THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

Colonialism? United States "Developmental" Influence in Mid-20th Century Iran

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
BACHELOR OF ARTS in PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES and HISTORY

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April 14, 2025

Abstract

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 starkly reshaped the country, region, and its diplomatic relationship with the United States. The US-backed monarch Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was ousted, ending the Imperial State of Iran in favor of a theocratic Islamic Republic. Modern history posits that the United States, through its 40-year influential campaign in Iran, was contributory to the sociopolitical instability necessary for the Revolution. In this paper, I will discuss such US influence from 1947 to 1979 through the ideological frameworks of colonialism and "development." Through analysis of (i) declassified US government documents and (ii) Western historiographical and theoretical literature, I will argue that Iran was an intentional test case of how the "benefits" of extraction and political capital to the "colonizer" could be experienced without the "detriments" of revolution and negative public opinion. Based on my findings, I suggest improvements to the guiding principles of future American aid-based foreign influence efforts.

Acknowledgements

There are several people I would like to thank for helping make this project possible. First, I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Richard Payne, for his immense support and advice throughout this process. This paper would not have been possible without his guidance. Second, I would like to thank my incredible preceptors, Saliem Shehadeh and Nick Foster, for their constant and constructive feedback. Third, thank you to my peers in the history and public policy departments, whose camaraderie and community were essential to my work.

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Introduction

"Populous, rich in resources, and strategically situated astride the pathway of Russia's traditional expansionist ambitions," Iran was an "important link in the chain of Free World security and a test case for the proposition that developing nations can reach their goals in association with the West."[1] The words of an unnamed Department of State staffer confidently reflected on the United States' efforts to modernize Iran from 1963-1968. The Johnson Administration had successfully and quietly thwarted the looming Soviet threat of control, securing Iran as a strategic ally of the Free World in the Middle East. Unknown by this author, however, Iran would reject its Western "status" only ten years later. Over a million Iranians would occupy the streets of Tehran, Iran's capital, to protest the government that the United States had for decades supported. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 would overthrow the Iranian government, and there was nothing the United States could do about it.

The Middle East was an integral theater of the Cold War from its outset. British troops moved into Iran as early as 1941 to solidify the region against Soviet strategic occupation.[2] The Soviets worked with the new Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (the "Shah"), to supply munitions against the German invasion in June 1941.[3] Only after the conclusion of World War II in 1945 did it become clear to the rest of the Allied powers that the Soviets had no intention of renouncing their occupation of Northern Iran.[4] Rather, the Soviets pushed for separatism, opting to split Iran geographically and maintain permanent logistical control. Only through intense, multilateral pressure involving both the United States and the United Nations did the Soviets

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[1] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B: U.S. Support for Nation-Building" (Department Of State), 3, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, accessed April 1, 2025, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349338898/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=a4f378ae&pg=27.
[2] Lorena De Vita, "The Cold War in the Middle East: Then and Now," *Atlantisch Perspectief* 43, no. 6 (2019): 34.
[3] De Vita, 34.
[4] De Vita, 35.

withdraw from Iran. The US further aided Iran in forcing out the separatists, signaling the newfound importance of Iran in US foreign policy. Both the Soviets and the US were interested in Iranian oil reserves and viewed the region as critical to controlling the Middle East.[5]

1950-1963 was a period of fiscal and programmatic Western combat. Both the Soviets and the United States channeled tens of millions of government dollars into educational, military, intelligence, and political initiatives in Iran. The Soviets relied on the Iranian communist party, the Tudeh, for social control, looking to subvert the Shah, while the US (i) utilized select government agents to incite protests, (ii) popularized "liberal" Western education, and (iii) funded the Shah's autocratic regime. By 1962, the US had successfully diminished the influence of the Tudeh but failed to stabilize Iranian politics. A new party, the Iranian Nationalists, replaced the Tudeh, threatening the Shah's regime.

As President Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the American Presidency in late 1963, he embarked on a formalized, five-year, programmatic foreign policy effort to stabilize Iran. From 1963-1958, the US approached Iranian "development" bilaterally, (i) making significant congressionally funded investments into Iranian economic infrastructure and (ii) justifying such investments by making them contingent on "liberal" social changes.[6] Thus, the confidence of the Department of State ("DOS") report on the five-year project is contextualized within a broad history of American influence efforts in Iran, primarily against the Soviets and secondarily in support of a "Western" vision for Iran.[7]

The Johnson Administration had reason for its confidence. From 1963-1968, Iran's Gross National Product ("GNP") rose an average of 7% per year to a total of USD 6.9 billion in March

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[5] De Vita, 35–36; Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim, *The Cold War and the Middle East* (Clarendon Press, 1997).
[6] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."
[7] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."

of 1968; its per-capita GNP was positively correlated, growing from $215 to an estimated $263.[8] Social reforms were boasted alongside such economic progress, including programs affecting land tenure, education, health, women's rights, government cooperation, and government administration.[9] The Administration holds Iran's periodic progress as a crucially "Iranian accomplishment."[10] The DOS was not an "active" agent of the United States Government, but rather a passive, facilitating, and coordinating agent.[11] The US explicitly denounced means of official representation, communication, and documentation characteristic of traditional diplomacy in favor of playing a "donor role."[12] This role persisted subliminally throughout the 1960s, eventually assenting to traditional diplomatic exchanges in the 1970s following intensified Western interests in Iranian oil. Despite this shift from inactivity to activity, Iran emerged in its relationship with the United States at the end of the five-year plan as a "staunch friend."[13]

Modern history disagrees with the Johnson Administration. After nearly 40 years of American influence, Iran revolted against the Shah in 1979. Iran rejected the West but maintained quintessentially Western political, educational, and social institutions. The efforts of the Johnson Administration failed to avert Russian allyship, yet Iran did not yield to communism. So what happened? Why did Iran reject the West yet adopt many of its institutions? What were the Americans to Iran, and what did US influence have to do with the Revolution?

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[8] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B," 1–2.
[9] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."
[10] Simon Johnson, James A. Robinson, and Daron Acemoglu, "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth," in *Handbook of Economic Growth*, 2005, 3.
[11] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."
[12] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."
[13] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."

The conditions and catalysts of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 (the "Revolution") are confined to three primary theses: economic, religious, and political. These theses present two distinct challenges to their analysis. The first is perspective. Given the outcome of the Revolution against Western interests (the "West" herein as the United States, Great Britain, and France, collectively), Western history considers Iran a "failed project." This bias inherently taints even genuine attempts at recounting the Revolution's events and motivations, making a study of Iran from the "bottom-up" difficult, if not futile. I will argue this bias can be an asset instead of a liability. It is through an analysis and acknowledgment of Western bias that the true character and motivations of the West are exposed.

The second challenge is that of agency. Primary and secondary Western scholarship, as anticipated, imply a lack of Iranian agency. Iran merely "accepted" and "reacted" to Western policy, the Revolution a fundamental result of US influence. I will directly acknowledge and discuss this view of agency at the end of this paper, contextualizing it within frameworks of colonialism and "development," to uncover a more accurate view of Iranian agency, both practically and perceptually.

The economic thesis holds Iran's liability for its pre-revolutionary instability as a function of US influence. As the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries ("OAPEC") completely embargoed oil against Western support of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the price of oil tripled, fueling Western interest in Iranian oil.[14] The Iranian government necessarily shifted its domestic focus to immediate industrialization to support and hegemonize

[14] Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007), 329.

the petroleum market.[15] At the same time, Western powers fought overcapitalization. Each wanted to assert itself in the Iranian market before the other to protect its economic interests. The US was the largest player in this assertive race, pushing Iran to industrialize.[16]

Behind economic evolution came instability. The Shah's focus on industrialization crucially neglected the agricultural sphere, thrusting Iran into a state of unsustainability. Iran relied on oil exports to fund the importation of essential goods. When costs began to exceed profits, the Shah fell back on credit, inciting Iran's first national deficit. This deficit, coupled with lavish, supplemental government and military spending, forced a walk-back from social spending programs. The Shah and his government quickly became resented, breeding instability. Thus, the economic thesis blames Iran for its Revolution, but only insofar as the US supported it. The US pushed the Shah to industrialize, preaching *future* stability, only to yield resentment and instability.[17]

The religious thesis directly implicates the United States. In response to the West's multi-decade-long projects towards Iranian modernization, led by the US, Islamic fundamentalists developed a bipartite response. First, the West was regarded as ignorant, viewing Islam as "yet another ideology of intolerance."[18] This bred distrust in Western projects. Second, modernization was separated from Westernization.[19] Fundamentalists, fueled by distrust, acknowledged the future value of modernization insofar as Westernization could be wholly rejected. Islam fused

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[15] Zubeida Mustafa, review of *Review of Iran: The Illusion of Power*, by Robert Graham, *Pakistan Horizon* 32, no. 1/2 (1979): 160–62; Jerrold D. Green, review of *Review of Iran: The Illusion of Power*, by Robert Graham, *Iranian Studies* 12, no. 1/2 (1979): 119–22.
[16] Mustafa, "Review of Iran."
[17] Mustafa; Green, "Review of Iran."
[18] Mahmoud Sadri, "Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, Islam & Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran: Abdolkarim Soroush, Religious Politics and Democratic Reform (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008). Pp. 320. 36.00 Paper.," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 2 (May 2012): 389, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743812000335.
[19] Sadri, 388.

with modernization into advocacy for "Islamization" in place of political revolution.[20] Fundamentalists called for an authoritarian, Islamic state fundamentally incompatible with the Shah's US-backed polity.[21] Views of the US as dogmatic and idealist proxied to the Shah, yielding instability.

The political thesis also holds the US directly liable for Iranian governmental instability. This thesis is perhaps the most simple of the three, holding US efforts towards modernization and liberalization in Iran throughout the 1950s and 1960s as fundamentally incompatible with a strong authoritarian regime. Especially for privileged Iranians, as "developmental" programs expanded, Iranians began to question the merits of liberalism under authoritarianism.[22] The Shah recognized this growing turmoil and began to distrust the United States and its interests.[23] The US was outwardly in support of the Shah, but inwardly wholly against the Soviet Union. The Shah realized this cleavage around US and Soviet unilateral self-interest.[24] He began to distrust the US and its historical generosity, fearing for the sustainability of his position. The US fundamentally misunderstood the internal forces of Iran, blinded by its vested economic interest and liberal idealism, ultimately undermining the Shah. Iranians consequently distrusted the Shah and his associations, and there was little he could do about it.[25] Political instability, and shortly the Revolution, ensued.

While distinct in their exact causal claims, the three theses hold the US culprit for elements of the Revolution. Iran's reliance on the US for political and economic programmatic

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[20] Sadri, 389.
[21] Sadri, 389.
[22] Sepehr Zabir, *Iran since the Revolution*, Routledge Library Editions. Iran, v. 35 (London: Routledge, 2011), 6, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/12012642?sid=61346266#description.
[23] Zabir, 7.
[24] Zabir, 7.
[25] Zabir, 10.

support subjected the state to the blind idealism of the US, breeding distrust in a liberal, authoritarian polity reliant on imports and deficit spending. Religious fundamentalists simultaneously criticized the ensuing polity for its trust in the intolerant West, pushing for a state marked by a modern, anti-Western ideology. Thus, catalyzing instability is explained by each thesis as propagated and tied together by the United States.[26] Yet, broad US influence in the short term does not fully explain the Revolution nor the origin and intent of such influence. I argue it is essential to examine the extensive history of US influence and foreign policy in Iran within the contexts of formal colonialism and "developmentism" to adequately frame such explanations.

Colonialism, whose period I will roughly confine from the 16th century to the mid-19th century for this piece, is defined as a form of domination, characterized by violence, of one group over another, whose necessary goal for success is the reordering of the colonized.[27] Colonizers, to establish complete dominance over the colonized, dehumanize the colonized.[28] They position themselves as foreigners, occupying their own, superior zone that distinctly partitions from the colonized zone.[29] Violence is the colonial weapon of hegemony and yields three outcomes. First, it prevents the colonizer zone from merely shrinking in its authority during the process of decolonization. Decolonization requires the "burial" and expulsion of the colonizers from the state entirely. Second, colonial violence breeds colonized violence. Colonized people, to distract from the violence they face from colonizers, attack each other as a last resort means of defending their personalities. This combines with the third outcome, that

[26] Zabir, *Iran since the Revolution*; Sadri, "Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, Islam & Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran."
[27] "Frantz Fanon | Biography, Writings, & Facts | Britannica," October 25, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Frantz-Fanon.
[28] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth* (Grove Press, 1997), 41–42.
[29] Fanon, 40.

colonial violence is the only language colonizers understand, to yield violence as the only effective means for decolonialism. At the same time, decolonization calls into question the colonial situation, first vomiting up colonial values before their outward rejection.[30]

As colonialism lost public favor, the rhetoric of "development" formally took its place by the 1980s. The narratives of Global North (for these purposes, the West) and Global South (generally including Africa, Latin America, Asia excluding Israel, Japan and South Korea, Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, the Middle East, Brazil, and India) are critical to this shift.[31] Such narratives originate from a socioeconomic phenomenon beginning in the ~1500s, where European civilizations singularly and distinctly overcame their existing constraints, emerging in the 19th century as the world's most powerful and prosperous nations.[32] Much disagreement exists as to the culprit of this change, but historians generally agree that by the 18th century, increases in living standards became a feature of economic life.[33] To conceptually explain and categorize this phenomenon, the terms "Global North" and "South" rose from an "allegorical application of categories" to name patterns of "wealth, privilege, and development across broad regions."[34] "The North" relied on an extracitonary relationship with the South for "modern" means of production. Norms of economic advancement became characteristic of the North and norms of underdevelopment became characteristic of the South. The South existed only in its orientation to the North; distance from the North was positively correlated with primitivity. This narrative of material extraction, grounded in conceptions of

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[30] Fanon, 43.
[31] "Global South Countries | BISA," accessed November 10, 2024, https://www.bisa.ac.uk/become-a-member/global-south-countries.
[32] Prasannan Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 116.
[33] Parthasarathi, 116.
[34] Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell, "The Global South," *Contexts* 11, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 12–14, https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504212436479.

"modernity" and "futility," marked an evolution of colonial interaction. Northern countries assumed the duty of "developing" the South to reflect their own socioeconomic and political structures, largely absent the violence and mindset of hegemony characteristic of colonialism.[35]

The evolution of colonialism to "development" fuses with the three revolutionary theses to frame and answer the questions of American influence in Iran. The US employed programmatic and fiscal methods of influence to "modernize" and "Westernize" Iranian economic and social institutions. The US did not deploy troops, set up colonies, or employ methods of violence. Yet the revolutionary process was characteristically decolonial. Hundreds were killed as the government police combated citizen revolutionaries. Iran embraced American political, economic, and social ideals, only to reject many of them later. This process of development, revolution, acceptance, and partial rejection is, in fact, neither completely characteristic of colonialism *or* "development." It is *both.* This paper will make two arguments. First, it will argue that Iran was an intentional test case of how the "benefits" of extraction and political capital to the "colonizer" could be experienced without the "detriments" of revolution and negative public opinion. US influence in Iran represents the beginning of a new world order marked by extraction, control, villainization, and presumption. Second, it will argue that US influence in Iran informs broad, reformative ideas for the guiding criteria of future aid-based foreign policy.

The methodology of this paper consists of extensive research into (i) Western secondary historical and theoretical literature, (ii) post-Revolutionary articles and government documents, and (iii) declassified documents and telegrams from the US Department of State ("DOS") and

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[35] Walter D. Mignolo, "The Global South and World Dis/Order," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67, no. 2 (July 2011): 165–88, https://doi.org/10.3998/jar.0521004.0067.202; Robert Dainotto, "South by Chance: Southern Questions on the Global South," *The Global South* 11, no. 2 (n.d.).

Central Intelligence Agency ("CIA"). The secondary literature I engage is bipartite. First, I employ a collection of secondary analyses of the Revolution to build an understanding of the "result" of American influence in Iran. The three theses in particular comprise the crux of this research. By understanding Iran's various revolutionary catalysts in relation to and opposition to the United States, arguments made from the primary literature about the character and origin of US influence can be viewed from the "top down." That is, the impacts of US influence, and how historians view such impacts, inform and confirm arguments from the primary literature. Second, I utilize an intentionally concise set of theoretical literature to inform my discussion of colonialism and "developmentalism." Both critical frameworks articulate from definitions; a species of influence cannot be determined as "colonial" or "developmental" without a secure set of definitions, and thus criteria, with which to engage. I provide such definitions absent extensive elaboration for the sake of concision and clarity. In the use of Western secondary historical and theoretical literature, I intend not only to develop a succinct "Western view" of Iran but to expose *how* the US thought of itself and its potentially colonial history of influence post-Revolution.

The two declassified telegrams I utilize, written by DOS agents Allen and Grady, respectively, originate directly from the US Office of the Historian ("OH"). Established in mid-1989, the OH documents and publishes the history of US foreign affairs and diplomacy. I use OH resources throughout this paper to inform how the United States officially records and understands its history. Allen and Grady's telegrams represent what the OH "allows" to be formally published about American influence in Iran and provide essential context for the origin of this influence.

I utilize two primary post-Revolutionary documents: (i) The Iranian Constitution of 1979 and (ii) a Letter written by American journalist and historian John Harvey in 1979. I accessed the Constitution through the Constitute Project, a database of the world's constitutions. I textually analyze the constitution to determine the US's influence on the post-revolutionary Iranian government structure. I discovered Harvey's letter through both the digital library JSTOR and a footnote from one of his published articles. I assess Harvey's letter to characterize social anti-Americanism in post-revolutionary Iran.

The declassified DOS and CIA documents I employ derive from Gale's US Declassified Documents Online Database ("DDOD"). Gale is a large electronic primary source database manager. The DDOD is a carefully curated and actively monitored collection of over 700,000 pages of declassified documents from a legion of US government agencies. I progressively developed a variable series of 30 keyword and compound search queries (as set out in Appendix A) with which I combined Gale's date filtering system to precisely search the DDOD for relevant documents. I began with general keyword searches concerning the Revolution and Iranian development, refining my queries with additional keywords as applicable. For each search result, I filtered the identified documents into chronological order and selected documents for analysis based on (i) title relevance and (ii) keyword matches. I read through the entirety of each selected document, beginning with identified pages that matched the keywords of the applicable query. As I identified pertinent documents, I notated the document name and hyperlink in a separate document with a brief description of its content for tracking purposes. Most useful keyword queries were compound, using the operators "and" and "or" to separate keywords. The "and" operator limits a search to include all keywords. The "or" operator broadens a search to include keyword synonyms. Keyword phrases were specifically searched

using quotation marks on either side of the phrase. I also used "truncation," or the addition of an asterisk at the end of a keyword, to include keyword suffix variability where necessary. Queries six, nineteen, and twenty-one utilized parentheses to group sets of keywords within a single "and" operation.

Through such extensive, variable keyword and manual search procedures, I identified 16 reports, memos, and studies conducted on Iran from 1947 to 1979 by the CIA and DOS. These reports build the grounding characterizations essential to my argument. From the end of World War II through the Revolution, numerous DOS and CIA agents conducted clandestine, subversive, influential, and intelligence-gathering projects in support of Iran's modernization and solidification as a Western ally. Through detailed, text-based chronological analysis, I will argue that the reports collectively display a perceptually reactive shift in US influence from protective to extractive, outlining the various colonial, consciously anti-colonial, and "developmental" characteristics of such influence.

The DOS and CIA share distinct, yet related, inceptive histories. The DOS was founded in 1789 under the Washington Administration as an executive department of the federal government responsible for US foreign policy relationships. As the US's global responsibilities increased across the early 20th century, the duties of the DOS increased in parallel. The DOS maintains diplomatic posts, negotiates foreign agreements, represents the United States in multinational organizations, protects American citizens abroad, and advises the president. From just six domestic employees in 1789, the DOS has grown tenfold from 1,228 in 1900 to 13,294 in 1960 and nearly 15,000 by 2000, maintaining 168 diplomatic posts across 21 administrative departments.[36]

[36] "Department History - Office of the Historian," accessed February 9, 2025, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "INTEL - Dept. of State

The declassified DOS reports are not uniform or clear as to (i) which sub-department oversaw the DOS agents in Iran and (ii) the identities of such agents. This was likely intentional to ensure operational effectiveness, protect the agents' safety, and maintain the clandestine nature of American influence in Iran. Given the cooperative involvement of the CIA and the intelligence-based content of the reports, it is likely that the involved agents were early members of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research ("INR"). Established in 1947 by Secretary of State George Marshall (as the US began its influence programs in Iran), the INR is a direct descendant of the wartime intelligence-gathering department the Office of Strategic Services ("OSS"). The stated intent of the INR is to provide "value-added independent analysis of events" to policymakers.[37]

The CIA also grew out of the OSS. The OSS was an intentionally temporary department, designed to be dissolved at the end of World War II. As postwar political tensions increased with the Soviet Union, however, the Truman Administration saw a need for a domestic intelligence agency, and controversially signed the National Security Act of 1947, officially creating the CIA. Truman imagined the CIA as a "daily newspaper," informing him of foreign developments that could impact national security and US foreign policy.[38] Yet the agency quickly became responsible for correlating and evaluating the intelligence activities of foreign governments, carrying out foreign intelligence-gathering activities, conducting counterintelligence, and advising the National Security Council. The CIA does not publish official employment statistics,

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Bureau of Intelligence and Research," accessed March 6, 2025, https://www.intelligence.gov/how-the-ic-works/our-organizations/424-state-department-bureau-of-intelligence-and-research; "Bureaus and Offices List," *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed March 10, 2025, https://www.state.gov/bureaus-and-offices-list/.

[37] Intelligence, "INTEL - Dept. of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research."

[38] "Establishment of the CIA | Harry S. Truman," accessed February 9, 2025, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/education/presidential-inquiries/establishment-cia.

but it is believed that the agency maintains roughly 20,000 employees across four primary directorates.[39]

The declassified CIA documents are, similar to the DOS documents, non-uniform and unclear as to (i) which directory oversaw agents in Iran and (ii) the identities of these agents. This was likely to retain the consistency of operational secrecy, security, and efficacy. Given the direct actions of CIA agents in Iran, it is probable that the agents were members of the Directorate of Operations ("DO"). The DO, known as the Office of Special Operations until 1952, is responsible for all espionage activities and any "special," often illegal operations.[40]

The notable absence of names from the DOS and CIA reports challenges the use of historical narrative argument. The reports are inhuman, mirroring the clandestine intention of their authors. Yet the actions and impacts of the agents, and by proxy, the United States, are inherently human. Influence was conducted *by humans to humans* as representative of the agential "will" of the US. Thus, it is both difficult and improper to discuss the documents anonymously. In this paper, as set out in Table 1, I will provide each report's author a name. Determined objectively and arbitrarily, I hope these names will humanize both the reports and the people behind them.

Table 1: Report Information in Order of Discussion

Report Title (Shortened)	Year of Publication	Government Agency	Assigned Author Name
The Tudeh Party Today	1952	DOS	James

[39] "Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) | History, Organization, Responsibilities, Activities, & Criticism | Britannica," March 6, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Central-Intelligence-Agency; "Take a Peek Inside CIA's Directorate of Operations - CIA," accessed March 6, 2025, https://www.cia.gov/stories/story/take-a-peek-inside-cias-directorate-of-operations/; "History of CIA - CIA," accessed March 6, 2025, https://www.cia.gov/legacy/cia-history/.

[40] "Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) | History, Organization, Responsibilities, Activities, & Criticism | Britannica"; "Take a Peek Inside CIA's Directorate of Operations - CIA."

Factors Significant for Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program	1949	DOS	Michael
Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed	1956	DOS	Chapin
A List of Data with Respect to Iran	1964	DOS	John
Examination of the Political Prospects for Iran	1962	CIA	David
Analysis of the Iranian Political Situation	1951	CIA	William

Section 1: Phase One of US Influence, 1947-1950

This section is devoted to understanding the genesis and noncolonial character of the first phase of US influence in Iran. I will first discuss the brief history of Western influence in the region, beginning with British military occupation. This occupation was characteristically colonial and crucially failed, prompting the US to reconsider its thesis of influence. I will then discuss (i) Allen's telegram, (ii) Grady's telegram, and (iii) James' report to dissect how the US researched and reported on its influence efforts. The questions I aim to answer in this section are: Why did the US get involved in Iran? How did it differentiate itself? Why did the US *stay* involved?

The origin of the United States' involvement in Iran was multilateral. As discussed in the introduction, the Soviets began a strategic military occupation of Northern Iran to supply

munitions to the Soviet line against the German invasion of 1941.[41] The British met this perceived aggression with a counter-military occupation of Southern Iran.[42] Both occupations were intermediately colonial. While largely devoid of the hegemonic violence characteristic of colonialism, bilateral military occupation carried the weight of *implied* violence. The British maintained a military presence, determining an *ex-ante* threat of Soviet stratocracy. It became clear that such occupation was (i) a continuous countermeasure against anticipated violence and (ii) a direct result of self-interest rather than genuine concern for Iran's sovereignty. The Soviets, in particular, leveraged existing Iranian separatist rhetoric to advocate for perpetual logistical regional control.[43]

Only through the involvement of the United States and the United Nations did the Soviets demilitarize.[44] It became clear to the Allies *post-factum* the twofold strategic importance of dominant Iranian influence. First, Iran was a potentially crucial source of oil.[45] While Iran was only the 5th largest producer of oil in the Middle East circa 1951 at 300,000 barrels per day and maintained the third largest oil reserves in the Middle East at 13 billion barrels (in comparison to the US's 6.2 million barrels per day and 26.1 billion barrels respectively), the *costs of production* were competitively lower, despite additional export costs.[46] This demanded a vested interest in developing and hegemonizing Middle Eastern oil production. Second, Iran was a flashpoint for modern Middle Eastern "development" and control. The Soviets had evidenced their belief in Iranian strategic importance, prompting a US counter-response. Notwithstanding the truth of

[41]De Vita, "The Cold War in the Middle East," 34.
[42] De Vita, 34–35.
[43] De Vita, 35–36.
[44] De Vita, 35.
[45] De Vita, 35.
[46] Thomas C. Barger, "Middle Eastern Oil Since the Second World War," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 401 (1972): 35–38.

such strategic importance, the United States aimed to deny the Soviets any political progress. Thus, Iran became a battleground between Western liberalism and Soviet communism, devoid of any independent determination of its strategic value.

The US strategic interest in Iran was bilaterally conceptually supported. First, the US manifested its willingness to intervene in foreign affairs irrespective of domestic opposition with its initial efforts to demilitarize the Soviets. The US had made itself comfortable with direct involvement in foreign affairs, and thus it was not unreasonable to continue its influence efforts, especially in response to the Soviet agenda.[47] Second, the Soviets demonstrated the efficacy of leveraging Iranian separatists in pursuit of their political agenda, testifying to the ease with which external powers could exercise control.[48] The United States recognized this leverage opportunity and was willing to exploit it. This fused with the US's existing comfortability, developing what I will later define as the American "influence thesis."

Two telegrams to the Secretary of State from US ambassadors in Iran make clear the outset and evolution of the US's Phase One influence thesis in Iran. The first telegram, sent at 3:00 pm on January 11th, 1947, from US Iranian ambassador Allen to then Secretary of State James Byrnes discusses Soviet pressure to assume control of Iranian oil production.[49] The Soviets had agreed with the Iranians a concession of oil rights to the Soviets.[50] Allen maintains the reasonability of this agreement given the "economic and geographic" view that Northern Iranian oil naturally outlets to the USSR.[51] The British, however, who still exerted regional influence despite the involvement of the US, were distinctly and vocally opposed to the

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[47] De Vita, "The Cold War in the Middle East," 35.
[48] De Vita, 35.
[49] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State" (Tehran, January 11, 1947), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v05/d281.
[50] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State."
[51] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State."

agreement.[52] They held that the concession would be better off under their control, at least partially, citing the belief that Iran's oil production would likely nationalize after the concession.[53] Allen argues that the British attitude is apathetic to "whether Iranian political and economic interests" are fully safeguarded and rather in complete service to themselves.[54] This concession and aversion toward the British is indicative of a genuine interest in Iranian sovereignty. Allen is opposed to complete Soviet control of the region but understands the importance of Iran advocating for its interests.[55] This constructs the Phase One Influence Thesis: Aid to Iran to protect and maintain its sovereignty against the Soviets.

The second telegram, sent at noon on October 12th, 1950, from US Iranian ambassador Grady to then Secretary of State Dean Gooderham Acheson, demonstrates the broad evolution of the US's influence thesis towards its interests of modernity under the guise of Iranian sovereignty. Grady begins by recounting the species of aid given to Iran as largely militaristic, a $25 million arms loan and a $65 million Major Defence Acquisition Program grant given to lift the Iranian army from a "half-armed outfit" to a "reasonable well-equipt" army which the Russians "must be prepared to fight" if they wish to "take Iran."[56] Grady sets out a sustained concern with the Russian annexation of Iran, maintaining a direct and timely link between sovereignty and military capability.[57] The most effective method of protecting Iran against the Soviets was to arm them. But arming alone is a feat of "diminishing returns" if Iran lacked a genuine *sovereign desire*.[58] Iran must *want* to be sovereign for it to repel Soviet influence.

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[52] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State."
[53] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State."
[54] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State."
[55] "The Ambassador in Iran (Allen) to the Secretary of State."
[56] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State" (Tehran, October 12, 1950), https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v05/d281.
[57] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."
[58] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."

Grady advocates for economic aid and socioeconomic development. He lists (i) an existing Exim Bank loan of $25 million for "road construction equipment, agricultural equipment, and an electric power survey," (ii) a proposed International Bank loan of $10 million for port equipment and cement mills, and (iii) a $0.5 million program for agriculture, health, and education centers.[59] Two theories of sovereign desire emerge from these programs. First, infrastructural modernity is correlated with the ability for sovereignty. To both mobilize a military and support a growing economy, roads and a sufficient power grid are required. The construction of these systems conceivably increases domestic belief in the sustainability of sovereignty. Second, social modernity is correlated with sovereign desire. As preventative healthcare, sustainable agriculture, and systems of education are introduced and maintained, belief in self-sustainability increases, similarly increasing sovereign desire. While conceivable, both theories are inherently Western. The United States did not sponsor the creation of *any* roads or schools, it sponsored the creation of *Western* infrastructure and institutions. These systems, they believed, were inextricably tied to modernity, self-sufficiency, and the ability of sovereignty. This belief in an institutional relationship with modernity and the capacity for state success is fundamentally "developmental."

Grady clarifies an American view of Iranian society as pre-modern, promoting "developmental" rhetoric in connection with existing sovereign sponsorship. Grady describes Iran as "semi-feudal," its people living in "animal-like poverty" without any commodities that cost foreign exchange.[60] This view is distinctly both colonial and "developmental." The US viewed Iran as *animalistically* primitive, whose poverty made it "prey" for the Soviets.[61] This

[59] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."
[60] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."
[61] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."

language of primitivity is indicative of a distinct sense of American superiority, even in outward support of Iranian sovereignty. The US did not support Iran simply because it believed in a people's right to sovereignty; it did so because it wanted to bring a society out of primitivity into strategic favor of the US. As architects of Iran's multilateral development, the US could carefully control its perception relative to the Soviets. If the US succeeded in modernizing Iran, the Iranians would be indebted to the West. It is this logical line that permeated the next decades of influence.

The US's rhetoric of sovereignty was a pretense for the future imposition of Western modernity. At the end of the telegram, Grady succinctly restates the goals of American influence. First, he holds that long-term support of Iran will increase its standard of living and productive capacity to resist Soviet influence.[62] Second, he argues that short-term aid will provide psychological support to the Iranians, implying the US's belief in their capacity for success and allyship.[63] I argue that there is a third sub-goal to American influence: expansion of credibility. As the US "modernized" Iran, they claimed "maximum credit" for themselves, bolstering their future credibility in the region. This allowed future campaigns for liberalism beyond the ends of Iranian sovereignty.

Comprehensive analysis of the Tudeh party crucially adjoined the US's influence efforts in the early 1950s. To better understand the Tudeh and their oppositional capacity, the US published a series of reports across the 1950s and 60s to (i) analyze the structure of the party, (ii) assess the party's goals, and (iii) determine the best method of US disruption. The first available report was written by DOS agent James, published in 1952. Over 27 pages, James assesses that

[62] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."
[63] "The Ambassador in Iran (Grady) to the Secretary of State."

the Tudeh were organized from the top down, much like any conventional political party.[64] They maintained different electorate branches to manage publications, administration, and any such required capacity.[65] Where the Tudeh were unique in their structure was at the bottom of their hierarchy. Local Tudeh members were organized in "cells," or succinct groups of party members.[66] This stratification gave party leaders greater control over members and encouraged such members to relate to one another based on cell identity.[67] Cells were constructed of Tudeh who shared a place of work, homogenizing members around a common interest, notwithstanding location of residence.[68] This intense focus on structure yields two extrapolations. First, the US considered the Tudeh sufficiently complex. James' dedication of ~17 pages to understanding the party's structure incites a characterization of Iranian society in direct contrast to the animalistic depictions of Grady. Iranians were "capable" of complex political organization worthy of US study and inter-agency education. Second, the Tudeh were formidable. James holds the Tudeh as the single major impediment to US influence and a direct threat to Soviet, communist political control.[69] All US influence efforts for Iranian sovereignty must inherently be aligned against the Tudeh.

James' assessment of the Tudeh's political tactics and goals directly informed US influence efforts. His report holds that the Tudeh utilized two primary political tactics: propaganda and education systems.[70] The Tudeh Propaganda and Instruction Commission recognized the circulatory effect of language, publishing communist newspapers, movies, and

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[64] "The Tudeh Party Today" (Department Of State, October 20, 1952), 4, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349354636/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=112b1cd1&pg=3.
[65] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 4.
[66] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 4.
[67] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 4.
[68] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 4.
[69] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 28.
[70] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 14.

magazines with the bipartite goal of indoctrination and maintenance of existing membership. Tudeh members would read and share written propaganda amongst themselves, sustaining their belief in the party and enticing new members.[71] This system of written ideological dissemination required literacy, prompting the institution of youth and adult night classes. These classes taught the illiterate to read Tudeh propaganda and encouraged political discussion between members.[72] James analyzes both mutualistic systems of propaganda and education in support of the unitary goal of "[seizing control]" of the Iranian government. [73]This cause was of particular, yet belated concern to the United States. The Tudeh carried a revolutionary goal, but James suggests that sufficient anti-revolutionary forces were working against the Tudeh, making revolution a "complex undertaking."[74] This detailed assessment of revolutionary potential and tactics against determined goals implies (i) legitimate revolutionary concern and (ii) a need for sustained surveillance. The US recognized the formidability and intent of the Tudeh, opting to continuously and carefully assess the possibility of revolution as a countermeasure against their interests and programs of influence. By closely monitoring its political and ideological opponents, the US could design its influence agenda to retain subjective "control." Thus, opponent analysis is a crucial element of the American influence thesis. To maintain unilateral control, the US needed to understand its opponents and their capacity for opposition.

The United States' methods of influence shifted away from protecting Iranian sovereignty and towards the service of its own ideals across the turn of the half-century. This claim is grounded in Machael's report published in 1949 by the DOS. Michael provides detailed

[71] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 14–15.
[72] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 14–15.
[73] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 28.
[74] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 28.

updates concerning many of the US's global influence efforts, including Iran.[75] He assesses that Iran will only side with the Americans against the Soviets to the extent that Iranians share Western ideals of individualism and personal dignity.[76] While the "how" of this argument is left unelaborated, Michael marks a conscious shift in the US's influence thesis. By building infrastructure, establishing schools, and collecting Western literature (similar ideals to that of Allen's telegram), a new generation of "Western" Iranians could be brought up to support the US. This concern with "support for the West" and "siding with the US against the Soviets" is separate but related to arguments for aid to protect sovereignty. The US still desired Iranian sovereignty insofar as such sovereignty was anti-Soviet, pro-West, and characterized by Western moral ideals. This expansion of the US's initial influence thesis reflects the beginning of a quid pro quo foreign relationship. Protecting foreign sovereignty wasn't enough. The US needed to get a return on its investment.

The US aid through the early 1950s was characteristically noncolonial. As stated by Fanon, colonialism is defined as a form of domination characterized by the violence of one group over another in pursuit of the reordering of the colonized.[77] Colonialism requires dehumanization and the intentional positioning of the colonizers as foreigners to the colonized.[78] While each of the above reports and telegrams is written through the US gaze, none make mention of violence. The United States maintained a policy *against* military occupation of Iran, opting for distant and individualistic assertions of influence. This fundamentally prevents the influence exerted on Iran from fulfilling the *physical* criterion for colonialism. The reports also fail to mention, however,

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[75] "[Near East] Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program." (Department Of State, January 28, 1949), U.S. Declassified Documents Online, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349425795/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=8c2bd728&pg=89.
[76] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 86.
[77] Fanon, *The Wretched of The Earth*, 40–42.
[78] Fanon, 40–42.

the Iranian perception of American influence. Were the Americans *perceived* as creating separate zones of influence? Were the Americans viewed as reordering Iranian society? Later sections of this paper will reanalyze these potential colonial implications.

Section 2: Phase Two of US Influence, 1950-1979

This section is devoted to understanding the evolution of US fiscal and programmatic influence in Iran across the second phase of US influence, from 1950-1978. I will first analyze the theoretical foundation of "developmentalism" as reliant on a thesis of institutions. Then I will further discuss the history of "developmentalism" based on such logic. Finally, I will discuss "developmental" measures actioned by the US that parallel the weakening of the Tudeh Party, culminating in the Iranian Oil Crisis of the 1970s. The questions I aim to answer in this section are: How did US involvement in Iran change, and why? Did the United States pursue an extractive, "developmental" relationship with Iran? Why did the US stay involved?

"Developmentalism" relies on the theory that economic institutions, political institutions, and political power are deterministic of state prosperity. Economic institutions, such as the structure of property rights and the presence of markets, dictate (i) the "aggregate…growth potential" of an economy and (ii) economic growth outcomes, including the future "distribution of resources."[79] Without property rights, individuals lack incentives to invest in human, physical, and technological capital.[80] Without efficient markets, economic gains are "unexploited" and resources are "misallocated."[81] Thus economic institutions determine both the "size of the aggregate pie" *and* how the "pie is divided" amongst societal groups. Societies with economic institutions that "facilitate" and "encourage" factor accumulation, innovation, and the efficient

[79] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth," 390.
[80] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 389.
[81] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 389.

allocation of resources will comparatively prosper.[82] "Developmentalism" holds the Global North as exclusively wielding such efficient economic institutions.

Yet economic institutions are unevenly determined. Different members of society maintain distinct or grouped economic interests, generating conflicts of interest regarding the most efficient institutions.[83] Political power breaks this tension.[84] Those individuals or groups with the most political power determine economic institutions.[85] Political power can be both *de facto* (unenumerated) and *de jure* (originating from political institutions). Political institutions, similar to economic institutions, determine the incentives of "key actors" in the political sphere.[86]

The fusion of economic institutions and political institutions yields a cyclical framework of economic and political power. The distribution of resources determines *de facto* political power, which determines political institutions.[87] These institutions allocate *de jure* political power, which determines economic institutions.[88] Economic institutions dictate both economic performance and the distribution of resources. This framework exposes the importance of economic institutions to societal prosperity and perceived political power.[89] In "developmental" theory, the more *efficient* the institutions, the more prosperous the society.[90]

The theory of institutions can be traced back to colonialism. Intensifying after 1492, European colonialism "transformed" the economic institutions of colonial societies.[91] Europeans

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[82] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 390.
[83] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 422.
[84] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 390.
[85] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 390–91.
[86] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 390.
[87] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 390–91.
[88] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 390–91.
[89] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 392.
[90] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 422.
[91] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 407.

assumed hegemonic *de jure* political control through military occupation, erecting political institutions that unilaterally benefited those colonial European societies.[92] Such institutions gave Europeans *de facto* political power, allowing them to establish multilateral economic institutions focused on material extraction. These institutions, too, were hegemonic, only (i) benefiting the economic performance of European societies and (ii) distributing wealth to select Europeans. The more profitable the institutions for Europe, the "worse" they were for the colonial population.[93] It was this unrelenting, autocratic control of both political and economic institutions that gave Europe the necessary capital to surpass its growth constraints. Europe was not to freely give up such control.

As I have established, when colonialism lost public favor, the rhetoric of "development" took its place. Europeans desired to maintain the parasitic extractive relationships of colonialism without such violent and publicly exploitative connotations. The Global North versus South dialectic fused with conceptions of European institutional superiority to yield the "strategy" of "development." European societies would fiscally and programmatically work to "develop" decolonized or otherwise "Southern" societies to improve and "modernize" their institutions. Markers for societal success became GDP per capita, population growth rates, literacy rates, urbanization rates, and other statistics that flow from Eurocentric ideals of prosperity. It was through this new strategy, devoid of colonial implications or repercussions, that the North could maintain its extractive, hegemonic relationship with the South.[94]

The evolution of colonialism to "developmentalism" was at the forefront of US influence in Iran. Two reports published by the DOS in 1956 and ~1964, respectively, mark the beginning

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[92] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 407.
[93] Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, 416.
[94] Parthasarathi, *Why Europe Grew Rich and Asia Did Not: Global Economic Divergence, 1600-1850*; Johnson, Robinson, and Acemoglu, "Institutions as a Fundamental Cause of Long-Run Growth."

of this "developmental" shift. The 1956 report, written by Chapin, discusses the funding and intentions of (i) a "constructive nationalist" program and (ii) undisclosed economic development programs.[95] Chapin holds that the constructive nationalist program, funded by "existing…[congressional] appropriations," employed Americans in varying positions of the Iranian government.[96] These agents took "every opportunity to "diminish" any influence that may turn Iran towards nationalism.[97] This covert maintenance of both political control and Iranian favorability toward the United States, while not characteristically "developmental," demonstrates a terminal shift in the US's influence thesis. Instead of broad "support," the US employed a small, active group of undercover agents, sponsored by congressional and agency appropriations, to further US interests. This focusing of influence is indicative of a broad domestic realization: that US aid could not "continue forever."[98] There must be an *end.* The concept of a definitive end is a crucial step towards "developmental" rhetoric. The US was no longer in infinite, exclusive service of Iranian sovereignty nor domestic interests, but desired a solidified, "Westernized," "[morally responsible]," "modern," and self-sustaining Middle Eastern outpost that by its own volition served the West.[99]

Chapin's discussion of Iranian economic reform furthers arguments for a "developmental" shift in influence. While unelaborated, Chapin hints at "funded" programs aimed at economic "assistance" and "development" projects.[100] This reflects a newfound, refined focus on institutions as harbingers of societal prosperity and modernity. The US reasoned that

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[95] "Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed" (Department Of State, June 23, 1956), U.S. Declassified Documents Online, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349286374/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=73a7619d&pg=5.
[96] "Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed," 2.
[97] "Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed," 2.
[98] "Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed," 6.
[99] "Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed," 6.
[100] "Economic and Military Assistance to Iran Discussed," 2.

such adoption of economic institutions would both combat communist influence and encourage trade between Iran and the West.

The structure of John's 1964 report embodies "developmental" rhetoric. Published by the DOS, John begins by listing five "country data" statistics: population, country area, literacy rate, oil production, and military metrics.[101] This format indicates that the report was designed to be *quickly* read and *easily* understood. A DOS "manager" could glance at the first page of such a report and determine the relative "success" of the US's aid efforts. An entire country could be distilled into and judged based on its five "most important" statistics, as determined by the US. This marks a distinct depersonalization of "development." The US valued the relationship between numerical objectives and spending allocations, used as comparative indicators of what it could "get out of" Iran, *overall.* This is fundamentally "developmental."

The five statistics themselves carry two "developmental" extrapolations. First, they directly mirror the markers for "developmental" success discussed in the beginning of this section. Oil production was a proxy for the efficiency of economic institutions. Population size, listed as of "mid-1962," implies active tracking and comparison with country area and economic success, indicating rough GDP per capita, population growth rates, and urbanization rates.[102] Combined, these statistics continuously indicated the "success" of Iran. Second, the listed literacy rate indicates a crucial variation of the "developmental" theory of institutions discussed above. Literacy rate is not directly indicative of economic or political institutions, yet it is the third statistic listed.[103] This evokes the "developmental" idea of "primitivity." The US

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[101] "A List of Data with Respect to Iran Includes: Population; Area; Literacy Rate; Oil Production; Military Force Information; Amount of Aid from Countries Other than the U.S" (Department Of State, 1964), 1, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349567396/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=d08ee24d&pg=1.
[102] "A List of Data with Respect to Iran," 1.
[103] "A List of Data with Respect to Iran," 1.

considered literacy a crucial marker of primitivity versus modernity. The literacy rate's listing above both economic and military statistics implies that, notwithstanding the success of Iran's institutions, the US cared foremost that Iran *modernize.* With modernization would come a natural dissuasion from the Soviets and an increased "capacity" to side with the US and its interests. Thus the species of "developmental" aid the US employed was not simply in the pursuit of modernity but *Western-oriented* modernity.

The US's shift in influence thesis paralleled the weakening of the Tudeh Party. As the US narrowed its developmental focus across the mid-1950s, it continuously observed the strength of the Tudeh Party in response to its efforts. By the early 1960s, the Tudeh party was "weak" and "severely repressed."[104] It is causally unclear as to the culprit of this decline, but the US had certainly reached its goal of thwarting the Tudeh. Despite this success, a 1962 CIA report written by David holds that Iran's political stability was still difficult to "estimate."[105] A new party, the "militant nationalists," had emerged who, similar to the Tudeh, opposed the Shah.[106] While assessed as "incapable of posing a serious challenge" to the Shah's authority, the development of nationalist sentiment suggests that US "developmental" efforts had extended beyond their desired ends.[107] By investing in Iranian economic, political, and social institutions, the US had "created" a self-sufficient, autonomous nation capable of opposing the leader the US supported.

The 1970s Iranian Oil Boom crystallized the United States as an extractionary "developmental" power in Iran. As established in the introduction, OAPEC's oil embargo tripled the cost of oil, inciting a Western race for the capitalization of Iranian oil production. The Shah,

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[104] "Examination of the Political Prospects for Iran" (Central Intelligence Agency, September 7, 1962), 3, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349219559/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=7a1131a4&pg=5.
[105] "Examination of the Political Prospects for Iran," 3.
[106] "Examination of the Political Prospects for Iran," 3.
[107] "Examination of the Political Prospects for Iran," 3.

under pressure from the US and recognizing Iran's altered economic position, ordered (i) a doubling of expenditure in oil industrialization and production to USD 69 billion and (ii) an increase in public sector investments to $45 billion.[108] By 1978, oil and gas were the second largest itemized government expenditure, representing 16.8% of the revised 1973-1978 budget, a 72% increase from the pre-boom projected budget.[109] This considerable increase in economic investment placed oil and gas as the primary product of Iran's economy.[110] The US championed this centralization, its imports of Iranian oil increasing from 223 thousand barrels per day in 1973 to 469 thousand barrels per day in 1974 and 555 thousand barrels per day in 1978.[111] The US's desire for material extraction was inextricably tied to a perceived and real increase in aggregate demand for oil. It is important to note that Shah maintained a social element to his plan of economic expansion.[112] He held that oil and gas would lay the groundwork for a "welfare state," providing free schooling, food subsidies, and public health, amongst other benefits.[113] For a time, the Shah's plan succeeded. Iranian GDP per capita rose from $501 to $821 from March 1973 to March 1974, in line with a ~47% increase in daily imports of Iranian oil, and "every sector of the economy" experienced "advanced growth.[114] Yet as early as 1974, it became clear that the aggregate demand championed by the US and other Western states outweighed the aggregate supply.[115] Instead of investing in *future* infrastructure, Iran focused its oil revenues on current expenditures. This imbalance of supply and demand put pressure on a range of goods and

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[108] Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power*, Routledge Library Editions. Iran 29 (London: Routledge, 2011), 78, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/12012633?sid=61346278#description.
[109] Graham, 78–80.
[110] Graham, 82–83.
[111] "U.S. Imports from Iran of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products (Thousand Barrels per Day)," accessed January 30, 2025, https://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n=pet&s=mttim_nus-nir_2&f=a.
[112] Graham, *Iran*, 81–82.
[113] Graham, 81.
[114] Graham, 83.
[115] Graham, 83.

services, triggering "powerful inflation."[116] The average cost of goods imported from industrialized nations rose by 28% by 1975.[117] Inflation fused with under-investment in agriculture, yielding an "out of control" import-based economy.[118] Iran suffered, for the first time, a national deficit, shifting the focus of the Shah away from social reforms and towards stabilizing the economy.[119] Thus, the US's role in supporting unsustainable demand for oil cannot be overstated. At the same time as the US increased its Iranian oil imports, it poorly aided the Shah in developing the Iranian economy. This hegemonic, extractive relationship is foundational to "developmental" theory.

Iran was an early "developmental project." Carefully navigating away from colonial implications, the US harnessed existing colonial-adjacent rhetoric of "modern" and "primitive" nations to justify programmatic and fiscal "development" of Iran's economic, political, and social institutions. The US carefully focused its influence and standardized its outcomes, assuming near-*de jure* political control, pursuing Iranian prosperity insofar as it favored the West. This culminated in a purely and blatantly extractive relationship between the US and Iran in the early 1970s that starkly distressed the Iranian economy. Thus, Iran was an American test-case for formal "developmental" theory that crystallized in the 1990s. The US extracted and subverted with little sense of repercussive responsibility.

Section 3: US Consciousness Across Phases of Influence

This section is devoted to understanding elements of perceptual management employed by the United States in Iran across both phases of influence. I will discuss Michael's 1949 DOS

[116] Graham, 85.
[117] Graham, 85.
[118] Graham, 85.
[119] Graham, 50.

report and the 1951 CIA report written by William. Both reports dictate the evolution of US policy-thinking across the early 1950s, revealing that the US consciously employed a perceptually conscious, anti-colonial method of foreign influence to (i) combat Soviet threats of Iranian control and (ii) gradually situate Iran as a "Western state" in the Middle East. The questions I aim to answer are: What did the US "think" of its influence? Did the US believe it was making an impact, and for whom?

As I have established, the British and the Soviets mutually established influential control in Iran during the early 1940s. The Soviets pushed for communist Iranian separatism while the British provided aid, generally speaking, in the service of Iranian anti-communist sovereignty. By the early 1950s, the literature surmises that the Iranian public developed discrete views of the "Western" and "Soviet" agendas. Yet the West was not entirely unified in its influential approach. Each power opted for different *types* of fiscal and programmatic influence, circumstantially following the priority of Iran in its foreign agenda.

Michael's report, as discussed in Section 1, begins with a statement of objective to present factors "significant for or conditioning" the efficacy of "a US Information Program" in Greece, Turkey, and Iran.[120] The report is divided into sections by country of interest. The Iranian section begins with a threefold statement argument for US involvement in Iran. Iran is of great strategic and political importance to the US because of (i) its "potential" support for the West in the UN General Assembly, (ii) its "roadblock" of the Soviets on the way to India, and (iii) its large oil production.[121] Michael does not believe that the US can achieve each objective passively. He assesses that Iran would prefer to remain neutral in the East versus West conflict, and will only side with the Americans (i) through constant "effort and encouragement" and (ii) to

[120] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 6.
[121] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 86.

the extent Iranians share Western, rather than Soviet, ideals of individualism and personal dignity.[122] Thus, before any description of *how* the US is actively "encouraging" Iran to side with the West, Michael makes a moral argument. It is through the dissemination of American, and by proxy Western, morality that the Iranians will side with the US.

Michael's appeal to Western morality marks a conscious shift in foreign-policy rhetoric. Instead of placing moral dissemination as tertiary to traditional influential forms of military occupation or fiscal leverage, the US placed it at the forefront of its foreign policy initiative. The US adopted a broad, gradual approach to its influence. By building infrastructure, establishing schools, and collecting Western literature, a new generation of "Western" Iranians could be brought up to innately support the West.[123] This statement of strategy yields two related extrapolations. First, the United States does not believe it can "work with" the current Iranian population. Many Iranians were already aligned against the West, notwithstanding programs for social and economic development. To achieve true impact, the US had to turn towards Iran's youth. Second, the US knew that it could not beat the Soviets at their "own game." That is, the US could not rely on Iranian alignment through hopes of passive diffusion and acceptance of American exceptionalism. Without interference, the Iranians would align with the Soviets. Thus, the older Iranian generation was determined to be inconsequential to Michael's, and by proxy, the DOS' stated objectives.

The US obsession with perception bolsters arguments for a conscious shift in foreign policy in Phase Two. Michael claims that while Iranians only had experience with a small cross-section of the American population, Americans were seen as "frank, generous, and idealistic"

[122] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 86.
[123] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 93.

persons who were "immature culturally" but treated Iranians as "equals."[124] This perception is viewed as generally positive but worthy of improvement alongside pages of analysis comparing and justifying Soviet, British, and French perceptions.[125] For an official report to be so concerned with the perceptions of such few Americans dictates the central importance of *perception* to the United States. The US wanted control but did not want to be perceived as controlling. This comes in specific contrast to the British, whom the Iranians developed a great "dislike" for and whom they believed to be a historical "colonial" power.[126] Thus, the US didn't simply desire distance from the Soviets or from a general perception as "controlling." It wanted distinguishment from its allies. The US *meticulously crafted* its perception to distance itself from colonialism, although it pursued many of the same educational and fiscal programs as the colonially perceived British. This extreme consciousness of perception marks an acknowledgment of colonial history and a desire to abstractly depart from it.

Michael's report marks an idealistic and controversially intentionally anti-colonial model of foreign influence. Colonial powers actively deter holistic perceptions by the colonized. By creating distinct zones of influence between colonizers and colonized, maintained exclusively by military engagement, colonizers deprive the colonized of the "access" required to develop "genuine" perceptions. The colonized view the colonizers as extractive, violent "others." The United States, understanding the impact of perception, actively combated the existing view of the West (the British) as colonizers. It minimized its involved personnel, intentionally confining them to scientists, diplomatic representatives, and missionaries to (i) prevent the Iranians from developing a view of the US as militaristic oppressors and (ii) formulate an exclusively positive,

[124] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 87.
[125] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 87–90.
[126] "Factors Significant for or Conditioning the Effectiveness of a U.S. Information Program," 118.

beneficial, and holistic conception of American national character. Yet Michael concedes, when considering several evident negative perceptions, that Iranians *did not* have enough exposure to the US to "truly" conceptualize American character. Thus, while the US carefully managed its perception in pursuit of a socially integrated, anti-colonial national identity, it consequently fulfilled aspects of the perceptual criteria for colonialism. The US consciously deprived Iranians of the proper "access" required to develop genuine perceptions, perpetuating the view of Americans as "others," occupying a distinct, semi-colonial zone of influence.

Published by the CIA in 1951, William's report expands upon Michael's argument for perceptual management, beginning with a description of Iran's political situation and orientation against the West and British "colonialism." As the Tudeh gained power despite Western influence, the US opted for an increasingly singular and active influential approach. The United States recognized perception's deterministic influence on its Iranian agenda and consciously worked to differentiate itself from other Western influences in the region.

The United States realized Britain's perceptual failure as yielding a narrow, reactionary window in which to regain favor. Since the counter-Soviet military occupation of Southern Iran in 1941, Britain was the primary Western power to exert influence in Iran. From government-sponsored aid to "British bank and business firms backed by a long history of…interests in Iran," the British established a desire for Iranian sociopolitical alignment with the West.[127] These interests, left in isolation throughout the 1940s, embodied a singular, broad, "Western interest." There is little evidence as to the domestic perception of this influence until 1951, when Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh came to power. While Mosaddegh was democratically elected

[127] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation, Topics Include: Popular Support of Mossadeq's Government; Collapse of British Position in Iran; Soviet Position in Iran" (Central Intelligence Agency, October 12, 1951), 1, U.S. Declassified Documents Online, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CK2349022785/USDD?sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=03811277&pg=1.

and approved by the Shah, William condemns the achievement as attained by xenophobia.[128] This word is of particular interest in the context of Britain's singular influence. William holds that the xenophobia tied to Mosaddegh's political campaign intersected the existing tension between the West and the Soviets, producing certain xenophobic ideations towards the West.[129] William's concern for such anti-Western sentiment is conscious but optimistic. Iran was wholly anti-Western but only violent against the British.[130] That is, Iran would tolerate the United States insofar as it differentiated itself from pre-existing British, and thus "Western" influence. A slim window of opportunity existed for the US to establish its own, unique perspective intentionally apart from the singularly "Western" conception.

The United States recognized its need to manage its perception at the outset of its influence effort in Iran. Following acknowledgment of Britain's perceptual failure, William holds that should the US continue to "side spectacularly" with the British, the brunt of Iranian anti-Western sentiment could "easily cover the United States as well as Britain."[131] This assessment yields two implications. First, as discussed above, the United States recognized a need to intentionally distinguish itself from the British and synonymous West. The United States had to be perceived as its own, similarly anti-communist power. Second, the US needed to actively manage its future perception to prevent perceptual fusion with either the British or the "West." Michael and William's reports are the genesis of this multi-decade effort, each spending time specifically analyzing ideal perceptions against failed perceptions.

The United States further rejected conceptions of Western unity in favor of physical expulsion. As discussed above, the United States recognized a need to ideologically separate

[128] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 1.
[129] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 1.
[130] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 1.
[131] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 1.

from the West. Yet William holds that the British had damaged the Western perception so seriously that it "undermined the prestige" of the "Anglo-Saxon powers" in the region, bolstering support for the Soviets.[132] The only effective remedy, he suggests, was to "[physically expel]" the British.[133] This argument furthers the contextual argument for xenophobia. The British were intolerable not only *ideologically,* but *physically.* For the US to "save" the Western project of influence, it needed unilateral physical influence in Iran. This argument, advocating for active and singular physical and ideological domination, is inherently colonial in its genesis. The US demanded its own influential "space" in Iran, yet without the "troops on the ground" characteristic of prototypical colonialism. William, and by proxy the US, advocated for something *hybrid:* ideologically colonial yet physically "developmental."

The United States' active effort to manage its perception was challenged by a shared, characteristically British anti-communist agenda. Much of William's report is devoted to discussing the strength of the Tudeh Party following the election of Mosaddegh.[134] Iran was popularly in support of Mosaddegh as was the Tudeh (albeit on "specific issues"), aligning popular opinion with that of the Soviets in contrast to the British's public backing of the Shah.[135] While the US aimed to combat anti-Western perception in favor of "pro-American" perception, it maintained the same goals as the British. The US held that the only effective method for the defeat of the Tudeh was through the Shah's removal of the increasingly Tudeh-alligning Mosaddegh.[136] Beginning with William's report in 1951, the US employed CIA agents in Iran to

[132] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 2.
[133] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 3.
[134] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 1–3.
[135] "Analysis of Iranian Political Situation," 2.
[136] "1953 Coup in Iran | Coup D'etat, Description & Facts | Britannica," January 2, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/event/1953-coup-in-Iran.

catalyze public unrest against Mosaddegh, yielding his removal from power in 1953.[137] The United States desired physical and ideological individualism but achieved the same goals as the perceptually damaged British.

William's report marks a perceptually conscious, ideologically and physically individualistic method of influence, unintentionally characteristic of colonialism. As discussed in the analysis of Michael's report, colonizers create and maintain distinct zones of influence between the colonizers and the colonized. The US actively physically combated the development of holistic national perceptions in connection with such zones by intentionally limiting its personnel presence in Iran. Yet William's report solidifies that the US conversely *desired* a nationalistic perception. It wanted to be viewed positively as the "Americans," devoid of perceptions as the broader "West" and in disconnection with the British. Thus, a crucial tension emerges. The US was *physically* anti-colonial but *ideologically* colonial.

Section 4: The Revolution and Post-Revolution

This section is devoted to understanding the Revolution's mechanism, outcome, and effects. I will first review the three theses and their intersection to demonstrate the complexity and chronology of the Revolution. Then, I will discuss the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the role of violence as a revolutionary tool. I will argue that the Revolution was pseudo-decolonial. The questions I aim to answer are: What caused the Revolution? Why did Iran emerge as a republic? Why did Iran emerge as anti-Western?

As I've established, the perceived causes of the Revolution are multivariate. When oil prices tripled during the OAPEC boycott in 1973, the Shah doubled oil industrialization

[137] "1953 Coup in Iran | Coup D'etat, Description & Facts | Britannica."

expenditures in line with a 47% increase in daily oil exports from 1973 to 1974.[138] Aggregate demand began to outweigh aggregate supply in early 1975, putting pressure on essential consumer goods and triggering "galloping inflation."[139] A housing shortage and mass urban migration "compounded" these problems, yielding broad political discontent amongst the urban poor.[140] Simultaneously, the minority population of Islamic conservatism grew in the early 1970s, fueled by distrust in Western aid programs.[141] They viewed the West as ignorant, advocating for Islamization in place of political revolution.[142] President Carter's election in 1976 further contributed to this unrest.[143] Carter represented a continuation of an incompatible American emphasis on Iranian "liberalization."[144] His election destabilized the triangular relationship between the Shah, the US, and the Iranian public. Existing opponents of the Shah understood the US's capacity for political control, extending their opposition beyond the Shah and towards the United States. The Shah embodied a newfound disdain for the US. Thus, the urban poor, religious fundamentalists, Iranian intellectuals, and other opponents fused into a revolutionary cohort that desired a new "mass politics" in broad favor of an analogously "liberal" extension of "democratic rights."[145] Iran was therefore not incompatible with "liberalism," but "liberalism" was incompatible with autocracy.

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[138] Graham, *Iran*, 83.
[139] Nikki R. Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," *The American Historical Review* 88, no. 3 (1983): 588, https://doi.org/10.2307/1864588; Graham, *Iran*.
[140] Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 588.
[141] Sadri, "Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, Islam & Dissent in Postrevolutionary Iran," 388.
[142] Sadri, 388–89.
[143] Babak Ganji, *Politics of Confrontation: The Foreign Policy of the USA and Revolutionary Iran*, Library of International Relations 27 (London ; New York : New York: Tauris Academic Studies ; In U.S.A. distributed by Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 49, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/6019734?sid=61346278#description.
[144] Babak Ganji, *Politics of Confrontation: The Foreign Policy of the USA and Revolutionary Iran*, Library of International Relations 27 (London ; New York : New York: Tauris Academic Studies ; In U.S.A. distributed by Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 49–51, https://catalog.lib.uchicago.edu/vufind/Record/6019734?sid=61346278#description.
[145] Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 588.

The Revolution formally began in 1978. Early that year, the paper *Ettela'at* published a scathing, "slanderous" article against religious fundamentalist and emerging revolutionary leader Ruhollah Khomeini.[146] Mass public, nonviolent demonstrations followed the article, and the Shah retaliated with lethal enforcement out of shock and fear of a political conspiracy. After the 40-day mourning period customary in the Shi'i Islamic tradition, additional protests continued and were met with violent force. Such violence only fueled public fusion against the monarchy. Martyrdom was viewed as a method of religious expression, and protests scaled with the exercise of violence. On September 8th, 1978, the Shah declared martial law, and troops "opened fire against demonstrators," killing "hundreds." Hundreds of thousands of Iranians protested this action in Tehran alone.[147]

Khomeini was a crucial component of Revolutionary success. Khomeini initially established his influence as a Shi'i Islamic leader in the early 1950s. His writings were consistently outspoken against the monarchy and escalated in the early 1960s in response to the Shah's liberalist social agenda. Khomeini incited anti-government riots, for which he was imprisoned in 1963.[148] In 1964, he was forcibly exiled from Iran by the Shah.[149] Khomeini published additional, wholly anti-government work from exile to grow his following. By 1976, many Iranians outside of Shi'i fundamentalism coalesced with Khomeini's desire for revolution. In 1977, Khomeini directly orchestrated mass strikes, boycotts, and tax refusals, preparing the

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[146] Keddie, 588.
[147] "Iranian Revolution | Summary, Causes, Effects, & Facts | Britannica," October 26, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/event/Iranian-Revolution.
[148] "Ruhollah Khomeini | Biography, Exile, Revolution, & Facts | Britannica," February 11, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ruhollah-Khomeini.
[149] "Ruhollah Khomeini | Biography, Exile, Revolution, & Facts | Britannica."

anti-government and implicitly pro-Khomeini protests of 1978.[150] Khomeini had emerged as the face of the impending revolution.

It is contested whether Khomeini had contact with the US while in exile. A crucial article published by the BBC in 2016 claims that a declassified CIA report published in 1980 confirmed contact between President Kennedy and Khomeini.[151] Khomeini reportedly told the President he was "not opposed to American interests in Iran."[152] Rather, he valued American interests in opposition to "Soviet" and "British" influence.[153] Iran quickly denounced the authenticity of the reported communication, and BBC Persian neglected to publish the report itself.[154] Gary Sick, a member of the National Security Council under President Carter, however, confirmed the authenticity of the communication to reporters at *The Guardian.*[155] The communication does not exist by its reported title "Islam in Iran" in the CIA electronic database. The document's potential authenticity conflicts with a consistent policy supporting the Shah from 1977 through 1979, suggesting that the US may have been complicit in, or even "allowed" the fall of the Shah to a more popular, pro-American leader. This is, of course, speculation, but evidences Khomeini's potential international influence. Throughout the pre-revolutionary period, the US maintained its fiscal and military support of the Shah.

As millions of Iranians publicly protested the Pahlavi regime, the Shah recognized his inability to sustain political control. In late 1978, as many as nine million Iranians participated in

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[150] "The Iranian Revolution (1977-1979)," ICNC, accessed February 17, 2025, https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/iranian-revolution-1977-1979/.
[151] "Two Weeks in January: America's Secret Engagement with Khomeini," *BBC News*, June 3, 2016, sec. US & Canada, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36431160.
[152] "Two Weeks in January."
[153] "Two Weeks in January."
[154] Saeed Kamali Dehghan and David Smith, "US Had Extensive Contact with Ayatollah Khomeini before Iran Revolution," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2016, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/10/ayatollah-khomeini-jimmy-carter-administration-iran-revolution.
[155] Dehghan and Smith.

largely nonviolent anti-government protests across Iran.[156] The Iranian police were overwhelmed, and the Shah's efforts to tame the public were "too few" and came "too late."[157] On January 16th, 1979, the Shah fled Iran.[158] Khomeini returned to Iran two weeks later.

Khomeini seized control of the government in February 1979. He appointed Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister to challenge the Shah's appointee Shapur Bahktair.[159] Recognizing the majority support for the new government under Khomeini, Bakhtiar resigned on February 11th.[160] On April 1st, Khomeini declared Iran an "Islamic republic."[161] Through 1983, he worked to conservatize the government toward his "brand" of "absolutist religious radicalism."[162] This included public dislike for the United States and broad xenophobia, but also social programs for "free urban housing, state-supplied utilities, and…land reform."[163]

The Revolution was controversially nonviolent. As I've discussed, Iranians engaged in large-scale, nonviolent protests and demonstrations against the Shah. When met with armed resistance, protests continued and even increased. These protests were not, however, exclusively non-violent nor retaliatorily violent. In retaliation for violence exercised by the police, protestors killed police and burned "cinemas, shops, and banks."[164] Amongst non-violent protestors were distinct "militant groups" who carried out non-retaliatory "assassinations" and "bomb attacks" on police and military personnel.[165] The Shah's secret police, the SAVAK, were especially targeted. On December 21st, 1978, for example, a group of protestors noticed a SAVAK agent

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156 "The Iranian Revolution (1977-1979)."
157 Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 389.
158 "The Iranian Revolution (1977-1979)."
159 Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 389.
160 "The Iranian Revolution (1977-1979)."
161 "The Iranian Revolution (1977-1979)"; "Iranian Revolution | Summary, Causes, Effects, & Facts | Britannica."
162 Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 389.
163 Keddie, 389–90.
164 Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 121–22.
165 Axworthy, 120.

on top of a building.[166] They climbed to the roof of the building and threw the agent "down to his death." Thus, the Revolution was not exclusively non-violent, but *semi-violent*. Iranians exercised violence both in *response* to and *irrespective* of governmental violence.

The Iranian species of semi-violent revolution is unique when considered within colonial rhetoric. I argue that such violence can be bifurcated into "external" and "internal" violence. Colonial violence is typically "external," originating from an extraterritorial colonial source and used to establish hegemony over the colonized. De-colonial violence is similarly directed "externally" at colonizers. The violence of the Iranian government, however, was directed "internally" toward the revolutionary Iranian public, for similar purposes of hegemony. The difference in revolutionary mechanism rests in this "internal" versus "external" distinction. There was no conventionally "colonial" power in Iran exercising violence, but rather a visible, tangible government comprised of citizens. Given that violence is an exclusively decolonial tool, it follows that non-violent revolution may follow non-colonial uses of hegemonic violence. Yet governmental violence did not exist in *exclusion.* The US openly supported the Shah throughout the 1970s, despite popular anti-government sentiment. This *implicitly* and *perceptively* connected the US to the Shah's exercise of violence, constituting the extraterritorial source necessary for "external" violence. The US assumed the role of a distant colonizer acting through the Shah against the Iranian public. Thus, the Revolution, while semi-violent, maintained a unique sense of external opposition, yielding *some* revolutionary violence. This grounds the argument for US "hybrid" colonial influence.

The postrevolutionary Constitution for the Islamic Republic of Iran, published on June 14th, 1979, evidences hybrid colonialism. The Constitution begins by describing the character of

[166] Axworthy, 120.

its preceding movement. It holds the "American conspiracy" to stabilize the "foundations of despotic rule" and to reinforce the "political, cultural, and economic dependence" of Iran on "world imperialism," central to revolutionary sentiment.[167] The Shah no longer represented the will of the people, and the people wanted freedom from "tyranny and foreign domination."[168] Such language suggests that broad anti-Americanism was foundational to the new Islamic Republic. Yet the resulting government was fundamentally "Western" in its institutions. The Constitution sets out a tripartite government comprised of three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial, similar to the American constitutional model. The legislative branch is popularly elected, and each representative serves a term of a four-year term. The main legislative assembly is divided into smaller designated "committees." The executive branch is comprised of the President, who is second to a "Leader" chosen by a popularly elected council. The president serves a four-year term. The Judiciary is popularly elected for terms of six years and oversees the actions of the government, elections, and the state. A series of "checks and balances" intersect the three branches of government to prevent certain abuses of power. Thus, this governmental system is structurally analogous to the United States' republic in how power is distributed and maintained. Yet it was conceived amidst popular anti-Americanism. This outward rejection and inward "adoption" of Western political institutions evidences a revolutionary result distinct from formal colonialism. Iran publicly rejected the US, fulfilling the total colonial rejection required of decolonialism, yet Iran consciously chose to implement Western institutions. I argue that this phenomenon is asynchronous to colonialism and characteristic of hybrid colonialism. Iran did not revolt exclusively decolonially and thus did not construct its government wholly

[167] "Iran's Constitution of 1979 with Ammendments through 1989" (Comparative Constitutions Project, 1979).
[168] "Iran's Constitution of 1979 with Ammendments through 1989."

decolonially. The unique "developmental" influence exercised by the United States warped post-revolutionary outcomes.[169]

Evidence of post-revolutionary hybrid colonialism extends beyond the Iranian Constitution. A letter published in *Library Journal* in June 1979 by John Harvey grounds this claim. Harvey confirms that "overt anti-Americanism" spread rapidly following the Revolution, the phrase "Damn Yankee Go Home" stenciled on many building walls.[170] Such dislike extended to librarians who, given the "colonialism of Western powers," were held tantamount to militarists.[171] Yet Harvey notices that "most" American libraries survived the Revolution. The American embassy-related "Community School" and its libraries remained, along with the Abraham Lincoln Library and even the Commercial Library, despite surrounding protests.[172] The significance of American libraries in Iran is illuminated by a subsequent article written by Harvey in 1989. He discusses that in the 1950s Americans brought the profession of "librarianism" to Iran.[173] Lectures were first given in English but transitioned to Persian in the 1960s as Iranian librarians received librarianship education outside Iran.[174] By the decade of the Revolution, librarianship was a popular professional institution. Thus, the maintenance of libraries across the Revolution was no coincidence. Harvey demonstrates that the Khomeini regime harnessed Iranian libraries to house censored state and Islamic documents. The profession of librarians was maintained but pursued in the Islamic tradition of knowledge collection. This intentional maintenance of a historically "Western" institution evidences the

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169 "Iran's Constitution of 1979 with Ammendments through 1989."
170 John F. Harvey, "Letter From Iran," June 15, 1979.
171 Harvey.
172 Harvey.
173 John F. Harvey, "Iranian Information Education," *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science* 29, no. 3 (1989): 178, https://doi.org/10.2307/40323543.
174 Harvey, 182.

particularity of the Khomeini regime. Unlike a strictly decolonial society that aims to dispel colonial institutions to the extent possible, Khomeini kept those institutions that benefited both Iran *and himself*. He recognized the importance of knowledge collection in establishing political legitimacy and transformed the librarian profession to meet the needs of his regime.[175]

Section 5: Historical Agency

This section is devoted to understanding the importance of agency in historical writing and studying Iran. I will first discuss the association between history and the past, and how agency and bias are inherent to historical writing. Then, I will consider the issue of agency in this paper and how, if at all, it can be remedied.

Historical narratives present a reinterpretation of the past, invoking the use of agency. American historian David Lowenthal posits much of the theory that grounds this claim. He holds history distinct from memory.[176] Memory is rarely "revised consciously," where history *deliberately* reinterprets the past through the "lens" of "later events and ideas."[177] History is both more and less than the past. It can never tell the "full story" but only "tiny fractions" of the past, yet through a narrator who understands the "consequences and outcomes" of the past, can reinterpret and present such past as "history."[178] I wholly agree with Lowenthal, but refine his claim to consider that the historical process of reinterpretation concedes *complete* narrative power to the historian. The historian unilaterally decides which information to include and exclude from their work, determining the context, argument, and outcome of their history. Such

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[175] Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Iranian Intellectuals: From Revolution To Dissent," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 11, no. 1 (2007): 80–90.
[176] C. Vann Woodward, review of *Review of The Past is a Foreign Country*, by David Lowenthal, *History and Theory* 26, no. 3 (1987): 349, https://doi.org/10.2307/2505068.
[177] Woodward, 349.
[178] Woodward, 349.

narrative power, as applied, is better contextualized as "agency" or one's ability to exercise their will and accordingly control certain outcomes. As the historian uses their agency to construct a historical account, they impress agency into their narrative. That is, the subjects they consider take on certain agency determined by the motivations and objectives of the historian.

Acknowledgment of bias and agency is crucial to holistic historical narratives. Historical bias constitutes a systemic distortion of events, results, or depictions by the historian. Bias can be conscious, indicative of a particular "goal" of the historian, or unconscious, deriving from the historian's implicit biases. Agency bias is a discrete species of historical bias and while difficult to discern, is combatable. Unconscious bias is impossible to actively combat by the historian. It is, however, the distinct job of the historian, in pursuit of historical "truth" through their interpretation, to reasonably limit the pervasiveness of both species of bias.

As the narrator of this paper and in pursuit of a holistic historical view of Iran, I must directly acknowledge that this paper is bilaterally challenged by agency and bias. First, I have exclusively considered literature written by and publicly available to the West. This "top-down" (or perhaps "West" to "East") approach inherently positions Iran as an impotent "failed state" through the lens of US foreign policy, each piece of source literature carrying such legacy in its analysis. History "happened" to Iran as both an implicit result of US influence and a direct result of an Iranian "incapacity" to "modernize." Iranians lacked agency over the outcome of their state. This position is furthered by a dearth of available contrary literature written from the Iranian perspective. Second, acting as a historian, I must consider my own biases. I have pursued this paper as objectively as consciously possible, but I cannot directly and actively account for any unconscious biases I may hold.

The "top-down" view of scant Iranian agency is contestable. This is most evident in (i) US reporting on and analysis of the Tudeh party and (ii) the means of the Revolution. As I have established, James' 1952 report thoroughly analyzes the construction, activities, and goals of the Tudeh party. The base unit of party construction was the "cell," comprised of Iranian citizens with shared occupations.[179] This yields two extrapolations. First, the Tudeh Party was a formidable enough opponent for the US to publish several reports monitoring its influence and demise. The US was consciously aware of the party's capacity for adverse agency. Second, the Tudeh were formidable insofar as they were grassroots. The Tudeh did not represent a certain identifiable political or social elite, but rather a sect of the Iranian public. A successful Tudeh revolt would constitute a generally "public" revolt rather than a unilateral, secular revolt. Thus, throughout the history of US influence in Iran, the US could not deny the *collective* agency of the Iranian public.

The Revolution was another simple, yet crucial demonstration of Iranian agency. As I have discussed, the revolution against the Shah was characterized by both nonviolent and violent resistance. The Shah, recognizing his defeat and perceived lack of US support, abdicated and left Iran in January 1979. Iran erected a new, democratic polity. This successful, quasi-violent revolution reflects ultimate, internalized agency. The Iranian public worked to shape Iran in its desired image, notwithstanding Western influence. Despite the West's efforts to modernize and liberalize Iran, it could not impose a certain species of government over the will of the Iranian people.

The issue of agency carries no predetermined conclusion. I do not aim to "give" agency "back" to Iran, nor intend the two foregoing examples of agency to represent the only instances

[179] "The Tudeh Party Today [Broad Outline of Scope and Activities of the Party]," 4.

of Iranian agency during my period of study. Rather, I simply aim to (i) acknowledge the literature's deprivation of agency, (ii) demonstrate that by looking closely, Iranian agency is fundamental to the history I aim to tell, and (iii) assert that agency's impact rests in acknowledgment and consideration. Even if bias is unavoidable and issues of agency are irremediable, they are essential components to a holistic interpretation of history and should not be denied.

Section 6: Policy Implications and Recommendations

This section will discuss the implications of US influence in Iran on American foreign policy. I will first review the impropriety of such influence, arguing that Iran was a preliminary "test case" of hybrid colonialism, guiding future "developmental" programs. Then I will discuss the difficulty of policy recommendations in this field, and offer three policy criteria, rather than distinct proposals, that must be improved upon for the future implementation of holistic foreign policy. The primary question I aim to answer is: What should the future of US aid-based policy look like?

The US's policy model of hybrid colonial influence in Iran was improper for three reasons. First, as explained by the political thesis of revolution, aid efforts towards "Western" modernization and liberalization were fundamentally incompatible with the sociopolitical norms of Iran. Iranians questioned the merits of American liberalism under authoritarianism, promoting distrust in the Shah's regime. The United States, motivated by unilateral economic interests, misunderstood how the effects of its influence would be interpreted in the context of Iranian life. The US's implementation language and methodology were discordant with the applicable Iranian historical and political contexts, yielding instability over "Western progress." Second, as the economic thesis holds, the US's characteristically "developmental" promotion of material

extraction was inequitable and unsustainable. The US promoted rapid Iranian industrialization to sustain Western oil extraction without due care for repercussions on the Iranian economy. Iran was reduced to a set of quantitative statistics matching American ideals for state success, warping the US-Iran relationship into one defined by norms of extraction instead of a genuine interest in Iranian welfare. Third, the US's pre-Revolutionary influence was colonially perceived. Through fiscal and programmatic support of the Shah across the 1970s, the US was implicitly and perceptively connected to the Shah's exercise of violence against Iranian citizens. This promoted revolutionary violence against the Shah and by proxy, the United States.

US influence in Iran was designed to guide future foreign policy initiatives. The United States viewed its "developmental" efforts in Iran as its first "test case" for the proposition that "developing nations can reach their goals in association with the West."[180] Colonialism had lost public support, and the US worked to find a method of influence to take its place that did not involve direct violence or military occupation. The US moved for a more discrete, non-militaristic, economically extractive model under the guise of institutional "reform." The initial success and subsequent "failure" of Iranian influence thus dictated the extent to which the "benefits" of extraction and political capital could be experienced without the "detriments" of revolution and negative public opinion. Despite its "mistakes," the United States continues to provide billions of dollars of both "developmental" and relief aid to hundreds of countries.[181]

Before suggesting the future of US "developmental" policy in the context of Iranian influence, it is necessary to provide a disclaimer to any such recommendations. It is inherently difficult to present holistic, unbiased, and agency-conscious policy recommendations without perpetuating the historically defining relationships of extraction and "developmentalism" that I

[180] "Johnson Administrative History of DOS, Vol. I, Chapter 4, Section B."
[181] "FA.Gov," accessed April 5, 2025, https://foreignassistance.gov/.

have analyzed. Through discussion of Iranian agency and Western bias, I have worked to crucially acknowledge how these limiting factors warp historical and policy perceptions. The following policy recommendations will not constitute formal policy "programs," but rather suggested improvements and guidelines to general policy determination and evaluation procedures.

I must first address the basic worth of US aid-based influence. It is reasonable that the most prosperous nations offer their resources to comparatively less prosperous nations when either (i) necessary and requested or (ii) unnecessary but requested. There are two crucial components to such conditions. First, the term "necessary" is defined as that without which a "condition cannot be fulfilled or to an inevitable consequence of certain events" and/or conditions.[182] Aid-based influence may be necessary to protect life or sovereignty in instances of natural disaster or war, for example. Second, the term "request" is defined as the "act or instance of asking for something."[183] A state may, for example, request resources, institutional aid, or military support from another state. The interplay between necessity and request is essential to the provision of aid-based influence. Influence should be given when requested and necessary, and should be provided case-by-case or in advance of future necessity when unnecessary but requested. Given the history and, in certain cases, importance of US-provided aid under both circumstances, it is unfeasible to suggest the US cease aid-based influence. Rather, it is appropriate and implementable to suggest improvements across three central components of aid-based influence: defining goals and success, mechanisms of action, and accountability.

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[182] "NECESSARY Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary," April 3, 2025, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/necessary.

[183] "REQUEST Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster," accessed April 9, 2025, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/request.

The determined goals and success of aid-based influence should be reasonably quantifiable. A common "Western" method of measuring policy is a system of cost-benefit analysis. The feasibility and success of a policy are tested by "weighing costs and benefits" and placing "efficiency" as the "measure of good policy."[184] Rational decision making is emphasized even in illogical situations. I agree that goals and success should be ideally quantifiable, but I assess that quantification and logic do not *causally* dictate good policy. Especially in the field of foreign aid, where issues of agency are inherent and context-specific knowledge is difficult to obtain, strictly relying on unilateral quantification can lead to policies that are maximally beneficial to the implementer instead of the recipient. Any future aid-based influence should promote context-specific knowledge as a necessary preliminary step to setting proper goals, in partnership with local actors. This requires a case-by-case expansion of research implementation language and methodology. With the right tools, holistic goals can be defined. Success should be measured consistently with such predetermined goals, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The receivers of a policy should be the primary gauge of its success.

Mechanisms of policy implementation follow from the determination of goals and success. New research methods and context-specific implementation language should be used cooperatively with the receivers of a policy to define successful methods of implementation. Importantly, policy mechanisms should be determined discretely instead of uniformly. While the US provides fiscal and programmatic support to over 180 countries, it should, where possible, evaluate each of its foreign engagements independently.[185]

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[184] Elizabeth Popp Berman, *Thinking Like an Economist: How Efficiency Replaced Equality in U.S. Public Policy* (Princeton University Press, 2022), 4–6.
[185] "FA.Gov."

US aid-based influence should include and encourage national and multinational organizations to implement systems of influential accountability. At the national level, the US Government Accountability Office ("GAO") already reports on certain aspects of US foreign aid, including the operations of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).[186] It is unclear, however, the extent to which the perspectives of policy receivers are considered in the measurement of policy. Future policy should work with the GAO and other applicable agencies to implement procedures for the direct inclusion of policy recipients in the assessment of effective foreign aid. This could notably include conducting regional interviews of affected citizens to assess (i) policy impact and (ii) suggestions for policy improvement. This would provide policymakers necessary qualitative feedback to supplement the attainment of quantitative goals.

Multinational organizations could similarly implement systems of policy receiver-based accountability. Independent evaluations of policy should be conducted, and member nations should use such evaluations as third-party markers of effective policy. In acknowledgement of and to shift the extractive narratives perpetuated by the West, multinational organizations should also broadly work to better include and amplify the voices of those nations subject to foreign "developmental" aid programs. Such amplification could work to develop a set of holistic international terms, norms, procedures, and systems of accountability for the provision of foreign aid.

Section 7: Conclusion

I have intentionally neglected a crucial vanishing point of the Revolution: the hostage crisis. This decision was made to maintain consistency with my historical period of interest. As

[186] "U.S. Government Accountability Office (U.S. GAO)," accessed March 5, 2024, https://www.gao.gov/.

anti-government protests increased across early 1978, the US embassy in Tehran became a target of frequent, anti-American demonstrations.[187] On February 14, 1979, a month after the Shah fled Iran, the embassy was briefly occupied and several Americans were killed. The embassy's staff was cut from 1400 to 70 while the US negotiated with both the official and provincial Iranian governments for the embassy's continued protection.[188] On November 4th, 1979, however, a group of ~3000 Iranians seized the embassy, taking 52 American staffers hostage.[189] President Carter pursued a responsive "policy of restraint" that put a "higher value" on the "lives of the hostages than on US retaliatory power."[190] He deployed a "spectrum of responses" ranging from "direct appeals, economic sanctions," foreign diplomat involvement, and a freeze of USD 1.973 billion in Iranian assets.[191] Carter aimed to demonstrate the breadth of potential American responses to Iran, resisting a military rescue mission until April 1980. The single attempted rescue mission was an objective failure. President Carter stated in an announcement given on April 25th, 1980, that "equipment failure in the rescue helicopters made it necessary to end the mission."[192] As the American team was withdrawing, "two…aircraft collided," killing eight of the crewmen.[193] It is widely reasoned that Carter's public admittance of responsibility for the failed mission foreshadowed his loss in the upcoming 1980 presidential election.[194]

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[187] "Iran Hostage Crisis | Definition, Summary, Causes, Significance, & Facts | Britannica," February 15, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-hostage-crisis.
[188] "Iran Hostage Crisis | Definition, Summary, Causes, Significance, & Facts | Britannica."
[189] There literature is contested as to the exact number of hostages. The number reasonably ranged from 52-63. See "Iran Hostage Crisis | Definition, Summary, Causes, Significance, & Facts | Britannica," February 15, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-hostage-crisis; Kratz, Jessie. "The Iran Hostage Crisis." *Pieces of History* (blog), November 29, 2021. https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2021/11/29/the-iran-hostage-crisis/, respectively.
[190] Jessie Kratz, "The Iran Hostage Crisis," *Pieces of History* (blog), November 29, 2021, pis.
[191] Kratz.
[192] President (1977-1981 : Carter). Speechwriter's Office. (1977 - 1981), *President Jimmy Carter's Annotated Statement on the Failed Rescue Mission Regarding the Hostages in Iran*, Records of the Speechwriter's Office, accessed February 24, 2025, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/593298.
[193] President (1977-1981 : Carter). Speechwriter's Office. (1977 - 1981).
[194] Kratz, "The Iran Hostage Crisis"; "Iran Hostage Crisis | Definition, Summary, Causes, Significance, & Facts | Britannica"; Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 579–98.

Minutes after the inauguration of President Reagan on January 20th, 1981, the hostages were released after 444 days in captivity.[195] The US gradually tapered its oil exports, ceasing to import Iranian oil since 1992.[196] The $1.973 billion in Iran assets remains frozen in the United States. The hostage crisis wholly damaged American political and military morale, and the US relationship with Iran steadily declined over the coming decades.[197]

The Iranian government progressively aligned with Khomeini through 1983. By June 1981, Khomeini's Islamic Republican Party had taken majority control of the "cabinet and parliament," executing former Shah-era government personnel and imposing social elements of Shi'i Islam.[198] Women were required to wear a head covering, and punishments "prescribed by Islamic law" were instated.[199] Anti-Western policies paralleled such policies. Western music and alcohol were banned, and a standard of "unrelenting hostility" towards the United States was standardized.[200] However, as the party achieved a political monopoly, it lost cohesion amongst its "ruling groups."[201] Political leaders fought over land reform, foreign policy, and personal supremacy. This allowed middle-class conservatives to gain political traction, resisting reforms central to Khomeini's regime. Such conservatives gained majority influence in 1983, emphasizing policies of political normalization and central religious control.[202]

There is suggestive evidence that the Iranian public did not receive the revolutionary "benefits" they desired. Most revolutionary Iranians wanted a "well-functioning, egalitarian

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[195] Fourteen hostages were released before January 1981, see "Iran Hostage Crisis | Definition, Summary, Causes, Significance, & Facts | Britannica," February 15, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/event/Iran-hostage-crisis.
[196] Kratz, "The Iran Hostage Crisis."
[197] Kratz; "Iran Hostage Crisis | Definition, Summary, Causes, Significance, & Facts | Britannica."
[198] Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 589.
[199] "Ruhollah Khomeini | Biography, Exile, Revolution, & Facts | Britannica."
[200] "Supreme Leader of Iran | Powers, How Chosen, & Difference from President | Britannica," February 21, 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/supreme-leader-of-Iran.
[201] Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," 589–90.
[202] Keddie, 589–91.

state" as promised by Khomeini.[203] What they received, however, was economic decline, strict Islamic laws, restrictions on women, "arbitrary trials and punishments," and a "scramble for wealth and power."[204] A series of small civil wars in protest of this post-revolutionary discontinuity followed Khomeini's accession, suggesting an imbalance of public opinion and government policy.[205]

As I discussed in the introduction and Section 5 of this paper, Western source literature implicates Western historical bias. The US's expensive overseas commitments can only "be sustained" if "American citizens support them" and believe they "understand the need for them."[206] As the US constructs historical reinterpretations of the past, it maintains a vested interest in unrepentance towards its foreign policy. Insofar as the US denies culpability in world affairs associated with its influence, it can persist in its foreign agenda. This yields canonical literature that views Iran as an "internally failed state." The Revolution was only marginally successful, and Iran descended into a state of conflicted despotism *by itself* and *because of itself.* This view, at a minimum unrefuted by the available literature, (i) crucially neglects Iranian agency post-revolution and (ii) reflects an American idea that admitting "failure" delegitimizes all future foreign policy initiatives. I admit that many Iranian citizens have disagreed, sometimes violently, with the direction of Iran under Khomeini (and others), but contend that such discontent was a direct result of the agency of the Iranian government, rather than as a consequence of historical American influence or an "inability" to self-govern. I further

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[203] Keddie, 597.
[204] Keddie, 597–98.
[205] Keddie, 589–99; Chowra Makaremi, "State Violence and Death Politics in Post-Revolutionary Iran," in *Destruction and Human Remains*, ed. Élisabeth Anstett and Jean-Marc Dreyfus, Disposal and Concealment in Genocide and Mass Violence (Manchester University Press, 2014), 183–203, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0s3n.12.
[206] Paul R. Pillar, "The Role of Villain: Iran and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 128, no. 2 (2013): 218.

extrapolate that the US's implicit bias contaminates its current and evolving relationship with Iran. The US cannot acknowledge its role in Iran's demeanor towards the West and thus places itself in opposition to it.[207]

Khomeini served as the Iranian "Leader" as set out by the 1979 Constitution until his death in mid-1989.[208] After a brief power struggle, Iranian President Al Khamenei assumed the Leadership. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, Khamenei ideologically conflicted with various "liberal" Iranian presidents, reportedly interfering in both the 2005 and 2009 presidential elections to ensure an agreeable presidency.[209] Khamenei still serves as the Leader of Iran after 35 years as its second-longest-serving head of state after the Pahlavi family.

The central focus of (i) the present US-Iran relationship and (ii) modern historical scholarship on Iran concerns Iran's nuclear capabilities. The US politically possesses an "extraordinary preoccupation" with Iran's potential to construct nuclear weapons, viewing the state as one of its greatest foreign threats.[210] This view is grounded bilaterally. First, as discussed above, the United States necessarily positions itself against Iran to avoid confrontation with its hybrid-colonial past. Iran is positioned as a "villain," broadly justifying US military and diplomatic action in the Middle East. Second, flowing from the first, the US forwards a distinct disinclination to see any "reasonable basis" for their "adversary's actions."[211] Despite consensus in the American intelligence community that Iran does not have any intention to build nuclear weapons, the US relies on a policy of presumption rather than discourse.[212] The US assumes that

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[207] Pillar, 211–20.
[208] The title "Leader" as set out by the 1979 Constitution is publicly referred to as "Supreme Leader;" see "Ruhollah Khomeini | Biography, Exile, Revolution, & Facts | Britannica."
[209] "Ruhollah Khomeini | Biography, Exile, Revolution, & Facts | Britannica."
[210] Pillar, "The Role of Villain," 211.
[211] Pillar, 219.
[212] Pillar, 213.

Iranian leaders are religious radicals who "do not think like Westerners" and who "cannot be deterred" by the prospect of military retaliation.[213] The US often views Iran's ambitions as "more negative" and "farther reaching" than they are, and underestimates Iran's capacity for compromise.[214] Yet Iran has demonstrated that it responds to foreign pressure with the same weighing of costs and benefits as other leaders, and has historically shown interest in the capacity of nuclear power rather than weapons. This rhetoric of Western assumption defines the present US-Iran political relationship and will affect future historical research. Western historians must combat their own and the literature's implicit biases to construct accurate, holistic interpretations.

This paper has argued that the evolution of US political and aid-based influence in Iran represents an intentional, yet "failed" hybrid-colonial test case of how the "benefits" of "developmental" material extraction and modernizing *de jure* political power for one party could be experienced without the "detriments" of colonial revolution and negative public opinion. US influence in Iran began in 1946 following diverging Soviet and British military occupation in 1941. Early DOS and CIA actors in Iran viewed the state as semi-feudal and wholly unequipped to "defend itself" against Soviet communist control. To differentiate itself from perceptively colonial British influence, the US implemented a bilateral influence strategy. First, the US provided military and infrastructural aid to bolster the domestic security of Iranian political and economic interests, implicitly against communism. Second, the US carefully scrutinized the Iranian communist Tudeh party to sustain subjective political control. By understanding the aims of the Tudeh, the US could antithetically match its influence efforts to maintain governmental

[213] Pillar, 213.
[214] Pillar, 219.

favoritism. This first phase of influence was characteristically non-colonial. The US did not construct colonies, deploy its military, or utilize hegemonic methods of violence.

By the turn of the half-century, US influence shifted to serve "developmental" ideals of institutional modernization and material extraction. The US recognized that it could not continue aid programs in the perpetual service of Iranian sovereignty. Rather, it desired a solidified, modern, Westernized, morally responsible, and self-sustaining state that naturally and independently served the interests of the West. By 1956, the US provided primarily economic and educational support to Iran, using GDP per capita, population growth rates, urbanization rates, and literacy rates as markers for success. The 1970s oil boom crystallized the US's extractionary relationship with Iran. Iranian industrialization and infrastructure expenditures doubled, paralleling a doubling in American imports of Iranian oil. Such economic overvaluation yielded double-digit inflation, under-prioritization of agriculture, and the onset of a national deficit. This second phase of American influence was characteristically "developmental." The US pursued Iranian modernization insofar as it favored the West, perpetuating a holistically extractive relationship. The US acted without repercussive responsibility.

Throughout both phases of influence, the US carefully managed its perception. Aware of the "colonial" connotations of the British, the US maintained a meticulously crafted, distanced, and implicit policy of influence. It desired a positive, nationalistic "American" perception devoid of developed "Western" connotations. Yet this policy was unintentionally colonial. As colonizers create and maintain distinct zones of influence between themselves and the colonized, the US actively pushed for a distinct positive, but foreign perception, creating *ideological* zones of influence between Americans and Iranians.

The causes of the 1979 Revolution were multivariate. Religious fundamentalists, the urban poor, intellectuals, and other opponents of the Shah fused into a unique cohort against monarchal government and in favor of Khomeini's species of Islamic republic. The process of the following revolution was distinctly pseudo-colonial. Both revolutionaries and the Iranian government employed methods of violence to control and influence the other. The US assumed the role of a "distant colonizer" through its public support of the Shah against the Iranian public, eliciting a distinct sense of external opposition to the Revolution. The resulting post-revolutionary government aligned against the West, yet meticulously kept Western institutions of government and principles of knowledge collection. Such scrutiny implies an intentional, rather than reactionary, consideration of Western modernity and anti-Westernism. Iran had the capacity for modernity and democratic self-governance devoid of Western influence.

The US's Iranian influence agenda was hybrid-colonial. Phase One of US influence was characteristically non-colonial, characterized by military and infrastructural aid as a means to protect Iranian sovereignty. This policy shifted across Phase Two into definitional "developmentalism," the US-Iran relationship characterized by material extraction and imposition of Western modernity and institutions. Simultaneously, the US pursued an unintentionally colonial policy of perception control, desiring a distinct, positive conception of "Americans." Such a policy fuses with a semi-violent, semi-decolonial revolution to yield a "failed" test case of hybrid colonialism. Iran maintained post-revolutionary sentiments against the West and developed institutions as it preferred. This process of development, revolution, acceptance, and partial rejection is, in fact, neither completely characteristic of colonialism nor "development." It is *both.*

The US's hybrid colonial model suggests modifications to the criteria of future foreign policy. US influence in Iran was unsustainable, utilizing implementation language and methodology dissonant with Iranian historical and political contexts. This fused with colonial pre-revolutionary perceptions and an emphasis on material extraction, yielding instability over "Western progress." The US, despite the failure of its Iranian "test case," continues to contribute billions of dollars in foreign aid to hundreds of countries. It is unfeasible to suggest that the US cease its aid-based influence efforts. Rather, I suggest that all future US aid-based influence efforts: (i) maintain reasonably quantifiable goals and metrics for success, emphasizing context-specific knowledge and the development of bespoke implementation language and methodologies; (ii) discretely infuse such knowledge and language into mechanisms of policy action; and (iii) consider the use of existing local and multinational organizations to maintain accountability and independently assess policy success.

The directions of future research are numerous. Within the existing canonical literature, potential expansions include analysis of the US's direct involvement, if any, in the Revolution. The literature provides a few unquantified claims of US support of the Shah throughout the Revolution. Exploration of existing databases of declassified CIA and DOS documents may provide greater insight into how the US thought about its influential role in Iran despite the declining popularity of the monarchical government. The legitimacy of the communication between Khomeini and President Kennedy, as reported by the BBC, is of particular interest to this history. Was there communication between the US and Khomeini? Did the US support Khomeini? Did the US believe it could retain its influence post-revolution? The answers to these questions will provide valuable insight into (i) the degree of US knowledge of Iran's

revolutionary potential and (ii) any role the US played in encouraging, or resisting, revolutionary action.

Another general expansion includes collaboration with Iranian historians to include Iranian source literature. There are three challenges to this species of analysis: (i) the Revolution "dislocated or obliterated" much of the Iranian source material, "[reshaping]" collective historical memory, (ii) governments "can interfere" with research, and (iii) the Iranian historical community may not be universally receptive to American intellectual inquiry.[215] Thus, even with unlimited and cooperative access to existing Iranian materials, discerning relevant, unbiased materials will be difficult. Many Western historians have called for the construction of new "methodologies" to combat these challenges.[216] A poignant solution includes relying on oral histories through interviews rather than elusive source literature. This solution may be more accessible but is similarly challenged by the reshaping of Iranian post-revolutionary collective history. Any such historical efforts, notwithstanding their impediments, work to remedy the internet issue of bias in Western historical analysis and may provide further insight into methods of foreign policy reform.[217]

I argue this paper provides three primary contributions to the existing literature. First, it popularizes the discussion of the US as a modern hybrid-colonial world power. Scant literature exists evaluating the implications of the US Cold War agenda within the context of colonial and "developmental" theory. With this first-mover advantage, I aim to place the United States within the historical colonial continuum, setting the discussion of bias and agency as historical standards of analysis. Second, my work acknowledges the historical implications of early US

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[215] Cyrus Schayegh, "'Seeing Like a State': An Essay on the Historiography of Modern Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 1 (2010): 48.
[216] Schayegh, 48.
[217] Schayegh, 48–49.

Cold War foreign policy. While I cannot hope to holistically speak on behalf of the US historical or political community, I maintain that the first step to changing and understanding the future of foreign policy is acknowledging and accepting its implications. Third, my work makes clear the evolution of US policy thinking in the Middle Eastern theater of the Cold War. Iran was more than a simple US test case of colonial and "developmental" influence. It was the beginning of a new world order.

Appendix A: Gale Database Queries

Number	Search Query	Key Words	Filter Modifications
1	“Iranian Revolution”	Iran; Revolution	None
2	Iran and Revolution	Iran; Revolution	None
3	Iran and Development	Iran; Development	None
4	“Iranian Development”	Iran; Development	Date restriction: 1940-1980
5	Iran or Iran*	Iran	Date restriction: 1950-1975
6	Iran and (colonial and colonialism)	Iran; Colonialism	Date restriction: 1940-1955
7	“Iranain economy”	Iran; Economy	None
8	Iran and economy	Iran; Economy	Date restriction: 1950-1974
9	Iran and econom*	Iran; Economy	Date restriction: 1950-1975
10	Iran and oil	Iran; Oil	Date restriction: 1965-1974
11	Iran and education	Iran; Education	Date restriction: 1945-1965
12	Iran and library	Iran; Library	Date restriction: 1975-1981
13	“Iranian library”	Iran; Library	Date restriction: 1950-1980
14	Iran and program*	Iran; Program	Date restriction: 1960-1980
15	Iran and sovereignty	Iran; Sovereignty	Date restriction: 1945-1960
16	Iran and Soviet*	Iran; Soviet	Date restriction: 1945-1960
17	Iran and USSR	Iran; USSR	Date restriction: 1945-1960
18	Iran and communis*	Iran; Comunism	Date restriction: 1945-1980
19	Iran and (Britain or British)	Iran; Britain	None
20	British and occupation	British; Occupation	Date restriction: 1940-1955
21	British and (colonialism or colonial)	British; Colonialism	Date restriction: 1940-1955

22	Tudeh Party	Tudeh	None
23	“Tudeh Party” and “Tudeh”	Tudeh Party	Date restriction: 1945-1965
24	CIA and Iran	CIA; Iran	Date restriction: 1940-1980
25	State and Department and Iran	State Department; Iran	Date restriction: 1940-1980
26	“Department of State” and Iran	Department of State; Iran	Date restriction: 1940-1980
27	“Central Intelligence Agency” and Iran	Central Intelligence Agency; Iran	Date restriction: 1940-1980
28	Johnson and Iran	Johnson; Iran	Date restriction: 1963-1970
29	Khomeini and Iran	Khomeini; Iran	Date restriction: 1970-1985
30	Khomeini and Kennedy	Khomeini; Kennedy	Date restriction: 1978-1981

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