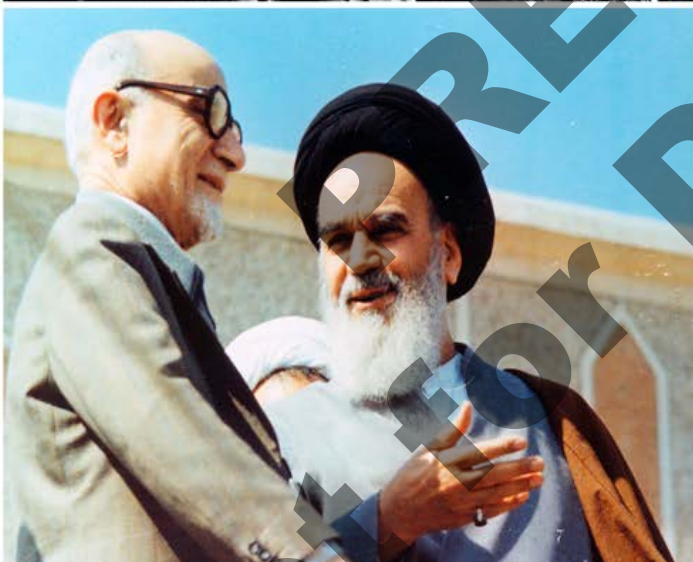


The Iranian Revolution



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PREVIEW
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The End of an Era

On January 16, 1979, the shah [king] of Iran boarded a plane and left the country that he had ruled for thirty-eight years. The shah claimed he was going on an extended vacation. Iran was in the midst of a revolution and in truth, the shah knew his days as Iran's monarch were over. The fact that he carried a container of Iranian soil in his pocket suggested that he knew he would never return. At the time of his departure, most Iranians saw the shah as a corrupt and repressive leader who was a puppet of the United States.

Iranians were ready to replace the unjust and corrupt monarchy, but just what kind of government Iranians would choose remained unsettled. While most Iranians agreed it was time for the shah to go, his departure marked the beginning of a fierce debate about Iran's future. Many Iranians imagined an Iran with a parliamentary system and laws modeled on Western nations. Others hoped for a government based on Islam. Still others imagined a socialist future for Iran. Although a struggle for the future of Iran was about to begin, anger against the shah's monarchy had, for the moment, unified the Iranian people.

“This great movement was born of the struggle for freedom and its success would mean the freedom of all people. This movement has not been brought about by any single individual, group or ideology.... Our nation is at this critical stage in its history and destiny is not after any ideology. It is fighting for freedom. It is concerned lest it is dealt another blow and another despot comes into power. This is what I am worried about most. I request you unify behind a single goal and a single slogan. Fight for people's freedom and struggle against imperialism and exploitation.”

—Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani, Leading Shi'i Cleric, January 18, 1979

This unity would not last. The Iranian Revolution would quickly become more than a fight for freedom from the shah. It would become the scene of ideological conflict and uncertainty as Iranians struggled to define the future of Iran.

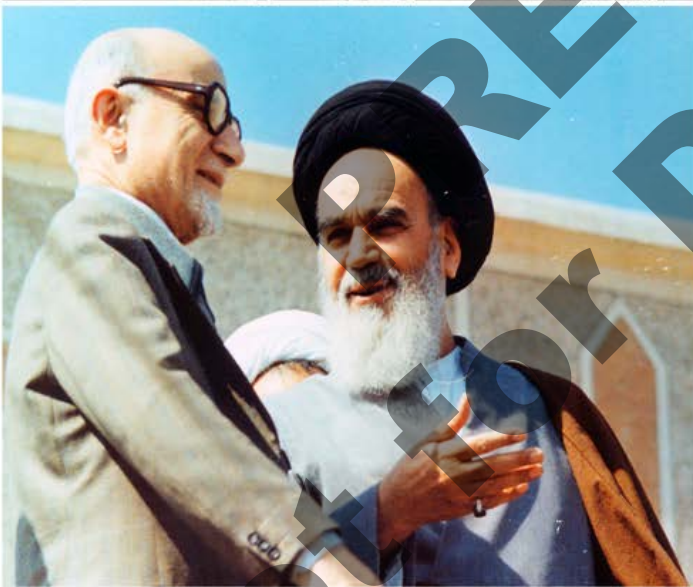
The Iranian people were no strangers to political uncertainty. In the twentieth century alone, Iranians lived through three revolutions, two coups d'état, and three abdications. Its geographic location and oil resources made it highly desirable to Russia, Great Britain, and the United States, who wished to control and influence its politics.

As you read in the coming days, try to consider the following questions. Why was there so much upheaval and change in Iran? What were the events that led to anger against the shah and eventually to revolution? How did Iranians determine what sort of government they would have? Why is it important to understand the Iranian Revolution today?

In these readings and the activities that accompany them, you will explore the culture and history of Iran. You will examine the role of Islam and legacy of Persian culture, as well as the role other countries played in trying to shape Iran. You will then be asked to recreate the debate among the Iranian people as they pondered their future after the departure of the shah. Finally, at the end of the reading, you will consider how Iran has changed since the Revolution and Iran's role in international politics.

The Iranian Revolution

Teacher Resource Book



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Iranian Oil Nationalization

Objectives:

Students will: Understand the Oil Nationalization Movement from the perspectives of the National Front, the shah, Great Britain, and the United States.

Collaborate with classmates to develop a group presentation.

Assess the competing claims and interests of each group.

Required Reading:

Students should have read Part II in the student text and completed “Study Guide—Part II” (TRB 15-16) or “Advanced Study Guide—Part II” (TRB-17).

Handouts:

“Oil Nationalization—Organizing Your Presentation” (TRB-19)

“The Oil Nationalization Crisis” (TRB-20)

Videos:

The short video used with this lesson is available at <www.choices.edu/iran>.

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question: Write the question “How should international disputes be settled?” on the board.

2. Defining Roles—Tell students that they are going to examine four perspectives on Iran’s decision to nationalize its oil industry.

Optional: Show students the short video of Professor Narges Bajoghli answering the question, “Why did Mohammad Mossadegh nationalize Iran’s oil industry?”

Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group the responsibility of representing one of the

four major players (the shah, Great Britain, Mossadegh and the National Front, the United States). Distribute the handouts to all four groups.

Explain that the groups will visit each other group and explain their perspective on the issue. Emphasize that each group must faithfully reflect the views of the perspective it has been assigned. Groups should not negotiate or debate, rather they should gather information about the other groups’ positions.

3. Comparing Perspectives—Once the groups have completed their preparations, call on groups to visit the other groups. Direct groups to exchange information about their positions and then move them on to another group until everyone has heard all perspectives.

4. Assessing Competing Claims—Encourage the groups to analyze other groups’ positions. For example, how does the perspective of the United States differ from that of Mossadegh and the National Front? How do domestic political factors influence the views of Mossadegh? What seems to be the primary concern of the United States? The shah? Great Britain?

What historical factors influence the perspectives?

When there are competing claims in international relations, on what basis do students think that claims should be resolved? What factors should be considered? For example, did Iran have a sovereign right to nationalize its oil industry? Or should it have honored its agreement with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company?

Homework:

Students should read “1979: Iranians Debate Their Future.”

Oil Nationalization—Organizing Your Presentation

Instructions: Your group has been called on to represent one of four perspectives about the oil nationalization in Iran. Your group should prepare answers to the questions from the perspective of the position you were assigned. Review the reading to gain insight into your group’s position. Answering the questions below will help you develop your presentation to the other groups. Use the handout “The Oil Nationalization Crisis” to record the perspectives of the other groups.

1. What is your position regarding oil nationalization?

2. What is at stake for your group?

3. What are the arguments in support of your claims?

4. How will the other groups perceive your claims?

5. What are your perceptions of the other groups?

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The Oil Nationalization Crisis

Mohammed Reza Shah

1. What is his position on oil nationalization?
2. What is at stake for him?
3. What are the arguments in support of his claims?
4. How will the other groups perceive his claims?
5. What are his perceptions of the other groups?

United States Government

1. What is its position on oil nationalization?
2. What is at stake for this group?
3. What are the arguments in support of its claims?
4. How will the other groups perceive its claims?
5. What are its perceptions of the other groups?

The Iranian Oil Nationalization Crisis of 1950-1953

Mossadegh and the National Front

1. What is this group's position on oil nationalization?
2. What is at stake for this group?
3. What are the arguments in support of this group's claims?
4. How will the other groups perceive this group's claims?
5. What are this group's perceptions of the other groups?

British Government

1. What is its position on oil nationalization?
2. What is at stake for this group?
3. What are the arguments in support of its claims?
4. How will the other groups perceive its claims?
5. What are its perceptions of the other groups?