

Source 1: Excerpt from Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh's Testimony to the International Court of Justice in the Hague, June 1952

Instructions: After Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh nationalized Iran's oil industry as part of an effort to free Iran from the influence of foreign powers, the British government appealed to the International Court of Justice to reclaim its access to oil in Iran. Read the testimony of Prime Minister Mossadegh to the court and answer the questions that follow. As you read, use different colors to mark 1) words or phrases that you do not understand; 2) 3-5 sentences that you think are most important; and 3) any sentence that refers to events described in your reading. Answer the questions that follow with your group. Be prepared to share your answers with your classmates. Use additional paper as needed to record your answers.

“Mr. President, Honorable Judges: For some time, humanity has been pondering over solving its differences through truth and justice and by means of the International Courts of Law rather than resorting to force and pressure.... The intellectual growth of humanity decrees that one's differences should be resolved through peaceful means. Rest assured that the wish to fulfil these aspirations has taken root in the hearts of the Iranian nation which joined the League of Nations, and after that, the United Nations from the very first day [these organizations came into being]....

“I should not hide this truth from the gentlemen present that for us Iranians, the uneasiness of stopping any kind of action which is seen as interference in our national affairs is more intense than other nations. There is a reason for this too, namely that we nations of the East, have, for many years, experienced the bitter taste of exceptional organizations that have come into being specifically to serve the interests of foreigners, and we have seen with

our own eyes how our country became the battlefield for the competition of imperialist policies. We have also realized that unfortunately despite all those hopes, neither the League of Nations nor the United Nations have been able to put an end to the regretful situation that had created in the last fifty years, and of which the former Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was its most manifest representation.

“The Iranian nation which had grown tired of this situation put an end to foreign domination in one go, in a manly movement, by nationalizing the oil industry and accepting the principle of paying compensation. At that time, the British government resorted to a series of threatening and intimidating operations.... In the end, since it did not achieve its aim through such sinister activities, it put on the face of a victim and complained to the organization of the United Nations such as the International Court of Justice and the Security Council. Perhaps this turning away of the British government from the previous course and resorting to international organizations appears like progress on the surface. However in view of the unfortunate track record that British policy has in Iran, the effect of this change on the thinking of the Iranian people is such that they conceive of this act as a new trick: that is, resorting to the judicial and peaceful means is another way for this same old political and economic rival whose presence we had put an end to, to be imposed back on us....

“The history of Anglo-Iranian relations is too long for me to discuss in detail here. Suffice it to say that in the nineteenth century, Iran was the object of rivalry for the imperialist politics of Russia and Britain. Sometime later, in 1907, the two rivals reached an agreement and divided up our country into two spheres of influence. Then, when the Tsar-

Name: _____

ist empire collapsed and the Soviet Union became entangled in a domestic revolution, Great Britain which had come out of the war as a victor, and had no rivals or adversaries left in the Middle East, took the opportunity and wanted to take exclusive control and gain political and economic domination by means of the 1919 Agreement, which entrusted the reins of the civil and military affairs to British officers and experts. In the end, since that Treaty was faced with intense resistance on the part of patriots and progressives, British diplomacy

fulfilled its aims by a different means, namely by bring to power the dictatorial regime which it supported for twenty years. By going to such lengths, the economic aims of British policy were to gain exclusive possession of our oil....

“The decision to nationalize the oil industry is the result of the political will of an independent and free nation. I implore you to pay attention to this point that our request to you is to refrain from interfering in this matter, based on the rules of the Declaration of the United Nations....”

Questions about Source 1:

1. What is the date of Mossadegh’s testimony? _____
2. What does Mossadegh say is the main purpose of British economic policy in Iran?
3. List the three most important sentences from this document. Explain your reasoning.