the citizens of the United States, by reaching them through the media.

Regardless of the veracity of Mossadegh's communist leanings, his portrayal as a communist was what ultimately marked him as a racial other. Societies create social to preserve the property rights of the citizen, and by tangling with nationalized oil and communist ideals, Mossadegh was a foe to existing social contract.

“[T]he classic social contract...is also *economic* in the background sense that the point of leaving the state of nature is in part to secure a stable environment for the industrious appropriation of the world... Thus even in Locke's moralized state of nature, where people generally do obey natural laws, he is concerned about the safety of private property, indeed proclaiming that “the great and *chief end* therefore, of Men uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the *Preservation of their Property*.”

...[T]he economic dimension of the Racial Contract is the most salient, foreground rather than background, since the Racial Contract is calculatedly aimed at economic exploitation. The whole point of establishing amoral hierarchy and juridically partitioning the polity according to race is to secure and legitimate the privileging of those individuals designated as white/persons and the exploitation of those individuals designated as nonwhite/subpersons (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 31-2).”

The reasons for American presidential administrations and CIA involvement in the Coup of 1953 will not be discussed. Instead, we are focusing on how these actions were justified to the people of the United States as being in-line with their dedication to

democracy. Yet when democracy is racialized, protecting the white hierarchy becomes vital. As Mills claims:

“...the model of the Racial Contract shows us that we need another alternative, another way of theorizing about and critiquing the state: the *racial*, or white-supremacist, state, whose function inter alia is to safeguard the polity as a white or white-dominated polity, enforcing the terms of the Racial Contract by the appropriate means and when necessary, facilitating its rewriting from one form to another (Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 82).”

In other words, protecting the racial order of the state is a major function of said state. In a liberal society, such as the United States, the racial order must be preserved by the state. This, along with defense of property rights, were emphasized to the American public through the media as why the Coup, the Shah, and the existing social order in Iran were beneficial and not contrary to democracy.

By thinking through the relationship between racial liberalism and U.S. involvement in the 1953 coup, scholars of social justice and human rights also stand to gain a couple of broader insights. The commitment to liberty and democracy espoused in domestic U.S. politics actually shapes rather than undermines public support for foreign actions such as the coup in Iran. The other is that the ideological framework of racial liberalism – forged in the context of slavery and the Jim Crow south – also shapes support for the exercise of U.S. politics and government in other, seemingly distant and unrelated settings. The theory of racial liberalism provides a continuity to American domestic and foreign values, resolving the dissonance that can be perceived between domestic democracy and foreign involvement.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY

Prior to World War II, the paths of the United States and Iran did not often cross. The 20th century in Iran is marked with a struggle for political identity and legitimacy. After overthrowing their foreign rulers, the Qajar dynasty, in 1906, Iranians were presented with the startling opportunity to forge their own government and way of rule. Iran was at a strategic location, both ideologically and geographically, to be a pawn in Cold War intrigues. As the threat of Communism loomed and attracted many of the working class, the Iranian elite class espoused Western ideals, such as modernization, secular government, and Western cultural norms, to preserve their hegemony (Lytle, 8). During the war, the United States reciprocated the want for alliance, and began eyeing Iran as a strategic ally (Lytle, 8). Relations with the Soviet Union were already strained, and the United States saw the value in an ally with a shared Soviet border. Iran also sought a relationship with the U.S. during this time, as protection from Russian aggression and exploitation.

When war broke out in Europe, Reza Shah, the father of Mohammed Shah Pahlavi and the monarch of Iran at the time, saw the United States as a neutral ally across the sea that could lend support and funds. US said they were different than old world imperial powers and could transform Iran. Reza Shah had a strategy to induce American involvement. He

“understood that substantial inducements would be necessary to raise the level of American concern. He had already acceded to President Roosevelt’s request in 1939 that he reopen Iran’s legation in Washington. His government removed

another potential irritant by agreeing to pay for the recent expropriated Presbyterian mission schools. The newly appointed minister to Washington opened preliminary discussions for a trade agreement as well as for financial credits, airplanes, and technical advisors (Lytle, 8).”

Reza Shah also understood what motivated the Western World: oil concessions. He attempted to attract American involvement in Iran by offering a concession to the United States. This would not only benefit the U.S.’s coffers, but would “reduc[e] Iran’s financial dependence on AIOC (Lytle, 8).” Unfortunately, this move was the last straw for the Soviet Union, who made it clear that American concessions in Iran, so close to its border, was unacceptable (Lytle, 12).

Iran, eventually, was used as a pawn in the standoff between Russia and the United States. This position, between two superpowers, haunted Iran after the conclusion of World War II.

Domestically, Reza Shah was dealing with the cost of showing alliance to the West. During his rule, resentment of perceived foreign influence in Iranian government continued to grow. Khan, instead of providing the stability for Iran to claim its political identity, instead increased nationalistic sentiment. When his son, Mohammed Reza Shah, ascended the throne, the sentiment only strengthened. In an environment where the people were claiming their nationalism, the Shah aligned himself with the Western powers and culture, hearkening back to the Qajar dynasty. Resentment between the nationalist supporters and Iranian elite grew until it exploded into the election of Mohammed Mossadegh, when the United States lost its favored place in the eyes of the Iranian government.

Iran's foray into selling oil concessions did not begin with the United States. Iranian leaders, especially Khan, often rewarded concessions to Western countries as a way to raise government funds. In turn, they suggested, concession owners would prevent communist Russia from seizing and appropriating Iran's oil reserves. One of these concessions, a particularly lucrative one, was sold to William Knox D'Arcy, a Briton.

Mossadegh, however, did not support the sale or continued ownership by outsiders of Iranian oil. He wanted to reclaim and nationalize the oil industry, which would be an enormous financial blow to British interests. Mossadegh brought two things to the table: first, his passionate faith in the rule of law, and second, an unshakable belief that Iranians must rule themselves (Kinzer, 53). With political prowess, emotional understanding, and elite, European education, he passionately believed in removing foreign interest and supporting democratic rule in Iran. After a short stint as Reza's minister of finance, Mossadegh came out as a fierce opponent to Reza's government and policy. He attacked Reza's attempt at becoming Shah with a warning toward "authoritarian tendencies and predicted that elevating him to the throne would lead the country back to absolutism (Kinzer, 59)." When Reza, again with a tenuous relationship with the British, was forced by them to abdicate in 1941, Mossadegh finally had the chance to see the Iran of his dreams.

In the 1943 election, the first free election for Iran in many years, Mossadegh revived his political ambitions, much to the anger of the British and Shah's son, newly-appointed ruler Mohammad Reza Shah. He ran for office with a high approval rating, and somehow lost the election, which led Mossadegh and his supporters to suggest corruption and unfairness at the polls. After this defeat, Mossadegh organized a protest for the free,

fair elections until the Shah finally backed down. The Shah was planning on visiting the United States for the first time, and wanted to keep political situations at home smooth for his visit to the newly-emerging superpower.

By aligning himself with anti-Western Ayatollah Kashani and fiercely supporting nationalizing oil in Iran, Mossadegh began to garner attention from British political leaders, and reactions were unfavorable. For the British, this marked the end of their rule of Iran. They launched a heavy-handed political assault of the Iranian nationalized oil program. When Britain unveiled plans to invade and economically cripple Iran that expected American support, the US was aghast. Mossadegh was popular with the American public for his rhetoric and resolve. He was named *Time Magazine's* 'Man of the Year' in 1951. American officials tried to negotiate with Mossadegh directly, without UN interference, to no avail. Mossadegh's popularity, both at home and in America, had reached a fever pitch.

The United States' neutrality was born of lack of threat to its own economic interests or safety. The British urged American involvement for quite some time, due to the threat of communism that Mossadegh brought and the threat to its financial interests. Neither reason was enough to entice President Truman, and even the United Nations, into action. Truman still felt that Iran could be a key ally in the Cold War and didn't want to set a precedent of overthrowing leaders. "The Truman Administration sought to avoid disputes in the oil-rich region of the Middle East, fearing the possibility of involvement by communist powers. For Truman, keeping the Middle East in the Western camp was a necessity (Pashai, 52)." However, actions by the Truman administration inadvertently weakened the Iranian position in the oil fight: "While Truman had no intention to

undermine Mossadegh, soon after the nationalization of AIOC, United States developed a plan to provide oil to countries affected by Britain blockade of Iranian oil...This plan inadvertently helped Britain and undermined Mossadegh's government (Pashai, 57)."

Unfortunately, the American dedication to neutrality ended with the election of decidedly anti-Communist Dwight Eisenhower. "But little by little, the CIA started to wane Mossadegh's supporters. The CIA paid a great amount of money to the Toilers party to stop supporting Mossadegh...Mossadegh also lost some of his wealthy supporters as a result of reforms applied by him to keep the country's economy from declining while the oil boycott was in full power. When Mossadegh started to lose his allies, Eisenhower decided that it was time for covert actions (Pashai, 58-9)."

Eisenhower represented a larger ideology shift in the United States: communism was the ultimate evil and had to be eradicated. Racial liberalism can be seen in the fight against Cold War threats. The Dulles brothers, John Foster and Allen, intensified the fear of communism (Kinzer, n.p.). From their lofty positions as Secretary of State and CIA director, respectively, the two believed that "any country not decisively allied with the United States was a potential enemy," and Iran, with its oil reserves, shared border with the Soviet Union, nationalist Prime Minister, and active communist party, was expected to surely fall to communism if intervention was denied (Kinzer, n.p.). According to Borstelmann,

"Liberals and racial egalitarians argued that the Cold War competition with the Communist bloc required the United States to live up fully to its proclaimed ideals of freedom and equality for all. Otherwise, the Soviets would win over the

world's nonwhite majority and the future of the globe would be theirs (Borstelmann, 107).”

Communism was, contradictorily, held at fault for anti-segregationist and segregationist activities. “Congressman Adam Clayton Powell of New York called the arrests of black bus boycotters in Montgomery in February 1956 ‘another ghastly victory for communism’ (Borstelmann, 108),” while “[conservative and segregationist] equally anti-Communist language targeted support for racial equality and integration as subversive of American freedom (Borstelmann, 108).” The FBI stated that “...The only whites who cared about the Till [lynching] case must have been Communists (Borstelmann, 99).” Communism was seen as the cause of any racial ill in the United States and abroad, and therefore opposition to communism came to be associated with the defense of the white citizen.

Yet the threat of communism spreading was somewhat exaggerated by the British in an attempt to get the United States to back their attempts at overthrowing Mossadegh (Pashai, 64). “Also, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which was established in 1947, did not have enough information about Iran’s Communist Party, the Tudeh, to make informed policy decisions. AS a result, Britain tried to overemphasize the importance of the Tudeh party and range of its activities in order to persuade the U.S. to support British policy (Pashai, 65).”

During the Eisenhower administration, Congressman and future Undersecretary of State, Chester Bowles, summed up the distinction between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ affairs: “In this sense, as in so many others, the division between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’ policy no longer has meaning (Borstelmann, 86).” Race relations at home shaped how the

American public viewed the Cold War and international affairs. The racial tensions were kept in mind when dealing with foreign nations. “Racial thinking influenced Eisenhower’s evaluation of the two states he most feared, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China[,] (Borstelmann, 105)” two powerful Communist countries. In Eisenhower’s eyes, and the opinion of many politicians in the country, communism was racialized.

Communism, as the absence of property rights, was contradictory to the racial order. The New Deal, a series of social programs that sprung into existence as a response to the great depression, linked the white citizen to the capitalist order. What defined the citizen was the ability to own property, but in a system where no one owns land, there is no citizen and other. There is no unified white race in their lofty position on the racial hierarchy. Communism itself was a threat to the racial order of the world, and it, combined with the fall of colonialism and the increasing reliance on oil and wealth in non-Western countries, became a national security emergency. People abroad did not necessarily agree that Communism was at fault for their lot in life. “The Eisenhower administration found it difficult to convince Asians and Africans that the expansion of Soviet influence represented a new and more powerful form of colonialism (Borstelmann, 113).” Eisenhower no longer saw the oil issue as between Britain and Iran. He saw it as a chance to thwart communism from spreading. Iran, with its history with Russia, would be a prime candidate to fall to communism. Using this rhetoric, Eisenhower committed the nation to assist Britain and remove Mossadegh, who touched on communist themes in his rule, from office.

The media was taken with the communist threat. According to Pashai,

“The tense political atmosphere of the Cold War was also reflected in the media. When Iran took over AIOC, *Time* magazine mentioned the move as the worst happening since the fall of China to communism. British officials used the hyperbolic perspectives of the era and convinced the American that Iran will fall to communism under Mossadegh. Christopher Montague Woodhouse, Britain’s Secret Intelligence Service Officer, mentioned that when he came to the United States from Britain in 1952 to discuss the coup arrangement, he decided not to use the old traditional British argument that since Mossadegh nationalized British property, he should be ousted. Instead, Woodhouse decided to emphasize the communist threat in Iran in order to make U.S. officials comply with the plan of the coup (Pashai, 66).”

The connection between white citizenship and capitalism was forged in the New Deal. The New Deal was specific to helping the white citizen after the Great Depression. As Katznelson states:

“Affirmative action then was white. New national policies enacted in the pre-civil rights, last-gasp era of Jim Crow constituted a massive transfer of quite specific privileges to white Americans. New programs produced economic and social opportunity for favored constituencies and thus widened the gap between white and black Americans in the aftermath of the Second World War. And the effects...did not stop even after discriminatory codes were swept aside by the civil rights movement and the legislation that inspired it (22).”

Framers of the New Deal used three mechanisms to leave Black Americans out of the economic recovery. They used language to exclude traditionally Black employment from receiving benefits, allowed deeply-prejudiced local policymakers as gatekeepers of the benefits, and prevented anti-discrimination riders from being attached to New Deal legislation. This resulted in: “a wide array of public policies...providing most white Americans with valuable tools to advance their social welfare – insure their old age, get good jobs, acquire economic security, build assets, and gain middle-class status – [while] most black Americans were left behind or left out (Katznelson, 22-3).”

This flurry of activity and social programs attached the privileges enjoyed by white citizens to the growth and expansion of capitalism after WWII. The New Deal elevated those hit by the recession to capitalistic workers, if they were white. Capitalism and the New Deal became inextricably linked. The New Deal allowed for the white citizen to join the capital order. By doing this, the New Deal linked racial liberalism to the Cold War, such that using undemocratic methods to defeat communism could be framed as democratic (because those methods were used in defense of the white citizen). Defending capitalism was to defend the white citizen, and defending capitalism was to defeat communism.

To combat this racial, communist threat, Kermit Roosevelt, of the Roosevelt dynasty, orchestrated the coup on Mossadegh. Operation Ajax, as the CIA called it, was divided into four parts. First, the combined wealth of the United States and Britain would bribe mosques and religious leaders, the press, and mobs to portray Mossadegh in a negative light. This proved so effective that one propagandist, Richard Cottam, claimed

that four-fifths of newspapers inside of Tehran were being bribed by the CIA (Kinzer, n.p.).

When Mossadegh's image was sufficiently tarnished by supposed anti-Mossadegh mobs, royalist military officers would then visit his home and deliver a decree, signed by the Shah, dismissing Mossadegh as Prime Minister. Unfortunately, this step proved to be difficult. Though the Shah attempted to align himself with Western powers, he believed that the direct act of dismissing Mossadegh was illegal. He had to be convinced to sign the decree by visits from his sister, Princess Ashraf, and by Kermit Roosevelt himself. Finally, the Shah acquiesced.

The third step in the process again relied upon bribes. Mobs were to descend the streets and take control, to prove Mossadegh's lack of power and support. Finally, General Zahedi, the American- and British-approved Prime Minister, would accept the Shah's nomination and ascend his position.

The United States' Kermit Roosevelt was the mastermind of the coup and a report written by CIA operative Donald Wilber was understood to be a handbook for future coups. Commissioned by the Historical division, "[i]ts intended audience was senior officials not only in the CIA, but also in the Pentagon, State Department, White House, and Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Abrahamian, 183)." These materials were not declassified on the usual schedule. Wilber's report wasn't declassified until the year 2000, and details of the coup were unclear to that point.

In the coming pages, I show that U.S. political leaders effectively justified the coup to the American public by building on and extending the links between racial liberalism and the Cold War. Using the press, I argue, they cast the Shah as an exemplary

defender of the white democratic citizen from the threat posed by communism, and
Mohammed Mossadegh as a threat to the rights of the White citizen.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY

Methodology

To highlight the role racial liberalism played in framing the coup as democratic and generating popular support for it, I examine media coverage. Through the information release in 2000, we know that the orchestrators of the Coup relied heavily upon both American and Iranian media to portray their image of the Shah. The CIA manipulated both American and Iranian media to portray Mossadegh as “favoring the communists,’ ‘threatening Islam,’ ‘creating public disorder,’ ‘giving power to unscrupulous politicians,’ and ‘deliberately leading the country to economic disorder (Abrahamian, 203).” Articles were planted, reporters bribed, and stories spun to show how unfit Mossadegh was to lead, and that Iran was teetering on the edge of communism.

The newspaper is also where popular discourse is formed. In an era before the internet or widespread television usage, newspaper articles were the quickest way to mold the mind of the public. They were an important channel of communication, and therefore, controlling the newspapers was controlling the populace.

“When considering foreign policy matters, the general public is especially dependent on the news media because very few people have access to first-hand information about US foreign policy issues. The US news media are instrumental in creating, perpetuating, and modifying images of foreign nations and international leaders (Merrill, 1991). Media analysts often use a contemporary term called "spinning a story" to refer to attempts by an individual or organization

to manipulate or control the media coverage of a specific issue. (Brown and Vincent, 66)"

For information on Iran, the public was especially dependent on the media. Iran was a mysterious country, and few had knowledge of it outside of what was read in the newspapers. Therefore, "spinning a story" was easier on stories centered on Iran, due to a lack of previous knowledge of the happenings in the Middle Eastern country. The vacuum of knowledge of Iran was filled with planted and bribed stories that emphasized the whiteness of the Shah and the racial otherness of Mossadegh. These stories were used to convince the public of the necessity of a change in power in Iran and justify the American perceived support of the Shah.

The racial liberalism in this case is present at all levels of the media. I examine three newspapers: the New York Times, the most recognizable newspaper in the country; to the Washington Post, with its finger on the pulse of the political; to the small Hartford Courant. The New York Times is the nation's most recognizable newspaper, with a large readership and trusted reporting base. The Washington Post is based in Washington, D.C. and reports heavily on the political happenings of the United States, influencing policy-makers and pundits. Finally, the Hartford Courant is a local newspaper in Hartford, Connecticut. The Courant has an extensive digital archive and shows media that is not elite-facing, media that is read by locals. In these, the Shah is effectively whitewashed and, conversely, Mossadegh is made to be the other. This attitude toward the Shah and Mossadegh is present in multiple levels of media, from national press outlets to local newspapers.

To gather evidence about how articles in the Times, the Post, and the Courant whitewashed the Shah and portrayed Mossadegh as the racial other, I ran six searches in the Arizona State University Library Database. The searches were “Iran+Shah+[Newspaper Title]” and “Iran+Mossadegh+[Newspaper Title].” I then filtered the results by type to only include newspaper articles. I then further narrowed down the results by relevance, and 50 articles for each search were downloaded and analyzed. For each article, I wrote a summary, focusing on identifying instances in which the author(s) associated the Shah with the characteristics of the white citizen and Mossadegh with those of the racial other. As I suggested in the history section above, dominant discourse of the time generally framed the white citizen as someone who had the hallmarks of white citizenship at the time of the Coup (dedication to Democracy and property rights; alliance with the Western, non-slave class; and hatred of communism). The media preserved these characteristics in the Shah’s portrayal, while conversely eliminating these characteristics from the narrative of Mohammed Mossadegh. Dominant discourse framed the racial other as someone who was dictatorial, hated the West, and sympathized with Communism. In associating the Shah with the White Citizen and Mossadegh with the racial other, the media used racial liberalism to help justify the coup.

The veracity of claims that the Shah and Mossadegh actually fit these descriptions of the white citizen and the racial other has come into question. Double standards abound when discussing the two men, who actually had much in common. Both were European educated, came from very rich families, shared religion and culture (Kinzer, 53). However, for Mossadegh, his education is rarely mentioned, aside from the “Dr.” occasionally thrown in front of his name. His extreme wealth is only mentioned when

contrasted with his austere policies and objections to what are seen as the Shah's social justice programs (10 Hurt in Iran Protest,' 1953).

In addition, a striking double standard presented itself after the overthrow of Mossadegh. During his reign, Iranian intrigues with the Soviet Union were seen as not contentious, borderline friendly, which complemented his association with communist groups (Love, 'Iran's Mossadegh Riding Tudeh Communist Tiger,' E4). However, when the Shah came into power again, and mentioned that the Soviet Union could be their only hope for funds for the poverty-stricken nation, American media did not accuse the Shah of being a communist ('Iran is Resuming Talks with Soviet,' 1;). The blame for Iran's troubles and the reason they were in the position to accept aid from anyone, fell on Mossadegh, whom "the Monarch accused....of bequeathing Iran a terrible situation ('Shah Declares Iran is Broke, Will Accept Aid From Anyone,' 1)." In fact, the American government's plan to give Iran financial aid solidified after this exchange, to protect Iran from communist influence ('Eisenhower Seen Moving to Aid Iran,' 1).

In the case of the Shah and Mossadegh, language used in these articles supports the whitewashing of the Shah. Mossadegh is portrayed as "frail ('Mossadegh, In Bed Aloft, Flying to N.Y.,' 1; 'Mossadegh Arrives for UN Oil Fight,' 1), "ailing ('Mossadegh Cries, Tells Iran More Hardships Coming,' M5)", "tired ('Mossadegh Cheered on return to Iran,' 2)", and "emotional ('Mossadegh Pleads For Hands Off In Oil Wrangle,' p. 17B)". His speaking style is criticized for his tears and fainting. Meanwhile, the Shah is portrayed as "youthful ('Catholics Promised Freedom by Iran Shah,' 2)" and "handsome ('Her Highness Even Looks Like a Princess,' C1)". However, both men have similar backgrounds. Reporters constantly questioned Mossadegh's health ('Mossadegh, In Bed

Aloft, Flying to N.Y.,' 1), every episode of fatigue mentioned, even if it bore no matter to the article's subject. The Shah's health problems were rarely mentioned, though he also had a chronic condition ('Shah of Iran has Appendectomy,' 2). The few times it is mentioned, the Shah is portrayed as thoroughly Western, as he solicited Western facilities to treat his condition.

Discussion

Dedication to Democracy

The reality of the Iranian Coup and American involvement did not become public knowledge until much later. In fact, media and the Shah himself had tried to preempt the narrative that Mossadegh was the democratic leader in Iran. The Shah himself tried to take on the mantle of warrior for democracy himself. When the 'free elections' of 1949 were accused of not being free, he was adamant in their freedom: "The Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, today told Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh, former premier, that there was no evidence that parliamentary elections in Teheran were not free. Dr. Mossadegh had taken refuge in the Imperial Palace last Friday under an ancient Iranian custom in protest against alleged violations of election freedom in the capital ('Shah Says Vote is Free,' 1949)." In one fell swoop, the quote reassures the Shah's dedication to free elections and shows Mossadegh's stubborn nature.

The Shah was often promoted as dedicated to social justice and social security. His water system dedication in Shiraz in 1952 was praised as "put[ting] himself on the side of progress ('Iran's Shah to Make Rare Public Visit,' 1952)." In 1950, he spoke to Parliament, stating that "the issues were food, clothing, shelter, health and education for all. He said his government would present bills to lower the cost of living. A seven-year

plan will be the basis of projected series of social reforms, the Shah declared, and bribery and corruption will be rooted out and social justice promoted ('Reforms in Iran Demanded by Shah,' 1950)."

After the Coup, the Shah did not miss a chance to once again praise the United States' influence on his way of rule: "He termed US policy 'idealistic as well as realistic,' and added: 'This is undoubtedly the greatest single factor contributing to the peace and security of the world ('Shah of Iran Praises US Design for Peace,' 1955).'" He even went so far as to claim that the United States' Fair Deal Plan was the impetus for his own policies: "The [seven-year] plan, he said, was something like President Truman's Fair Deal program, only more so. 'Because your social and economic conditions are better than ours, I have to go a little further, and use a little more drastic measures ('Shah Likens Iran's Plan to New Deal, 1949).'"

The assumed dedication to democracy and justice perceived of the Shah positioned him as the true ruler of Iran. Elizabeth Maguire, of the Washington Post, while reporting on the Shah's visit to the United States, reminded readers that, "The Shah is not an absolute monarch, contrary to general belief, and does not aspire to be cast in the role Oriental potentate. He prefers being a modern, liberal governor, improving the condition of his people ('Shah of Iran's a Very Modern Monarch,' 1949)."

High moral standing also marked reporting on the Shah's rule. When he signed the oil nationalization act, the press emphasized the fact that "The Shah has no veto and had no recourse but to sign the law," due to his less-than-absolute monarchical powers ('Iran's Oil Seizure Act Signed by Shah,' 1951). When Mossadegh was convicted of treason, the Shah was portrayed as a magnanimous ruler, as "Mossadegh could have been

sentenced to death, but Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi – when the emotional nationalist leader tried to oust late August – came to his rescue with a royal mercy plea (‘Mossadegh Appeals Sentence, Whole Case Must be Reheard,’ 1953).”

The Shah’s place as ruler was reiterated in the alleged “deep affection” the populace had for the monarch. Demonstrations by Mossadegh’s followers and Communists were often met with counter revolts by pro-monarchists (‘Iran greets Shah with Joy, Tears,’ 1953). In fact, in 1953, the Hartford Courant attributed Mossadegh’s downfall to this love affair between the Shah and the people (‘Monarchy May End in Fabled Iran’, 1953). The actual coup was assisted by pro-Shah factions: “Forces loyal to the absent Shah swept iron-willed, weepy old Mossadegh out of power today with a blood and violent nine-hour coup...the aged premier himself fled today from his bed in a Hitler-type bunker from which he has ruled his country with tears and an iron fist for almost three years....The mobs instead of meeting resistance from Mossadegh’s police, found the gendarmes shouting pro-Shah slogans. People leaned out their windows and echoed them. (‘Mossadegh flees, Shah’s Forces Rule Iran,’ 1953).”

Mossadegh’s comparison to Hitler was not unusual in the American media. He was referred to as a dictator, and his powers dictatorial. The Hartford Courant claimed Mossadegh’s tactics “brought him almost dictatorial powers of this Middle East nation... (‘Mossadegh Indictment is Signed,’ 1953).” The Washington Post went a step further, calling Mossadegh’s regime a “dictatorship” when discussing his downfall (‘Mossadegh Foe Resigns in Iran’, 1955). The newspaper also had additional comments during the regime: extending Mossadegh’s powers would be “giving a blank check to rule nearly every phase of Iranian life by decree...[He] then will have power to institute

at will, soak-the-rich taxes, economic and financial reforms, government banking controls, a possible military cut down and work projects...('Mossadegh About to Get a Free Hand to Rule Iran,' 1952)." The New York Times' assessment of Mossadegh went further: "Observers here wonder how a man with such a background could in his ripe years have drafted a jurists' nightmare like the oil nationalization law," including "systematically oppos[ing] everything."

The nearly dictatorial powers that Mossadegh was claimed to have were reported on often. The result of his ruthless rule, according to the succeeding premier, Fazollah Zahedi, resulted in an Iranian debt of \$544 million and deprivation of \$2 million from the treasury by "improper licensing of rice export firms ('Iran's Regime Asks Pardons from Shah', 1953)." His ruthlessness didn't end there, allegedly. Deputy Mohammed Ali Shushtan claimed his life was threatened because he opposed nationalization of oil, due to Mossadegh and his followers ('Mossadegh Foe Charges Life Threat,' 1951)..

Western Alliance

Mossadegh's positioning with the Communist element in his country was not necessarily his own doing. However, he did alienate the United States and the West without help from the media, creating an 'Us vs. Them' mentality in his country. Understandably, Mossadegh and the British had their intense differences. In fact, in a speech described as "bridge-burning," Mossadegh blamed the troubles of the Iranian people on the British and "expelled the British technicians" from the country, to which the United States responded by saying the decision "is to be regretted ('Mossadegh Severs Ties with Britain,' 1952)." He demanded reparations be paid by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, to which the British heartily scoffed.

Due to their ideological proximity to Britain, the United States was often accused of siding with the British by Mossadegh ('Impartial, Ike Assured Mossadegh,' 1953). Mobs of Mossadegh supporters, often shouting "Anti-American" slogans, destroyed property and incited riots ('US Homes, Cars Stoned by Iran Mob', 1953). Iran's extensive history with invading foreign regimes was reflected in Mossadegh's attitude toward the West. He condemned the international community, saying

Some foreigners endeavor to misinterpret and distort any step the Iranian nation takes [in] its aspirations...[T]he Iranian people have forged a bond of unity and are resolved to cut off the hands foreigners have extended into the country, which is the very thing of which a particular group is afraid. They try by any means to deny us moral help [of world opinion]. The attitude recently adopted by some world statesmen to portray our national rising as caused by other than its true and actual factors affects the best evidence supporting this assertion (Mossadegh Charges Distortion on Iran, 1953).

Even in his defense against the treason charges brought forth after the Coup, Mossadegh cited Western and foreign involvement as the reason for the country's downfall. "In my opinion," he said, in his closing defense, "we practically are a member of the Western bloc, but must not officially be so...Neither the Eastern or Western bloc pays any attention to the interests of small nations ('Mossadegh Ends Defense, Urges Iran Neutrality,' 1953)."

Mossadegh's plea fell on deaf ears. Much like during his previous reign, the Shah aligned himself closely with the Western world. Though Mossadegh admonished the UN and claimed it had no control over Iran while it was ruling on the oil crisis, a few years

earlier “[T]he Shah...emphasized the importance of friendly relations with all countries of the UN (‘Iran Parliament Opens,’ 1947).” In a speech to the National Press Club in the United States, the Shah portrayed the previous administration as a creator of chaos and the reason the oil industry faltered. He recognized individual countries, including his relation at reestablished relations with Britain. He lauded praise upon the United States and thanked them for their aid (‘Address by Shah of Iran to National Press Club’, 1954).

On the same trip to the United States, the Shah continued his praise of the United States, and cast himself and his country as their natural ally, including the assertion that warm relations between the two countries will “strengthen the stability and progress of the Middle East(‘Shah of Iran Arrives for Three-Day Visit,’ 1954).”

Communism

The Shah’s association with the white citizen and Mossadegh with the racial other are also quite prevalent, regardless of whether the men themselves identified with a certain group. For instance, the Shah’s family was often reported on. They were beautiful, Western, spoke English and flew to Paris. The Shah placed himself as a leader on the level with the American President Truman: “Speaking English well, the Shah...expressed his personal admiration for President Truman’s candor and said he subscribed to the President’s Fair Deal Program as expressed in Mr. Truman’s speech at St. Paul (Feinberg, 1949).” With statements like this, the Shah acknowledges his similarities to the President.

President Truman also participated in the association game. When the Shah visited in 1949, the Truman administration spared no expense for pomp and circumstance: “The ruler of Iran will be greeted at the airport by President Truman. He

will be rendered full military honors and then move to the head of the parade formation ('Thousands Here to Hail Shah Today,' 1949)." The Shah was seen as a legitimate leader and friend of the United States in the Middle East. He was played football with college teams, flew a bomber, and was accepted into American society readily. He was, according to Mary Van Rensselaer Thayer, "no despotic Oriental potentate (Van Rensselaer Thayer, 1949)."

On the other hand, Mossadegh was associated with that which was the United States' biggest fear: communism. Though never a self-professed communist, the reds inside Iran were often attributed to Mossadegh's followers and in cahoots with Mossadegh's highest advisors. Mossadegh's Interior Minister, in fact, was accused of inciting a "Communist...demonstration... [which] killed from 12 to 25 persons ('Harriman Hits Blank Wall in Iran Oil Talks', 1951)" in response to the American W. Averell Harriman's arrival to discuss the oil crisis.

When Communists and Mossadegh supporters were not mentioned in the same breath, they were still placed next to each other in terms of ideology. In 'Iran Street Riots Kill 1; Many Hurt,' the Hartford Courant points out that the Tudeh (communist) party is not Mossadegh's party, but "nevertheless pressed actions in support of Mossadegh...('Iran Street Riots Kill 1; Many Hurt,' 1953). Kennett Love of the New York Times mentions that Mossadegh's government is "widely accused of having come to an understanding with the Tudeh party, giving its members the freedom of the streets and tolerating them in government departments in return for political support. The government denies these allegations, but it does not seem to be particularly embarrassed by them ('Iran's Mossadegh Riding Tudeh Communist Tiger,' E4)."

Casting Mossadegh in the same realm as communists did not end when he was ousted. After the coup, Iran's government was described as "anti-Communist, anti-Mossadegh ('Eisenhower Seen Moving Aid to Iran,' 1953)." According to Robert C. Doty of the New York Times, "Tudeh mobs played an increasingly important part in maintaining Dr. Mossadegh in power during the last four months of his regime, and the former Premier winked at the law banning the party... The Tudeh has made no attempt to lift its head since Dr. Mossadegh's overthrow, and was reported to have received orders to await a more favorable opportunity to reassert itself (Doty, 'New regime in Iran Opens War on Reds', 1)."

The Shah was complimented for his land use program, which dissolved several thousands of acres of royal estates for sharecroppers to work. The program represented the Shah's attributed dedication to social justice ('Reforms in Iran Demanded by Shah,' 11; 'Shah Breaks Precedent,' 11). Meanwhile, Mossadegh was portrayed as being reluctant in participating in the program, which would require donations from other wealthy landowners. An article on a clash in the capital alluded to Mossadegh's guilt in the delay of these reforms: "The clash [between Mossadegh supporters and Shah supporters] occurred shortly after the disclosure that the Shah had temporarily abandoned his plan to distribute some of his lands to the peasants because Dr. Mossadegh had complained it would create difficulties for other big landowners like himself ('10 Hurt in Iran Protest,' 1953)."

The irony in this situation is that this program was a socialist, almost communist program. It allowed peasants to work other land and pay their sharecropping dues, partially going to a fund to help other peasants and farmers ('Mossadegh Orders new

Levy to Aid Iran Tenants,' 1). The media and the West, accusing Mossadegh of having close ties to communism, did not point out that these reforms his followers were protesting were socialist at the very least. Another irony is that it was praised by Justice William O'Douglas as an answer to communist threat in Iran: "The Shah gave me details of his large-scale land distribution program...It's an excellent idea to fight poverty, which will cause the spread of communism ('Douglas Visits Iran's Shah', 1955)."

The most effective way of whitewashing the Shah, however, had to do with the ever-present threat of communism, which eventually led President Eisenhower to intervene and stage the coup. Mohammed Mossadegh did not consider the feelings of the West when he "h[e]ld high-level negotiations here to iron out 'all differences,' including financial and territorial disputes" with the Soviet Union in 1953 (Love, 'Iran-Soviet Talks on High Level Set, 1).

Meanwhile, the Shah and his supporters were sensitive to the plight of the West and the fear of Communism. Abolhassan Ebtehaj, director of the Shah's seven-year plan, stated the plan was "essential for stopping a possible revival of communism in Iran ('Shah of Iran Approves 7 Year Economic Plan,' 1955)."

Even before Mossadegh rose to power, the West was wary of communism so near Iran. "One of the aims" of the land share policy, "is to make peasants less susceptible to the communism of Iran's northern neighbor, the Soviet Union ('Shah of Iran Starts to Give Away Lands', 1951)." In 1953, the Shah told parliament "Iran must not lag behind other non-Communist nations in defense against Communist aggressions ('Iran Must Not Lag in Defense Plans', Shah Tells Nation, 1953)."

How were these extreme characterizations of Mossadegh and the Shah used to justify involvement to the public? Mohammed Reza Shah became associated with the White citizen (the democratic subject under racial liberalism) and Mohammed Mossadegh was associated with the racial other (the threat to democracy under racial liberalism). Though their actions and beliefs did not always follow this pattern, the press framed each man as dictatorial or democratic. Regardless of the reason, coercion or bribery, the press wrote its story about the men and manipulated information until it fit the role each man had been cast. The press even told the Iranian people that Mossadegh – emotional, old, dictator – had lost power well before it happened (Kinzer, 177), writing his downfall into history.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Racial liberalism is a framework in which we can examine the United States and the international relations thereof. It reconciles differences between perceived values and executed actions. In the United States itself, the citizenship question is inherently racialized. Minorities are not protected by institutions such as the police at quite the same rate as the white citizen. Capitalism favors the white citizen on the backs of the racialized minorities, those disproportionately making minimum wage and living in poverty. Medical deportation, a practice in which undocumented immigrants are repatriated to their country of origin if they suffer an injury or illness deemed too expensive for the hospital to cover, is a clear example of racial liberalism within our borders: the citizens are eligible for medical insurance through the Affordable Care Act. The other, which is disproportionately Hispanic, is considered to be worth less than the amount of their care, ineligible for health insurance and even care at many hospitals, being repatriated without consent or arrangements for care in their destination.

This paper set out to apply the theory of racial liberalism to the American involvement in the Coup of Iran. The theory adequately reconciled the American public's devotion to democracy with their support of seemingly anti-democratic activities abroad. Information on the Coup in Iran is relatively new to study, which makes this an interesting case. The information on the Shah and Mossadegh had been previously filtered through the media and the American government, which therefore controlled the public opinion of each character. Kermit Roosevelt and President Eisenhower's extensive

involvement in the Coup was unknown until recently, as was the fact that the media was actively manipulated to whitewash the Shah and make Mossadegh the racial other.

The theory has been applied to domestic situations, but not often to foreign policy. Olson, in *The Abolition of White Democracy*, applies the theory of racial liberalism to American slavery in the Antebellum South and posits that race was invented to justify the defense of property rights and profits for the upper classes. This parallels the Iran case. During his trial, Mossadegh succinctly stated his criminal actions: “My only crime is that I nationalized the Iranian oil industry and removed from this land the network of colonialism and the political and economic influence of the greatest empire on earth (Kinzer, 193).” He understood his crime was that he limited the White citizen’s property rights, resulting in his removal.

While this sets the stage for our case study, it also creates limitations. The true natures of the Shah and Mossadegh have been obscured by years of rhetoric and media spin, making it difficult to differentiate between what information has been manipulated and what has not. It would be interesting to compare these articles to Iranian newspaper articles of the time, though Kermit Roosevelt and the CIA leaned heavily upon the Iranian media to print whitewashing articles.

Racial liberalism pervades our culture, establishing citizenship for a certain class of people, and leaving the racial other on the outside of the citizen sphere. Awareness of the influence of racial liberalism helps us to understand how U.S. political leaders can justify anti-democratic interventions abroad to an ostensibly democratic public at home.

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