

American and British Imperialism and the 1953 Iran Coup

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On June 15, 2017, The State Department released a long-awaited updated volume of declassified U.S. government documents on the 1953 coup d'état in Iran entitled "Operation TRAPJAX."²⁷¹ In 1989, the State Department released the official record of the coup, but it did not make a single reference to American or British actions in connection with the event.²⁷² Therefore the 2017 publication represents decades of internal debates and public controversy concerning the role of American and British intelligence in the ousting of Iran's Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh. The coup had long-lasting effects on Iran's economic and political future, and according to Kerman and Wood, the event did more damage to Iran than any singular event in its long history.²⁷³ There has been a widespread debate ever since the coup on whether or not the event was a spontaneous uprising by the Iranian people to overthrow the controversial prime minister or whether American and British forces were the main actors motivated by their self-interest.²⁷⁴ What was the extent of American and British intervention in the coup? This paper will argue that the United States and Britain were the leading figures behind the 1953 coup due to their economic and political imperial motivations. To begin, the paper will review the pertinent literature on the topic, first on the broader debate on modern-day imperialism, and secondly on the various perspectives on the coup. Next, the paper will explore Lenin's theory of Imperialism. Afterwards, the paper will discuss the topic through a broad historical lens, taking into account the positions of the U.S and Britain in the years leading up to the coup.²⁷⁵ Subsequently, the paper will look at how the U.S and British forces utilized propaganda and military force to overthrow

²⁷¹ Byrne, Malcolm. "Iran 1953: State Department Finally Releases Updated Official History of Mosaddeq Coup." In *National Security Archive Briefing Book No. 598*, 2017.

²⁷² Byrne, "Updated Official History of Mosaddeq Coup."

²⁷³ Cited in Anderson, Kira C. "Whitewashing the Shah: Racial Liberalism and U.S. Foreign Policy during the 1953 Coup of Iran." In *Dissertations Publishing*, 2016, 29.

²⁷⁴ Kinzer, Stephen. "All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror." *J. Wiley & Sons*, Hoboken, N.J, 2003, 124.

²⁷⁵ McMurdo, Torey L. "The Economics of Overthrow: The United States, Britain, and the Hidden Justification of Operation TPAJAX." In *Studies in Intelligence*, vol. 56, no.2, 2012, pp.15-26, 23.

Mossadegh. Finally, the paper will examine the current instability in the region that has resulted from the coup.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been competing views on whether or not imperialism is a modern phenomenon. Hobson made the first systematic critique of contemporary imperialism in his 1902 book *Imperialism: A Study*, which gives a comprehensive description of the significant economic and political features of imperialism. According to Hobson, the profitable employment of surplus financial resources is at the basis of the drive to imperialism.²⁷⁶ Additionally, banks and exporting companies were the main actors in promoting imperialism and foreign investment because these large and wealthy firms were the primary benefactors.²⁷⁷ Hobson's foundational book was later utilized by Kautsky in his 1912 book *Gold, Paper Currency and Commodity*. Kautsky argued that it was wrong to identify all the phenomena of present-day capitalism as imperialism.²⁷⁸ Kautsky claimed that imperial actions are a result of particular foreign policy utilized by few countries.²⁷⁹ Lenin in response wrote a comprehensive Marxist analysis in 1917 entitled *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Lenin argued that imperialism was not only a change in foreign policy of the government of the advanced countries but as a change in the nature of capitalist relations of production.²⁸⁰ Lenin's perspective on imperialism will be further discussed below, in direct reference to the British and American motivations for orchestrating the coup.

Addressing specifically the Iranian coup, several scholars have explored the potential role of American and British intelligence.²⁸¹ For example, Abrahamian sees the coup as firmly located inside the "conflict between imperialism and nationalism, between developed industrial economies and underdeveloped countries dependent on exporting raw materials," in this case, oil.²⁸² In Abrahamian's book *The Coup* published in 2013, he paints a picture of Mossadegh as a well-meaning, naive man, who was out of his depth against the American and British forces against him.²⁸³ In addition scholars such as Kinzer in his book *All the Shah's Men* published in 2003 asserts

²⁷⁶ Hobson, John "Chapter 1: The Measure of Imperialism." In *Imperialism, a Study*. J. Pott & Company, New York, 1902, pp. 15-29, 26.

²⁷⁷ Hobson, "The Measure of Imperialism," 25.

²⁷⁸ Smyth, Gareth. "Five Books on the Legacy of the 1953 Coup in Iran." In *The Guardian*, 2015.

²⁷⁹ Smyth, "The Legacy of the 1953 Coup in Iran."

²⁸⁰ Lenin, Vladimir. "Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism." In *Resistance Books*, Newtown, 1999, 8.

²⁸¹ Smyth, "The Legacy of the 1953 Coup in Iran."

²⁸² Abrahamian, Ervand. "The 1953 Coup in Iran." In *Science & Society*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2001, pp. 182-215, 189.

²⁸³ Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 189.

that the coup acted as a trigger of Middle Eastern terror.²⁸⁴ Kinzer states that the U.S and Britain made a terrible mistake toppling a leader who shared their values, as Mossadegh was the first liberal leader of the Middle East, who believed in secular government and the rule of law as the highest authority.²⁸⁵ Kinzer argues that the intervention has caused a rise of national sovereignty in the form of anti-Americanism.²⁸⁶ The paper will further address Kinzer's argument when analyzing the modern repercussions of further insecurity in the region.

Others, however, argue the roots of the clash of 1953 are found in internal contradictions against the ideals of Mossadegh. For example, Bayandor maintains the coup had an "indigenous character."²⁸⁷ Bayandor's *The Fall of Mossadegh: August 1953* published in 2012, argues that the current narrative on the 1953 coup has been riddled with foreign conspiracy theories.²⁸⁸ Bayandor insists that many Iranians actively opposed the secular, liberal nationalism of Mossadegh and finished completing the coup when CIA efforts failed on August 15, 1953.²⁸⁹ Furthermore, narratives refuting outside involvement persist in modern day Iran, as reflected by one of the top members of the current ruling elite, Kashani, who has publicly denied British and American involvement.²⁹⁰ Kashani asserts Mossadegh himself was following British plans and carrying out their dictates to undermine the role of the monarchy and influential religious leaders, such as the Shia clerics until the Iranian people bravely revolted to take back control of their country.²⁹¹ My argument aligns with scholars such as Abrahamian, who insist the imperial actions of America and Britain played the main role in Iran's coup.

LENIN'S THEORY OF IMPERIALISM

To highlight the central role of American and British intervention in the 1953 Iranian coup, I will assess the historical, political, and economic context within the theoretical lens of Lenin's views on imperialism as stated in his 1917 book *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

²⁸⁴ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 3.

²⁸⁵ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

²⁸⁶ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

²⁸⁷ Bayandor, Darioush. "The Fall of Mosaddeq, August 1953: Institutional Narratives, Professor Mark Gasiorowski and My Study." In *Iranian Studies*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2012, pp. 679-691, 679.

²⁸⁸ Bayandor, "The Fall of Mosaddeq," 679.

²⁸⁹ Bayandor, "The Fall of Mosaddeq," 679.

²⁹⁰ Kazemzadeh, Masoud. "Review Essay All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror." In *Middle East Policy* vol. 11, no. 4, 2004. Pp. 122-129, 124.

²⁹¹ Kazemzadeh, "An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," 123.

Lenin argued that imperialism was the highest and last stage in the development of capitalism.²⁹² Capitalism has grown into a world system of colonial oppression and financial control for the overwhelming majority of the people of the world by a handful of “advanced” countries.²⁹³ Lenin builds off of a Marxist economic framework, which asserts that the spread of influence is necessary to secure foreign markets as capitalism needs to constantly expand in order to sustain itself.²⁹⁴ Under capitalism, the home market is inevitably bound up with the foreign markets and as the export of capital increases, the foreign and colonial connections and “spheres of influence” expand in all ways.²⁹⁵ Lenin insists that the gains are then shared between two or three world powers, specifically pointing to America, Great Britain, and Japan.²⁹⁶ State power within each of the advanced capitalist countries is then used to further the interests of the finance capitalists of its own country on the world market.²⁹⁷ Lenin’s idea that imperial domination is a result of the direct growth of capitalism furthers my argument that as capitalist superpowers, Britain and America’s actions in the coup were driven by imperial motivations to extend their spheres of influence.²⁹⁸

In addition, there are modern-day academics that agree with Lenin’s initial speculations surrounding imperialism. For example, Gowan built off Lenin’s theory by categorizing the United States as a “business democracy.”²⁹⁹ Similarly, Monbiot has contended that corporate interests have captured the entire democratic process in Britain.³⁰⁰ Gowan asserts that the American form of state organization throughout the twentieth-century represents a society that celebrates and accepts the worldview and values of the business class, which then, in turn, gives the business class extraordinary sway over policy formation.³⁰¹ Therefore, business groups directly control the American party system and the other institutions of the American state in a practically unmediated way.³⁰² At the beginning of this process, the people of the most advanced and most expansionist capitalist powers were often quite straightforward about the use of state power to defend and

²⁹² Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 9.

²⁹³ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 10.

²⁹⁴ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 10.

²⁹⁵ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 10.

²⁹⁶ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 10.

²⁹⁷ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 9.

²⁹⁸ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 14.

²⁹⁹ Gowan, Peter. “Triumphing Toward International Disaster: The Impasse in American Grand Strategy.” In *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2004, pp. 3-36, 4.

³⁰⁰ Monbiot, George. “It’s Business That Really Rules us Now.” In *The Guardian*, 2013.

³⁰¹ Gowan, “Triumphing Toward International Disaster,” 4.

³⁰² Gowan, “Triumphing Toward International Disaster,” 4.

promote these interests.³⁰³ In 1907 Woodrow Wilson, who was to become US president in 1912 declared: “Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process.”³⁰⁴ Therefore the imperial motivations of Britain and America have been well documented and widely established.

BRITISH AND AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

By exploring the British economic condition in 1953, it is evident how British Imperial actions in Iran were necessary to sustain Britain’s global economic position. The issues that arose in Iran in the early 1950s stemmed from disagreements between the private British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) and the Iranian government.³⁰⁵ Relations between the company and Tehran, the capital of Iran, were dictated by the 1933 contract between the Iranian government and AIOC and resulted in a lopsided revenue split among the parties.³⁰⁶ For example in 1950, if Iran had controlled its own oil revenues, the country would have earned 275 million euros, which today would represent just over 8 billion U.S dollars.³⁰⁷ However, Iran only received 13% of the overall revenue.³⁰⁸ This disparity prompted nationalists, such as Mossadegh to advocate taking control of Iran’s oil production, which resulted in Mossadegh gaining tremendous popularity throughout Iran.³⁰⁹ Despite British opposition, in 1951 the Majlis, Iran’s parliamentary body, under the leadership of Mossadegh voted to nationalize Iran’s oil industry.³¹⁰ Considering Iran produced 76% of the AIOC’s total output that year, control of Iran’s oil was seen as a vital source of revenue Britain couldn’t afford to lose.³¹¹

While on the surface the United Kingdom faced an immediate loss of revenue with the nationalization of Iran’s oil, its more significant concern was a weakening British economy throughout the post World War II period.³¹² With the conclusion of the war, Britain was slow to readjust from wartime production back to a standard peacetime economy.³¹³ For example, at the end of the war, nearly 55 % of Britain’s gross domestic product was derived from production

³⁰³ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 13.

³⁰⁴ Lenin, “Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” 13.

³⁰⁵ McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 16.

³⁰⁶ McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 16.

³⁰⁷ McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 13.

³⁰⁸ McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 13.

³⁰⁹ Kinzer, “All the Shah's Men,” 53.

³¹⁰ Anderson, “Whitewashing the Shah,” 20.

³¹¹ McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 17.

³¹² McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 16.

³¹³ McMurdo, “The Economics of Overthrow,” 16.

associated with war.³¹⁴ As a result, Britain was unable to immediately produce and export goods to gain currency to pay for imports and to pay back its large war loans.³¹⁵ Finances were also short because Britain had been reluctant to scale back spending to maintain its international empire.³¹⁶ In addition, the sudden end of the Lend-Lease agreement in 1941 had a considerable impact on Britain's economy.³¹⁷ The Lend-Lease agreement consisted of the United States providing its wartime allies including the United Kingdom, Soviet Union, China, and France, with war materials and supplies.³¹⁸ Britain received an estimated 31.4 billion dollars in wartime shipments, the most of any country listed under the agreement.³¹⁹ When Lend-Lease was abruptly cancelled, Britain was virtually bankrupt and still in need of financial assistance.³²⁰ Furthermore, in the negotiation of the Anglo-American Loan Agreement that followed the end of Lend-Lease, Washington used its newfound economic power to pressure Britain into agreeing to the Bretton Woods system in 1944.³²¹ The Bretton Woods system ensured that the dollar would become the larger reserve currency rather than the pound, which resulted in Britain losing its ability to cheaply purchase imports and borrow across borders.³²² The relatively undamaged U.S economy was much better equipped to take advantage of freer trade and convertible currency regimes than Britain.³²³ Britain's economic situation in 1953 was desperate, causing an increased reluctance to give up control of Iran's oil production.³²⁴

In contrast to the United Kingdom, the United States had little stake, economic or political, in Iran until it came to be seen as a key in the West's Cold War competition with the Soviet Union.³²⁵ It was argued that if Iran sided with the Soviet Union, it would open the doors to the spread of communism throughout the Middle East.³²⁶ Britain's Attlee and subsequent Churchill governments, therefore, worked to emphasize this vulnerability to Washington, which was

³¹⁴ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 17.

³¹⁵ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 17.

³¹⁶ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 20.

³¹⁷ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 20.

³¹⁸ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 20.

³¹⁹ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 20.

³²⁰ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 20.

³²¹ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 19.

³²² McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 19.

³²³ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 16.

³²⁴ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 15.

³²⁵ Anderson, "Whitewashing the Shah," 20.

³²⁶ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 15.

increasingly concerned about Soviet expansion.³²⁷ The British urged American involvement for quite some time, due to the threat of communism that Mossadegh brought and the threat to its financial interests.³²⁸ However, the U.S president Harry Truman resisted considering Mossadegh was popular with the American public for his democratic rhetoric and his glamorous lifestyle.³²⁹ The U.S image in Iran was also extremely positive due to lack of American colonial enterprises and to Woodrow Wilson's support for the rights of colonized nations.³³⁰ In fact, Mossadegh was named *Time Magazine's* "Man of the Year" in 1951.³³¹ Eisenhower, who entered office in 1952, had a different response to Britain's approach.³³² Abiding by his famous campaign promise to rid the world of "communism, Korea and corruption," Eisenhower decided to try to eliminate communism's role in the Middle East by agreeing to join the British attempt to forcibly remove Mossadegh from power.³³³ For example, the Secretary of State and CIA director at the time both believed that "any country not decisively allied with the United States was a potential enemy," and Iran, with its oil reserves, shared border with the Soviet Union, nationalist Prime Minister, active communist party, and political neutrality was expected to fall to communism without intervention.³³⁴ Therefore, the United States had its motives for maintaining its sphere of political influence over Iran to put in place a leader who favoured the United States' brand of capitalism.

1953 IRAN COUP, PREPARATIONS AND RESULTS

In the months leading up to the coup, American and British intelligence led an intense propaganda campaign, relying on psychological-political warfare designed to further weaken support for the Mossadegh government.³³⁵ The release of the CIA's TAPJAX declassified documents revealed detailed plans for propaganda in Iran.³³⁶ These overt and covert actions involved portraying the government as favouring communism, threatening Islam, creating public disorder, giving power to untrustworthy politicians, and deliberately leading the country to

³²⁷ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 23.

³²⁸ Anderson, "Whitewashing the Shah," 20.

³²⁹ Anderson, "Whitewashing the Shah," 20.

³³⁰ Kazemzadeh, "An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," 124.

³³¹ Anderson, "Whitewashing the Shah," 20.

³³² Anderson, "Whitewashing the Shah," 20.

³³³ McMurdo, "The Economics of Overthrow," 23.

³³⁴ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 131.

³³⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954, Volume X, Iran, 1951–1954*, eds. Carl N. Raether and Charles S. Sampson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), Document 7, 47.

³³⁶ *Foreign Relations of the U.S., "Iran, 1951–1954,"* 47.

economic disorder.³³⁷ For example, the combined wealth of the United States and Britain were used to bribe mosques, religious leaders, and mobs to portray Mossadegh in a negative light.³³⁸ Specifically, one of their goals was to provide increased subsidization for selected Iranian newspapers that ran CIA backed articles.³³⁹ This subsidization proved so effective that one propagandist, Richard Cottam, claimed that by 1952 80% of newspapers inside of Tehran were being bribed by the CIA.³⁴⁰ In addition, the CIA paid a great amount of money to the Toilers party to stop supporting Mossadegh.³⁴¹ Therefore, the CIA influenced Iranian domestic politics through propaganda as a method of political warfare to further their own anti-communism agenda.

Furthermore, the destabilizing campaign was not restricted to propaganda activities.³⁴² Weapons were dropped quietly to the paid off tribes and armed gangs, providing “amenable” groups with money, arms, materials, food, and personnel.³⁴³ For example, National Intelligence Estimate shows that about 10- 20 million U.S dollars were added to the accounts of participants in the overthrow of Mossadegh.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, the declassified documents confirm that the CIA was planning to organize indigenous resistance groups in an attempt to establish a government with a pro-western alignment.³⁴⁵ Therefore there is a body of evidence to show that the British and American forces planned to take active steps to ensure weakened support for Mossadegh through bribing influential figures and the dissemination of false information.

The first coup attempt failed on Saturday, August 15, 1953.³⁴⁶ On that day, CIA headquarters ordered Kermit Roosevelt, the senior CIA officer on the ground in Iran, to return to the U.S, but against orders he remained and organized a second coup on Wednesday, August 19, 1953.³⁴⁷ Roosevelt was able to use the U.S ambassador in Tehran, Loy Henderson, to deceive Mossadegh into ordering the people to stay home and calling in the armed forces to bring calm to the streets.³⁴⁸ Having secretly organized paid mobs and having already secured the support of high

³³⁷ Foreign Relations of the U.S, “Iran, 1951–1954,” 3.

³³⁸ Foreign Relations of the U.S, “Iran, 1951–1954,” 30.

³³⁹ Foreign Relations of the U.S, “Iran, 1951–1954,” 47.

³⁴⁰ Kinzer, “All the Shah’s Men,” 131.

³⁴¹ Anderson, “Whitewashing the Shah,” 21.

³⁴² Foreign Relations of the U.S, “Iran, 1951–1954,” 23.

³⁴³ Foreign Relations of the U.S, “Iran, 1951–1954,” 23.

³⁴⁴ Anderson, “Whitewashing the Shah,” 20.

³⁴⁵ Foreign Relations of the U.S, “Iran, 1951–1954,” 48.

³⁴⁶ Kazemzadeh, “An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror,” 125.

³⁴⁷ Anderson, “Whitewashing the Shah,” 26.

³⁴⁸ Anderson, “Whitewashing the Shah,” 26.

ranking Shia clerics and the radical group Fadaian Islam, who brought their followers into the streets, Roosevelt then had one group of military officers attack Mossadegh's home and another take over the Tehran radio station.³⁴⁹ With the Shah's endorsement, General Fazlollah Zahedi assumed the position of prime minister and Mossadegh was placed under house arrest.³⁵⁰

The benefits received by the United States and Britain after the coup further points to the likelihood of their significant role. Notably, the coup launched the denationalization of Iran's oil industry.³⁵¹ In theory, the National Iranian Oil Company remained in charge, but in reality, a consortium gained full control over management, refining, production, and distribution of Iran's oil.³⁵² In this consortium, 40% of controlling shares went to the AIOC, which was renamed British Petroleum and 14% went to Royal Shell, therefore giving the majority vote to the British.³⁵³ Also, 40% of the shares went to a group of American firms and the remaining 6% of shares went to the French State Company.³⁵⁴ The consortium gave only 50% of its profits to Iran.³⁵⁵ In addition, Britain demanded Iran pay them 25 million pounds over a period of ten years as compensation.³⁵⁶ After the coup, the U.S. was regarded as the engineer and instructor of the dictatorial regime of Iran, which slowly became more under the control of the King, Reza Shah Pahlavi, rather than the prime minister.³⁵⁷ Iran's educated class believed that Western imperialism was behind every decision in the country, considering the Shah's interests were aligned with the free market economic and anti-communist interests of the United States and Britain.³⁵⁸ From 1953-1963, Iran entered a "dependent relationship" with the United States, and as a result, the country became extremely vulnerable to the power and pressure exerted by Washington D.C.³⁵⁹ As time went on, the Shah limited the power of the Majlis and established absolute authority in Iran.³⁶⁰ Meanwhile, the U.S. aided the Shah's regime through economic and military means as the Shah continued to

³⁴⁹ Kazemzadeh, "An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," 125.

³⁵⁰ Kazemzadeh, "An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," 125.

³⁵¹ Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 184.

³⁵² Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 184.

³⁵³ Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 211.

³⁵⁴ Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 211.

³⁵⁵ Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran," 211.

³⁵⁶ Pashai, Homira. "For the Sake of Oil, for the Sake of Prestige Or for the Sake of Power: Did Cooperation among the Governments of the United States and Great Britain Contribute to the 1953 Coup of Iran?" *Dissertations Publishing*, 2011, 121.

³⁵⁷ Pashai, "For the Sake of Oil," 125.

³⁵⁸ Pashai, "For the Sake of Oil," 123.

³⁵⁹ Pashai, "For the Sake of Oil," 124.

³⁶⁰ Pashai, "For the Sake of Oil," 124.

gain power through fear, intimidation, and violence.³⁶¹ As a result, the Iranian public generally became distrusting and perceived the Shah's regime as a domestic instrument of American imperialism.³⁶²

MODERN REPERCUSSIONS

Kinzer asserts that the coup destroyed Iranian democracy and brought to power an authoritarian regime, which then started a domino effect throughout the region.³⁶³ The results include the destabilization and increased Islamic militancy, which are still being felt worldwide today.³⁶⁴ As the Shah gained more power, he repressed the democratic political process and therefore left the field open to right-wing Islamic fundamentalists who, in 1979, succeeded in overthrowing the Shah and establishing the first contemporary Islamist government.³⁶⁵ Moreover, the Iranian revolutionaries assisted other Islamic groups such as Lebanon's Hezbollah and Hamas.³⁶⁶ In addition, the Shah's success in Iran provided a model for Sunni fundamentalists around the Islamic world, including Osama Bin Laden.³⁶⁷ Kinzer argues that, had the U.S not overthrown Mossadegh, Iran would have consolidated its newfound democracy and in turn prevented the success of Islamic fundamentalism.³⁶⁸ Kinzer notes that operation TRAPJAX, "taught tyrants and aspiring tyrants that the worlds most powerful governments were willing to tolerate limitless oppression as long as oppressive regimes were friendly to the west and to western oil companies."³⁶⁹ Therefore the actions of the American and British forces in the 1953 Iran coup sparked further instability and Islamic nationalism in the region.

In sum, this paper has argued that the United States and Britain were the leading powers behind the 1953 coup d'état in Iran due to their imperial economic and political motivations. Through a Leninist imperial lens, this paper has explored the economic and political context in order to showcase the various motives of Britain and the U.S. In addition, with the newfound evidence outlining the multiple forms propaganda planned by the CIA shows their intentions to establish a pro-western government. While the U.S government succeeded for a long time in

³⁶¹ Pashai, "For the Sake of Oil," 124.

³⁶² Pashai, "For the Sake of Oil," 124.

³⁶³ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

³⁶⁴ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

³⁶⁵ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

³⁶⁶ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

³⁶⁷ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

³⁶⁸ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 130.

³⁶⁹ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 204.

covering up its role, it was not until March 2000 that for the first time an American official acknowledged the U.S role, and Britain has still not formally admitted to being part of the coup.³⁷⁰ The positive outcomes for both the U.S and Britain also provide a clearer picture of their considerable role in the intervention. In addition, scholars have argued that the coup has resulted in elevated insecurity and an uprising in Islamic militancy in the surrounding regions.³⁷¹ A Leninist perspective argues that imperial motivations of the U.S and Britain will continue in order to sustain their level of economic power. It is necessary to learn from the Iranian coup and to be aware of the consequences of foreign interventions moving forward.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Kazemzadeh, "An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," 126.

³⁷¹ Kinzer, "All the Shah's Men," 22.

³⁷² Kazemzadeh, "An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," 127.

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