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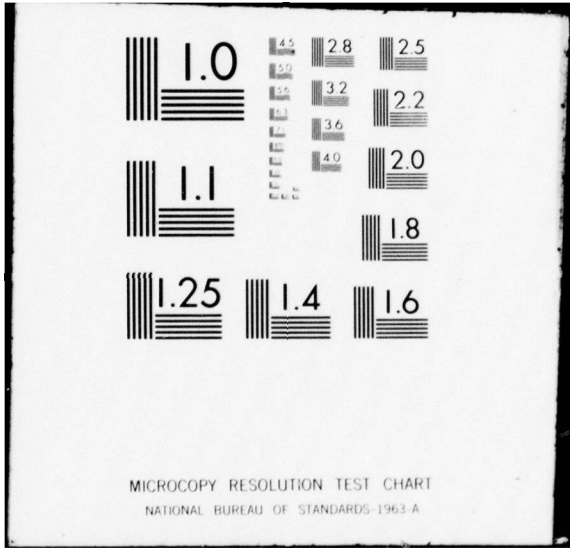
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AN INTERPRETATION OF IRAN'S PERSPECTIVE**



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9 Military issues research memo

6 **ARMS TRANSFER AND NATIONAL SECURITY:  
AN INTERPRETATION OF IRAN'S PERSPECTIVE**

by

10 Robert Ghobad/Irani

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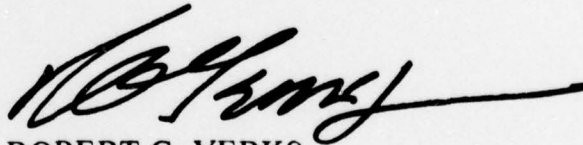
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## FOREWORD

This memorandum focuses upon arms acquisition and national security, as essential and interrelated components of Iran's foreign and defense policy, within the context of Iran's strategic and economic significance to the West. The author considers the major factors contributing toward Iran's commitment to modernize its armed forces and evaluates the impact of arms acquisitions on Iran, on regional stability, and upon US-Iranian relations in the context of this critical region of the world.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



ROBERT G. YERKS  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. ROBERT G. IRANI joined the Strategic Studies Institute in 1975. He graduated from Glenville State College with a bachelor's degree in history and social sciences, earned a master's degree in international relations from the American University, and a second master's degree and a PhD in government and politics and international relations from the University of Maryland. Dr. Irani's research abroad includes trips to both sides of the Persian Gulf and one year of field research as a Research-Associate at the Institute for International Political and Economic Studies, Tehran, Iran. His published works include, *American Diplomacy: An Option Analysis of the Azerbaijan Crisis, 1945-1946*, (1978); *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1974: A Selective Bibliography*, (1976); and several articles in English and Farsi for professional journals.

**ARMS TRANSFER AND NATIONAL SECURITY:  
AN INTERPRETATION OF IRAN'S PERSPECTIVE**

One of the issues which has attracted world attention to the Persian Gulf area involves the sale of arms, particularly to Iran. Iran's arms acquisitions increased significantly in 1972, when Iran ordered nearly \$2 billion worth of advanced fighter bombers. The Iranian arms purchases became a sensational press issue in the United States and gained further publicity particularly after the 1973-74 oil price increases. The arms buildup by Iran in the Gulf area is generally characterized in the Western press within the setting of tensions, rivalries, and possible sources of conflict. There is also a tendency in some Western press reports to present and analyze Iran's purchase of advanced weapon systems such as the F-14, the F-16, and the Spruance class destroyers as somewhat unnecessary and acts of "prestige," in light of Iran's already "dominant" military position in the Gulf area. Some reports even claim that Iran's growing military might is a manifestation of its imperial ambitions—the glory of the ancient Persian Empire and the Shah's desire to reestablish its primacy. Others, such as evidenced in a staff report issued by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, then Chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warn that the "United States arms sales to Iran, totalling \$10 billion since 1972, have been out of

control.”<sup>1</sup> Clearly the sale of arms to Iran has become a political issue in the United States and will continue to remain a principal public attraction, as has been indicated by ample documentation in Congressional hearings and the extensive coverage provided by the media. It is interesting that many reports tend to view the sale of arms to Iran as destabilizing, without providing a substantial rationale for such a conclusion, or a genuine consideration of the possibility that by strengthening regional friends such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, the United States enhances pro-Western regional stability in critical areas of the world. However, few deny that the growing Foreign Military Sales (FMS) are a recognized corollary of the Guan Doctrine.<sup>2</sup>

This paper focuses upon arms acquisition and national security, as essential interrelated components of Iran's foreign and defense policy, within the context of Iran's strategic and economic significance to the West. Special attention is paid to the factors contributing toward Iran's policy of modernizing its armed forces and an interpretive evaluation is made regarding the impact of arms acquisitions on Iran, on regional stability, and upon US-Iranian relations in the context of this critical region of the world. Throughout the study, special emphasis is placed upon presenting an account of Iran's view, as presented by American and Iranian scholars, on the acquisition of arms, and within the context of US-Iranian relations. Hopefully, this presentation will contribute toward a better understanding of an arms recipient's point-of-view.

#### IRAN'S ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

The littoral Persian Gulf states cover an area in excess of 1,759,000 square miles with a total population over 59,000,000 or about half the size of the United States and over one-fourth of the US population. Iran, with an estimated population of over 35 million, or significantly over one-half of the population of all the Gulf littoral states and an area in excess of 636,000 square miles, a centralized and relative to its neighbors a well-developed infrastructure, is clearly the predominant power in this region.<sup>3</sup> According to demographic specialists, Iran's population will double in 23 years. A few years before its oil runs out, this country is expected to have a population approaching 70,000,000.<sup>4</sup>

Historically, the strategic significance of the Persian Gulf area is directly related to the geopolitical value of the majestic Iranian plateau, located on the southern tier of the Soviet Union, blocking direct Soviet

access to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Due to its location, Iran became the center of Russo-British rivalries and intrigues on numerous occasions. The strategic location of Iran and its utilization for logistical supply was the principal reason for the Allied occupation of the country during the Second World War. Iran's contiguity to the USSR, and the historic Tsarist Russian as well as Soviet Russian ambitions to gain access to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf in order to project Russian power directly into the Indian Ocean, are crucial strategic factors that will continue to have relevance in evaluating Iran's significance in the East-West global geostrategic equilibrium, long after the oil runs out.

George Lenczowski, a prominent American analyst, claims that Irano-American defense "alliance" should be firmly asserted "for the sake of both Iran and the entire free world," and that "the fate of the West would be sealed" if the strategic Strait of Hormuz, the "jugular vein" of Iran and the West, located at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, falls into the hands of the adversary.<sup>5</sup> At a conference held in Washington in October 1977, Lenczowski suggested the need to reevaluate the strategic significance of Iran and the Persian Gulf area to the West, in light of changes in the international environment and because, in his opinion, compared to the Bosphoros, the strategic significance of the Persian Gulf, particularly that of Iran, has been underestimated.<sup>6</sup> A somewhat similar analysis, concentrating on a different dimension regarding the strategic significance of Iran, was provided by Major General Manouchehr Khosrowdad, the Commanding General of the Imperial Iranian Army Aviation, at the National Convention of the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) on October 15, 1977. General Khosrowdad, in essence, stated that any blockage of the Strait of Hormuz would amount to blocking the refuelling capability of NATO and Japan, and that Iran is a crucial barrier which prevents the Soviet Union from gaining direct land access, as he put it, "without any obstacles," into the Indian Ocean and into Africa and Asia.<sup>7</sup> According to General Khosrowdad, Iran acts as a barrier to direct Soviet penetration of the heart of the Third and the Fourth World, both of which are of vital importance in the overall, long-range balance of power equation between the US/Allied vs USSR/WP forces. There is little doubt that a direct land access through Iran and into the Persian Gulf by the Soviet Union would enable the Soviets to directly project power and influence, without limitations to logistical support, into the Afro-Asian world; there is also little doubt,

regarding the growing significance attached to the Persian Gulf area by the United States. There are reported indications that President Carter, in a directive to the Pentagon, has given "Iran and the Persian Gulf priority in defense planning," another sign of the strategic significance the United States attaches to this region of the world.<sup>8</sup>

The economic significance of Iran and Saudi Arabia lies in their huge oil reserves and tremendous oil production. The Gulf area contains approximately 70 percent of the known oil reserves of the Western World and at the present produces about 30 percent of the Western World's annual oil supply. The main producers are Iran and Saudi Arabia. Japan and Western Europe are heavily dependent upon the Persian Gulf oil for their economic prosperity and well-being, and the United States dependence upon Persian Gulf oil is expected to grow, revealing the significance of this region to the United States and its allies. This area, particularly Iran and Saudi Arabia, will very likely continue to attract world attention as long as the West depends upon it for oil. In this regard, Iran was the first Middle Eastern country in which oil was discovered and exploited. Today, it is the second largest exporter of petroleum.

Clemenceau's prophetic statement, that petroleum would be "as necessary as blood in the battles of tomorrow," became reality as a result of the conversion from coal to oil as the basic fuel for naval and, later on, other forces around the world.<sup>9</sup> Today, our era can be appropriately described as a "petroleum age" and the foreseeable future appears to be dominated by petroleum. Needless to say that the world depends upon the production and reserves of the Persian Gulf area for the present, midrange, and long-range future. Any indefinite total oil embargo could result in disastrous economic dislocation in the United States, Western Europe, and Japan in time of peace. During a general war, the results could be even more disastrous, considering Soviet efforts during such a war to cut off the West's essential oil supplies. Defense Secretary Harold Brown in congressional testimony has pointed out that:

In the event of some future confrontation, the Soviet Union might be able to restrict access of the Western world to its essential oil supplies to a degree of severity and duration greater than any embargo by the oil producers . . . the USSR might attempt to deny access to the oil of the Persian Gulf by direct attack on the facilities of the major oil-loading ports which lie near to Soviet territory . . .<sup>10</sup>

The strategic significance of Iran and the Persian Gulf was

summarized recently by an Iranian analyst as "an extension of the southern flank of NATO."<sup>11</sup> Such a description may, at first instance, appear to overstate the case, but there is little doubt that it is worth careful attention. It is necessary to evaluate the importance of this region and the significance and its oil resources, in time of peace and war, to the Western world's prosperity and to its ability to fight a prolonged general war with its principal adversary.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF US SECURITY POLICY TOWARD IRAN

George Lenczowski describes US policy toward the Middle East prior to 1941 as "one of indifference, good will" and a recognition that this region was a part of the British sphere of influence.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the war, basic US policy toward Iran remained undefined. The participation of the United States in the Iranian theater during World War II and the growing realization of the economic and strategic importance of this country were influential in engendering US national security interests in and refining American policies toward Iran.

The establishment of the Persian Gulf Command constituted the most extensive single American military involvement in Iran during the Second World War. It was associated with the American Army's presence of approximately 30,000 noncombatant troops who arrived in Iran in 1942-43 with the objective of facilitating wartime Allied aid operations to the Soviet Union via Iran. There was a need to build harbors on Iran's coast on the Persian Gulf, to repair roads, build airstrips, and to take over and operate the Trans-Iranian railway. By 1944 some of the prominent officials in the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs advocated that US policy and position in Iran should not be permitted to regress to its prewar status.<sup>13</sup> But most important were President Franklin D. Roosevelt's support for Iran during the war and his pronouncements that reassured its territorial integrity and independence.<sup>14</sup> One of the highlights of US assistance to Iran took place in the immediate postwar period, when the US commitment to resolve the Azerbaijan crisis, 1945-46, played a crucial role in pressuring the Soviet Union to withdraw its forces from northwestern Iran. President Truman's advocacy in resolving the Azerbaijan crisis was a definite indication of US appreciation of Iran's importance and a prelude to the expansion of ties between the United States and Iran.<sup>15</sup>

The Truman Doctrine was welcomed by the Iranians as an explicit commitment on the part of the United States to contain Soviet

expansion and to ensure Iran's territorial integrity against Soviet encroachments. The United States extended military assistance and economic aid to Iran under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, and subsequently through the Point Four Program.<sup>16</sup> In the same period, the Soviets continued their attacks on the Shah, the Iranian government, and Iran's pro-Western policies, while the United States encouraged the Shah to modernize Iran.

The early 1950's witnessed the rise and fall of Mohammad Mossadegh, the Iranian Premier during whose administration the nationalization of the Anglo Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) took place. The fall of Mossadegh in 1953 ended a chaotic era in Iran's history and brought Iran and the United States closer to each other. The Shah's welcome return heralded a new era in Iran and thereafter the Monarch was more determined than ever to free the country from the disruptive forces from within and to introduce needed large-scale reform. The establishment of the oil consortium in 1954 expanded and enlarged American economic interest in Iran's oil, while prior to 1954 the British were dominant in the country's oil industry.

The establishment of NATO and its inclusion of Turkey and Greece provided an impetus for the encouragement of an alliance in the Middle East that would include the Arab world.<sup>17</sup> Principal Arab countries such as Egypt, however, failed to perceive a threat from the USSR, a distant land which had not in the past threatened the Arab world. As a result, the United States concentrated its efforts on the area adjacent to the USSR, the so-called Northern Tier countries of the Middle East. The alliance began with the formation of the Baghdad Pact, which also included Iraq (an Arab country), in addition to Turkey and Iran. Pakistan also joined the alliance, Great Britain was an observer, and the United States became a full participant, but not a formal member.<sup>18</sup>

The 1956 Suez Crisis substantially improved the image of Nasser, expanded the role of Egypt, and promoted "Nasserism" in the Middle East. It was a boost for radical and revolutionary forces in the Middle East and threatened the moderate, established regimes of the area. The efforts engineered by Nasser toward Arab unity were viewed with alarm, even among the Arab states and a rivalry was developing between the traditional Arab governments and the new "revolutionary" regimes. It signaled a new threat from within the region that was aimed toward disruption of the traditional orders. The spread of radicalism was viewed with concern in the Gulf area. The Gulf states considered radicalism a potent and immediate threat, and the 1958 bloody coup in

Iraq enhanced the immediacy of the threat. Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad Pact. The coup stunned the Gulf states and led to the renaming of the Pact as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Of greater significance to interstate politics in the Gulf area was the introduction of a local revolutionary force--Iraq. In March 1959, the United States and Iran signed a bilateral executive agreement by which the United States agreed to assist in resisting aggression aimed at Iran.<sup>19</sup>

The 1960's marked a sharp inroad by the USSR into Egypt and Iraq. Soviet-Iranian economic relations were improved and Iran was developing rapidly. By 1966, the United States no longer considered Iran a "less-developed country." As such, it was no longer eligible to receive US aid and military grant aid. Hereafter Iran began to buy American military hardware under Foreign Military Sales.<sup>20</sup> The British proclamation in 1968 to withdraw its forces from the Gulf by 1971, the increased revolutionary activities in the Arabian peninsula, the state of hostilities between Iran and Iraq, and the encouragement of the United States that, in accord with the Guam Doctrine, regional states should be strengthened--all contributed to the development of a sense of commitment in Iran to defend its national interests in the Gulf and to expand its armed forces to assure the safety of the oil route. The US policy of Foreign Military Sales to Iran and Iran's economic strength greatly assisted in building Iran's capability to defend its interests in the area.<sup>21</sup> The early 1970's witnessed close ties between Iran and the United States and between Iraq and the USSR.

In 1974, Secretary of Defense, James E. Schlesinger, pointed out that, as a result of the Soviet attainment of nuclear parity with the United States, the deterrence element in the US-USSR global military equation would be "greatly strengthened if there were regional military balances in critical areas of the world."<sup>22</sup> In the Persian Gulf/Arabian Peninsula the application of such an approach would be to support the major powers in this region--Iran and Saudi Arabia--which are friends of the United States, and to assist other smaller Gulf states in developing their armed forces, in order to ensure that our friends have the capability to defend their interest. In this manner, the United States can contribute toward regional stability and the balance of power between the East and the West in such critical areas, without the maintenance of significant US forces, particularly since the United States seeks to avoid the role of a global policeman.

Iran's acquisition of US arms is an indication of the political, economic, and military significance that Iran attaches to its perceived

“special” connection with the United States. The sale of arms to Iran is viewed by many Iranians as a reflection of the close relations between the United States and Iran. In this connection, Sidney Sober, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, has stated that:

We have considered it an integral part of our relationship to be responsive to Iran's legitimate and reasonable requests for the purchase of military equipment. And Iran has seen its own development of a reasonably credible defensive capability as an integral component of its own ability to play a responsible, moderating role in the political arena.<sup>23</sup>

Several prominent defense analysts have raised the question as to whether Iran is “overarmed” or not.<sup>24</sup> Iranians believe it is inappropriate for the United States to decide whether their country is overarmed or underarmed, since such decisions are internal matters, ultimately to be made by Iranian officials as an element of their own domestic affairs, aimed at meeting their needs as set by themselves. Of course, this does not in any way deny the validity of such questions being raised within the context of their implications for US defense and foreign policy—a setting within which usually such questions are raised. But Iranian leaders question whether or not Washington should depict and outline the details of arms procurements and define the “needs” of its allies and friends around the world. One Iranian analyst asserted that:

An arms policy that seeks to dictate to allies is bound to fail, for states must judge their own security needs. There is no reason to suppose, for example, that the requirements-in quantity or quality-of a particular state can be assessed more accurately in one capital, than in another.<sup>25</sup>

The opposition to the transfer of US arms to Iran generally rests upon a number of points such as: (1) the allegedly overarming of Iran will have a negative impact upon its socio-economic development; (2) Iran may utilize the weapons against the states in the lower Gulf, thus destabilizing the region; (3) the low-level of technological sophistication in Iran precludes it from operating and maintaining highly advanced weapons; (4) some of the highly classified equipment may fall into the hands of the adversary; (5) the weapons may be used for internal oppressive purposes; and, finally, that the United States should not become a “merchant of death.” These points, raised and refuted one by one by George Lenczowski,<sup>26</sup> tend to be based upon hypothetical,

unproven scenarios, disregarding the positive impacts of the transfer of arms to Iran.

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TOWARD IRAN'S ACQUISITION OF ARMS

There are a number of factors which contribute toward a nation's perceived need to acquire arms. It appears that, in the Iranian case, the most significant elements are: (1) the leadership's view of Iran's potential threats, vulnerabilities and insecurities; (2) the Monarch's determination to modernize Iran's armed forces—an objective which was greatly facilitated by the financial capability derived from the increased petroleum revenues; (3) the Shah's commitment to modernization and nation building; (4) the British withdrawal from the area east of Suez; and (5) the Guam Doctrine and US support for Iran's efforts to contribute toward regional security by developing the capability necessary to defend its vital interests in the area, which converge in almost all essential points with critical US security interests in this region of the world. These factors are discussed further in this paper.

*Potential Threats and Vulnerabilities.* History, geography, cultural norms, and political affiliations are some of the factors which have a bearing upon "threat perception." In the case of Iran, sharing a 2500 kilometer border with the USSR to the north is a permanent factor influencing Iran's foreign and defense policies and laying the foundation of Iran's "threat perceptions." The history of Tsarist and Soviet Russian intrusions and interventions in support of irredentist elements in Iran adds credence to Iran's concern over Soviet ambitions. Tehran, the capital of Iran and its most populous center, is within a short striking distance from the Soviet Union—Tehran can be approached by an airborne assault; by a combined Soviet amphibious and land operation via the Caspian Sea; or through a direct Soviet land assault from the northwestern or northeastern areas adjacent to the Caspian Sea—a factor which propagates a feeling of "permanent insecurity" among the aware Iranians. In evaluating the Soviet threat, Iran's Monarch reportedly has stated that:

There exists what I call the USSR's pincer movement. There exists their dream of reaching the Indian Ocean through the Persian Gulf . . .<sup>27</sup>

The Monarch has added that should the USSR attack Iran, its survival, as he put it, "would depend on [Iranians'] ability and will to resist. So

the problem of resistance looms today . . ."28 Iran appears committed to defend itself and to develop the capability to meet any conventional threat to its independence and sovereignty, if necessary, by implementing a so-called "scorched-earth" policy and a total partisan war in which all the Iranians would fight. There is a prevalent feeling that "Iranian boys" must be able to ensure the defense of their homeland against any conventional attack, while relying upon the United States and the protection of American nuclear shield to deter a tactical nuclear strike against Iran.<sup>29</sup> The location of Iran, adjacent to the USSR, has contributed toward bringing Iran closer to the United States. Americans have historically been viewed by Iranians as an unselfish people with no territorial designs upon Iran. While Soviet intentions and actions have remained a source of suspicion in Iran, culminating in a historic distrust and suspicion of USSR's motives, and a "natural" desire for Iran's leaders to associate themselves closely with the United States, the only other superpower, and to establish a linkage which could ensure Iran's survival and independence against an overt Soviet attack.

Many analysts point out that the Soviet Union does not threaten Iran at the present time. Therefore, why should Iran concern itself with the Soviet threat? It is true that Soviet intentions are based on good neighborliness at the present time, but this does not mean that its intentions will remain the same during the midrange or long-range period. The acquisition of arms is a necessity, as the Iranians view it, in order to counter the Soviet threat toward the region in general and toward Iran in particular. The Soviet threat can take place covertly or overtly. An overt Soviet threat can involve tactical nuclear, conventional, or a combination of nuclear/conventional weapons. The Iranians are committed to develop a conventional military capability that could act as a "trip wire" to slow down an overt conventional Soviet thrust into Iran, and protect the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf and beyond.

The principal short-range source of instability in the Persian Gulf results from the commitment made by the lower Gulf states to assist in resolving the Arab-Israeli dispute.<sup>30</sup> Another Arab-Israeli war could have unpredictable consequences for regional stability in the Persian Gulf, since it may undermine the position of the moderate Arab states in the Gulf and strengthen the role of the radical Arab states and revolutionary groups, and may even invite external intervention, in an extreme situation.

It is to the interest of the Western oil consumers to pursue the

pro-Western diplomatic edge that now exists in the moderate Arab states, particularly in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The pursuit of peace in the Middle East is of utmost importance to the West, to prevent the alternative of another war. The extent, duration, and the nature of another Arab oil embargo would depend upon the duration, extent, and nature of the war. A future war in this region would be different from previous wars; the parameters of a future war are difficult to depict and its outcomes even more so. It is literally impossible to delineate the implications of another Arab-Israeli war coupled with another oil embargo. The best policy option in this situation is a preventive policy—one that would lead to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Oil, as a result of its successful use in 1973, has become a potent instrument in the hands of the Arabs. The Arabs probably will not hesitate to use the oil weapon again, provided they perceive a likelihood of its success or if they see no other alternative means to gain concessions from Israel. The Arabs will continue to utilize the oil weapon as they see fit in the future to gain limited objectives, particularly in an indirect fashion against pro-Israel Western states such as the United States, as long as the oil weapon remains effective. For example, the Saudis could place a great deal of pressure upon the US/Allied nations by cutbacks in production of oil or by supporting OPEC price increases. In addition, Saudi Arabia can drastically curtail its oil production for an extensive period of time, without damaging its own economy.

Prince Fahd and other high ranking Saudis continue to stress that disturbances, tensions, and another round of fighting could follow unless the Arab-Israeli dispute is resolved soon.<sup>31</sup> President Carter pointed out in his Notre Dame speech in May 22, 1977, that "failure" as he put it "in the Mideast now could be disastrous" for the Middle East as well as for the global political and economic order. The President has called "time most propitious" for peace in the area.<sup>32</sup>

Other potential threats to Iran in its Gulf borders may result from radical changes in the neighboring governments as an outcome of coups and counter-coups, which may threaten Iran's security, particularly provided that the new regime decides to export its ideology or assist minority groups inside Iran. In addition, and of greater immediacy, terrorist groups assisted by revolutionary entities, governments or by other revolutionary proxy forces external to the region pose a dangerous threat to the security of the lines of communications in the Persian Gulf, particularly in choke-points such as the Strait of Hormuz

and other highly vulnerable areas such as oil installations, oil tankers and petroleum-related facilities. Since the entire Persian Gulf is an enclosed body of water, terrorist attacks upon supertankers can result in large scale ecological disasters for the entire area, damaging the natural ecology, habitat, and the source of life in this body of water.<sup>33</sup> Iran is naturally concerned with the threat posed by terrorists since Iran's borders on the Persian Gulf are in excess of 1800 kilometers, and because a great deal of Iran's planned industrial development is concentrated on its Persian Gulf coastal area. The government of Iran will invest over 30 billion dollars in its coastal area in the next five to six years, the bulk of which will concentrate upon projects involving petrochemicals, steel mills, copper industries, desalinization plants, nuclear power generating plants, expansion of the fishery industry, etc.<sup>34</sup> The Abadan refinery, one of the largest in the world, lies across the southeast border of Iraq, vulnerable to artillery.

The efforts of the revolutionary groups in the tip of the Musandam Peninsula, supported by the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and carried out by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Gulf (PFLOG) located in the Dhofar Province of the Sultanate of Oman, is an example of the type of upheaval which concerns Iran, a country that was involved in assisting Oman in its struggle against the Dhofar rebels. Apparently, the PFLO's Central Executive Committee maintains its objective of "liberating" Oman from the so-called "rule of the agents and the forces of foreign occupation,"<sup>35</sup> which is another indication to the Iranians of the continuing potential for instability in this region. The parameter of threats posed by terrorists is furthered as a result of the active participation of radical regimes in their support. It has been stated that:

The Soviet Union is certainly giving substantial assistance to the governments of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and Iraq. Both these governments are actively engaged in efforts to subvert the other states of the area.<sup>36</sup>

A number of regional disputes in the Persian Gulf and on Iran's eastern borders also threaten regional stability, and could involve Iran. Such potential crises become particularly explosive, when assisted overtly or covertly by regional or extra-regional governments. The disputes between Iraq and Kuwait over the islands of Bubiyan and Al Warbah, the Baluchi secessionist movement, the Dhofar rebellion, and the Pakhtunistan dispute are examples of such regional sources of

instability. In short, Iran's location on the southern periphery of the Soviet Union and between two principal zones of conflict, the Arab-Israeli dispute to its west and the Indo-Pakistani conflict to its east, plus the growing need to defend the sealanes to its south together form the basis for Iran's threat perception.<sup>37</sup>

*History.* In order to understand Iran's current arms acquisition, it is necessary to take a look at its historical experience as a pawn between Russia and Great Britain in the 19th and the early 20th centuries, and to evaluate methodical Soviet efforts to try to create autonomous "republics" inside Iran, as shown by the establishment of the relatively short-lived republics of Gilan, Azerbaijan and Mahabad in northwestern Iran since the First World War, and the British support for tribal-controlled movements in south-western Iran in the mid 1940's. Competitive great power rivalry has scarred the history of Iran's relations with the great powers until recent times. Russo-British rivalry and imperialism in Iran prior to and during the Second World War and in its immediate aftermath coupled with the lack of capable military power on part of the central government of Iran to defend its sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and to pursue its own national interests are highly influential in forming the basis for a great Iranian desire to develop a strong military capability. An Iranian analyst has evaluated Iran's arms acquisitions in its contemporary setting as follows:

If Iran's historical experience undermines any lurking temptations to attribute all of her security problems to any one state, it also discourages any tendency to denigrate the value of arms for defense purposes. In an era of strategic parity when perceptions of resolve and credibility matter as much as actual capabilities, there is little disposition to doubt the real political utility of military power. Territorial contiguity with a dynamic great power, a world power with global reach in itself fosters insecurity.<sup>38</sup>

The Iranian government has felt sufficiently secure to pursue a policy somewhat independent of the superpowers and based essentially upon Iran's national interests only within the past decade. For Iran, a nation which has been at the crossroads of invasion throughout history, and has fallen at the mercy of competitive great power imperialism in the past, the notion of being able to defend itself must be irresistible. This nationalistic idea of developing the military capability to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty is one of the key answers to Iran's arms acquisitions. Iranian nationalism together with the Monarch's commitment to bring the country fully into the 20th

century and to create an industrialized state before Iran's oil runs out form the underlying basis for the acquisition of arms.

*The Monarch's Determination, Iran's Financial Capability and Changing Values.* The Shah of Iran has stated that "it is the holy duty of every country to insure its defense . . ." The Iranian Monarch is determined to ensure Iran's security and to build its defense capability to be able to ensure the security of the sealanes of the Persian Gulf and the northwestern quadrant of the Indian Ocean. The Shah prefers to accomplish some of Iran's security objectives in cooperation with the other states of the Persian Gulf through a firm, or loose security arrangement or merely by an understanding among the Gulf states pertaining to collective security of this region, provided that such an understanding can be reached; however, Iran is prepared to defend its interests in its southern security zone single-handedly, if necessary.<sup>39</sup>

The Shah of Iran makes the decisions as to the "needs" for the defense of his country, assisted by his advisors, confidants and trustees. In an interview in 1976 the Shah, responding to the question of the sale of sophisticated US arms to Iran, commented that "If they want to sell, we are buyers. The question is that what is needed for the defense of our country, we decide. So, we decide how many people, what kind of weapons we need, and we try to get it where we can."<sup>40</sup>

The sale of arms to Iran by the United States increased from \$524 million in 1972 to nearly \$4 billion in 1974. Such a substantial increase was made possible in large part by the 1973 manifold increases in the price of oil. As it has been pointed out, Iran is "the largest single purchaser of U.S. military equipment."<sup>41</sup> The multiple increases in the price of oil has enabled Iran to implement its long sought objective of modernizing its army, navy and air force and to develop a defense capability which will remain up-to-date through the 1990's. Such an ambitious program takes a great deal of determination and commitment to implement. The Iranian leadership is determined to establish, maintain, and improve a defensive network that could deter a potential adversary from pursuing adventures at Iran's expense. The planned acquisition of the airborne warning and communications systems (AWACS), the F-16 and other conventional arms is aimed at substantially improving the defense capability of the Iranian armed forces to deter a conventional attack by any adversary forces, and providing that deterrence fails, then to have the capability to slow down, if not halt, the potential adversary from advancing its forces into Iran's territory.

The expression "shod shod nashod nashod," which symbolizes the tradition of fatalism in Iran, is under strong attack at all levels of the Iranian society at the present time. Iranians are fully aware that Iran by itself and alone will never be able to defend itself for any extended period of time in the face of an overt Soviet attack; however, key Iranian decisionmakers and technocrats tend to associate such a view with traditional fatalism, an outgrowth and a remnant of the value system that was prevalent in "feudal" Iran, a value system which is viewed as inappropriate and irrelevant to a modernizing country. The era of fatalism appears to be withering away, making room for pragmatic values which are more appropriate for a modernizing society. Iranians realize that the lack of deterrence or maintenance of cheap deterrence can be fatal. Therefore, the leadership is more determined than ever to ensure the defense of Iran. The leadership also realizes that a capable defense force cannot be developed overnight but that, on the contrary, it requires a long-range plan, implemented in stages, supported by an existing financial capability and a determined leadership to carry it through. It is fortunate that Iran possesses the determination and the financial capability to develop its defense capability and that it has the support of another super power (the United States) in doing so.

A capable Iran can defend the sea-lanes of the Persian Gulf and the northwestern portion of the Indian Ocean, act as a pro-western buffer or a deterrent toward covert, pro-Communist expansion. According to an Iranian analyst, Iran is a "moderate, self-reliant partner—a natural extension of the southern flank of NATO," particularly in the context of the balance of power equation between the East and the West.<sup>42</sup> He goes further by stating that:

Overlapping security interests with the West, the stability of her leadership (36 years), her determination and means to assure her own security without seeking Western entanglement (either in terms of commitments or financially) make Iran one of the few dependable US allies . . .<sup>43</sup>

*Modernization.* One of the most profound, resilient undercurrents of change in Iran and in other states in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula area today is the relentless commitment to modernization. The impact that this commitment will have upon internal as well as regional processes will be substantial. Indeed, the transfer of arms should be looked at as an inherent and integral aspect of the process of modernization. Armies in many underdeveloped and developing nations

have played a crucial role in the process of nation building and modernization. Iran is a classic example of such a case. The Shah realizes the role of the armed forces as vital agents of modernization and he is committed to provide them the best weapons his country can afford.

The Iranian armed forces are one of the most potent vehicles of modernization in the Iranian society, implementing the principles of the "White revolution," established by the Shah and the people. The internal nation-building role of the armed forces is a crucial factor, and provides another explanation for Iran's commitment toward what appears to be a relatively high defense expenditure; Iran's defense expenditure seeps down to training, education, and overall modernization of the entire nation. It is completely interwoven with the process of modernization.

The armed forces have served a large role in the modernization of Iran, as exemplified by the various health, literacy and other corps for over a decade. In addition, wherever a military installation or base is established or developed it brings with it jobs for the local people and development for the region. An excellent example is provided by the rapid modernization of both Bandar Abbas and Chah Bahar areas. Over a decade ago, Bandar Abbas was known as a center for criminals and hooligans—a place where no respectable Iranian would want to visit. Today, it is one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in Iran, a center for tourism, industry, defense, and an area of indispensable importance to Iran's future plans. The modernization of Chah Bahar is similar. As a result of Iran's commitment to build a tri-service port in Chah Bahar, this region has suddenly gained a great deal of importance, while previously Char Bahar was essentially uninhabited. According to General F. Michael Rogers, USAF, "a significant portion of the Security Assistance Program has a nation-building role":

The program introduces facilities, equipment and skills that benefit the civilian sector in the development of its national infrastructure. In the long term, recipient nations are better prepared to take care of themselves without direct U.S. involvement— particularly during armed crises.<sup>44</sup>

General Rogers claims that since 1950, 40.5 percent of all US government-to-government military exports have involved weapons and ammunitions; the remaining 59.5 percent have consisted of spare-parts, supporting equipment and supporting services.<sup>45</sup> In the case of Iran, reports indicate that less than 40 percent of aggregate dollar

expenditures for defense by the government of Iran consist of weapons and ammunition procurement, and the rest of the defense expenditure has been spent toward building facilities, roads, airports, bases, ports, purchasing spare-parts, training and manpower development. In addition, by emphasizing the aggregate defense expenditure, analysts tend to discount the impact of inflation upon arms acquisition. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to present and evaluate Iran's arms acquisitions exclusively in terms of its total defense expenditure, without providing a breakdown of what is involved in the overall expenditure.<sup>46</sup> Countries such as Iran, which are on the verge of modernization and industrialization, often spend large portions of their defense appropriation on establishment, creation, maintenance, and modernization of their internal infrastructure (roads, buildings, etc.) which are essential for utilization and rapid deployment of modern armed forces.

The spillover effect of the modernization of the armed forces upon the other sectors is substantial in Iran. The national drive to modernize the armed forces is in reality directly related to the aspiration of the Shah to industrialize the entire nation as rapidly as possible. The military, in essence, acts as the most potent agent for change. In this regard it has been stated that:

Iran is demonstrating how arms sales and military technology can be used to strengthen economic development. The Shah is using his army, navy, and air force as technical training platforms for Iranian youth. His objective is to spur Iran into becoming a modern nation, schooled in advanced technology, before the year 2000.<sup>47</sup>

*British Withdrawal and the Nixon Doctrine.* The military modernization commenced by Iran in mid 1960's was sharply accelerated after the announced British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf, and in response to changes in the international environment proceeding after the enunciation of the Guam Doctrine in 1969. As a result of the British withdrawal a power vacuum was created in the Gulf which could have only been filled by the United States, USSR, or Iran—at the time Saudi Arabia did not appear willing to fill the vacuum. It is also questionable whether the Saudis had the overall capability to do so. Therefore, Tehran appeared to be in a natural position to fill such a gap—willing and eager to do so. Thereafter, in accordance with the Guam Doctrine, the United States assisted Iran in developing the capability necessary to protect its interests, which converged almost

totally with those of the United States. According to Elliot Richardson, one of the former Secretaries of Defense:

We look primarily to the states in the area to maintain peace and stability, and to this end, we have security assistance programs with selected countries, notably Iran and Saudi Arabia . . .<sup>48</sup>

The transfer of arms supports US security objectives in the Persian Gulf area by strengthening major, moderate, pro-Western powers (Iran and Saudi Arabia) and the smaller states of the Gulf, so that they can play a greater role in ensuring regional stability and reducing potentials for conflict. Arms transfer not only furthers US interests in the area but remains an integral component of US relations with the countries of this region, and it is in accord with the Guam Doctrine and in keeping with the midrange US foreign policy objective of strengthening friendly nations around the globe to defend their vital interests; therefore, the continuation of arms transfers and technological know-how remains essential to implementation of such an objective. In assisting Iran, the US Military Assistance Advisory Group of the United States in Tehran is headed by a major general. The group consists of three sections representing the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy, headed by two brigadier generals and a rear admiral.<sup>49</sup>

The Nixon Doctrine remains the basis of US policy as it relates to the transfer of arms and with regard to the position that US allies and friends should be encouraged to play a more significant role in the defense of their own interests. In the case of Iran, George Lenczowski states that "the least we can do is to respond favorably to Iran's requests for adequate weapons systems."<sup>50</sup>

#### IRAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY: OBJECTIVES AND MEANS IN TRANSITION

*Iran's Growing National Security Parameters.* Iran's national strategy during the 1940's was based upon the Shah's sincere desire to maintain Iran's sovereignty and independence and to free the country from foreign, particularly Soviet troops. During the late 1940's and 1950's a number of disruptive domestic issues predominated in Iran. It was not until the mid-1960's that the Shah could begin to formulate and implement a national strategy that would focus upon Iran's regional interests.

It is common knowledge that a nation's military requirements vary

in time and circumstances. Iran's defense needs, for example, are quite different today from those required to defend a land frontier, as Tehran has discovered by the southward focus in its diplomatic and maritime interest, which has resulted in a determination to develop a modern naval capability. What is involved, as a result, is more than the creation of a modern navy but also "... enhancing the capabilities of the land and air forces to carry out hovercraft and helicopter operations as well as developing maritime surveillance and antisubmarine capabilities."<sup>51</sup> Therefore, Iran plans to establish a major naval base at Bandar Abbas, on the northern portion of the strategic Strait of Hormuz, and another larger multiservice installation at Chah Bahar, in the Gulf of Oman, adjacent to Pakistan. Iran has relied heavily upon the United States to meet its defense needs.

Since the late 1960's Iran has focused its attention south toward the Persian Gulf as the primary zone of its interests, thus expanding Iran's security parameters to include the defense of the vital sea lanes beyond the Persian Gulf—in the Arabian Sea, into the northwestern quadrant of the Indian Ocean and as far south as the Maritius Islands. Such a broad security zone is a huge defense burden for a relatively small country such as Iran. Whether the Shah can attain the conventional military capability to ensure the security of such a broad zone of interest remains to be seen, despite ample evidence which indicates that the determination and the financial means to develop such a capability does exist.

The Shah has reportedly stated that the "sea knows no frontiers,"<sup>52</sup> designating the Arabian Sea and the oil-lanes of the northwestern quadrant of the Indian Ocean as components of Iran's expanded security zone. This zone will be protected by Iran's naval expansion program designed to ensure the security of these vital sea lanes of commerce through which all of Iran's oil export must pass to reach its destination.

In the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz is considered by the Shah to be the "jugular vein" of Iran. This choke-point is a highly vulnerable, relatively narrow passage connecting the Persian Gulf basin via the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean to the rest of the world. All of Iran's oil exports and over half of Iran's imports, including the weapons purchased, pass through the Strait of Hormuz to arrive at Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf. One Iranian analyst has stated that:

Any threat to the security of the area would endanger the very existence of the country. These waterways have become not only the life lines of Iran

and other littoral states but also the life lines of Western Europe, Japan, increasingly the United States, and much of the Third World. . . .<sup>53</sup>

Oman owns the southern tip of the Strait. Iran is vitally concerned with the retention of a friendly regime in Oman and would not hesitate to use force to halt a rebellion in the areas of the Strait. The security of the Strait of Hormuz has gained a vital dimension of importance to the Iranians.

Iran's proposal enunciated in 1970 to encourage the littoral Persian Gulf states to develop a multilateral collective security arrangement gathered some momentum when the Foreign Ministers of the Persian Gulf states met in 1976 in a conference in Muscat to find ways to cooperate to ensure the security of the region and to pave the way for a summit meeting on this topic.<sup>54</sup> The Monarch favors the creation of a regional Persian Gulf arrangement. He has reportedly stated that his government is "... ready for the closest cooperation to the loosest one. . . ."<sup>55</sup>

Regarding Iran's security interests in the Indian Ocean, the Shah has consistently favored the designation of the Indian Ocean as a "zone of peace" claiming that the super powers should abstain from expanding their influence in the Indian Ocean and "assign the responsibility for maintaining peace and security" of this region to its littoral states.<sup>56</sup> In an interview with Hassan Heykal, the Shah reportedly has stated that:

... There is a vacuum in the Indian Ocean. We do not claim to be able to fill the void entirely on our own. We believe that the area's countries must maintain naval presence in the ocean, especially close to the Straits of the Persian Gulf, which provide access to the heart of Iran.<sup>57</sup>

Both Pakistan and Iran are committed to ensure the security of the Indian Ocean area, particularly the portion which includes the Arabian Sea. In addition to this converging interest, Iran in 1972 committed itself to come to the defense of Pakistan's territorial integrity, if Pakistan was threatened with further dismemberment. The Shah reportedly has stated that Iran is "unequivocally against any separatist movement in Pakistan, and will firmly block it. . . ."<sup>58</sup>

PRC supports the Shah's efforts toward the creation of a security zone in the Persian Gulf by the littoral states of the area, and without the presence of the great powers. It also supports the creation of a "zone of peace" in the Indian Ocean and a nuclear free zone in the Middle East.<sup>59</sup> Both Iraq and the USSR support "the struggle for turning" the Indian Ocean area into a zone of peace, as expressed in a

joint communique issued in 1976;<sup>60</sup> the United States also supports the creation of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

*Iran's Growing Military Capability.* The distinction between capability and intent, and the difficulty in accurately assessing intent are inherent problems that are faced by military analysts. In this regard Iran's case is no exception. The military capability of Iran in the numbers game is known, although its qualitative aspects, its absorption capacity, and its capability to effectively utilize the weapons acquired are debatable and Iran's capability to absorb future arms acquisitions is further questioned.

Iranian armed forces require upgrading in logistics, unit readiness, reinforcement (greater airlift capability due to the rugged terrains) and enhanced flexibility of combat forces to include military doctrine, force structure and weapons requirements. However, despite the existence of an array of qualitative improvements which are necessary, there is little doubt that Iran has the most developed capability and the best equipped and probably the best organized armed forces in the Persian Gulf. For example, it has been stated, and accurately so, that no other Persian Gulf state possesses a navy comparable to that of Iran,<sup>61</sup> despite the fact that compared with West European nations, Iran's naval and logistic capabilities are in their infancy. For example, Dale R. Tahtinen, a specialist in defense and national security affairs claims that:

Tehran has a gulf-wide quick-reaction capability. In addition Iran is said to be getting closer to controlling seaborne traffic in the Gulf, and from their new naval-gun emplacements on Abu Musa and the Greater Tunb islands, the Iranians are making spot radio checks on transiting vessels.<sup>62</sup>

The Soviet Union is carefully observing Iran's growing naval capability. Radio Moscow in its so-called "Peace and Progress Commentary" in Arabic, has stated that:

... The destroyer rocket-carrier Artemiz of the Iranian navy is being completely modernized at the South African docks, and Iranian sailors are taking crash courses in Simonstown ... US military advisers ... are trying to turn the Iranian army into a force capable, together with the South African Republic, of defending this section of the Indian Ocean. To put it more precisely, it is obvious that the USA is trying to finally turn the Iranian regime into an instrument of US imperialism in this vast area of the world.<sup>63</sup>

Despite such commentaries the Soviet Union does not appear to be

too concerned over Iran's arms buildup. In the past, for example, the Soviet media usually reported unfavorably upon joint CENTO exercises; the exercises held in 1976 in the Indian Ocean were reported as an event. In a discussion held in Moscow in 1976 on Iran, the Soviets viewed Iran's buildup in moderate tones, as a necessity for Iran to protect the oil route and as an element of Iran's overall desire to modernize.<sup>64</sup>

At any rate, Iran's arms acquisition focusing upon helicopters, hover-craft, minesweepers, special and quick reaction forces indicate that Iran's concern with covert terrorist groups attacking the sea lanes of the Persian Gulf is taken seriously in Tehran, since the focus of such quick reaction forces is upon mobility, surveillance and quick deployment in crisis situations. In addition, arms such as the Airborne Warning and Communications System (AWACS), the Spruance class destroyers and Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) will provide Iran with the capability to defend its interests beyond its own borders to include the defense of the vital sea lanes through which this region's oil must pass to reach its destination in Japan, Europe, and the United States.

Alfred L. Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Middle Eastern and South Asian Affairs, has commented that the sale of AWACS to Iran "was not a decision made without a great deal of study and soul searching." According to Atherton, the approval of the sale to Iran by the Carter Administration was based on presidential policy which allows transfer of arms in order to promote "the security of our close friends," and that of the United States. The AWACS was described by Atherton as "central to Iran's long-range planning in the air defense field." He further commented that delaying a decision on the AWACS sale would "hamper Iran's air defense planning, increase program costs and create similar serious doubts as to U.S. intentions."<sup>65</sup>

Eric F. von Marbod, the Acting Director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency, views the AWACS acquisition as a more efficient and less costly alternative for the Iranian government. In his opinion, seven AWACS utilized with "existing facilities" and "12 to 21 ground-based radars at accessible sites" should cost less than three billion dollars. In comparison, he points out that the construction of forty "ground-based radar stations has been estimated by Iran to cost as much as \$15 billion."<sup>66</sup> In a statement made before the House International Relations Committee, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance discussed the proposed sale of seven AWACS planes to Iran, mentioning that the Administration approves the sale because:

It is in our national interest; it meets a legitimate Iranian defense need . . . close U.S.-Iranian relations are demonstrably in our national interest.<sup>67</sup>

The principal use of AWACS would be for coordination of the command, control, and communication facilities of Iran in order to ensure the defense of its territory and its vital interests. Iran covers an area in excess of 630,000 square miles containing a number of zones of defense, in which such airborne systems could be utilized more efficiently and effectively considering the rough terrain and the still inadequate facilities, roads, communications and other infrastructures within the country. In addition the AWACS would provide Iran with a capable command, control, and communications alternative, which could be utilized in a situation in which Iran's command, control, and communications facilities on ground were destroyed or found inoperative in part as a result of an attack, or in a crisis in which such facilities fall into the hands of rebel forces. Finally, according to Von Marbod, in conjunction with the F-14, and the F-16, the AWACS:

will help assure that the Iranian government retains a modern air force which in the 1980's and 1990's will be equal to that of any hostile regional force other than the Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup>

Stansfield Turner, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, initially had opposed the sale of the AWACS planes to Iran, fearing that the secret equipment normally installed in the planes may fall into Soviet hands. However, according to Jody Powell:

Admiral Turner has now taken the position that the special measures now contemplated, in combination with Iran's security record in other such situations, will materially reduce the risk of any compromise.<sup>69</sup>

Iran's security procedures will be reviewed, to ensure that they are adequate in protecting the AWACS, one year prior to the delivery of the AWACS to Iran.<sup>70</sup> The Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, in a private memorandum to President Carter in early September 1977 stated "that there is always some risk" in any arms transfer; however he added that the sale of AWACS to Iran has "clearly adequate safeguards."<sup>71</sup> In addition, President Carter informed the Congress that the AWACS planes would not be equipped with some of the sensitive equipment. According to Jody Powell, the Presidential spokesman, Iran has agreed to the restrictions imposed by the United States on the use of the planes.<sup>72</sup>

“DOD Analyses of Alternative Systems for Iranian Air Defense,” a Department of Defense study, points out that the AWACS, combined with some ground radars, is the best available radar system for Iran.<sup>73</sup> The alternatives to AWACS are the Hawkeye (E-2C), developed by the Navy, somewhat similar in functions to AWACS; a complete radar system; and NIMROD. According to the DOD study, the land-based radar system advocated by the General Accounting Office (GAO) would be most expensive, while selling the E-2C airborne radar system combined with ground radar would be less expensive but would require three times as many planes and more American personnel.<sup>74</sup> The British NIMROD is a maritime-oriented system. The British have decided to buy the NIMROD, instead of the AWACS, for their forces.

The chief defensive benefit of the AWACS planes is that they will provide Iran early warning against a surprise attack by the USSR.<sup>75</sup> The acquisition of the AWACS system along with the F-14, F-16, and the substantial modernization of Iranian ground forces, together, can act as a “trip wire” to deter, and, if deterrence fails, to prevent an attack by any adversary except the Soviet Union. The protection and defense of Iran’s borders on the ground is the principal mission of Iran’s ground forces which includes Iran’s gendarmerie. This mission can be best accomplished provided it is supported by an air defense radar system such as AWACS, particularly due to the country’s difficult and in places insurmountable terrain. It is also mandatory that the Imperial Iranian Air Force maintain air superiority and ensure the country’s air space sovereignty, which can only be accomplished in conjunction with the acquisition, maintenance, and coordinated use of the AWACS, the F-16 and the F-14, in a joint defense effort with the Iranian Ground Forces.

#### IRAN’S ARMS ACQUISITIONS: IMPACT ON US-IRANIAN RELATIONS AND REGIONAL STABILITY

The sale of the F-14, the F-16, the AWACS, the Spruance class destroyers and the ELINT appears to have a salutary impact upon US influence on Iran, on the region and on enhancing regional stability. The Iranian government views the procurement of such weapons essential to its perceived defense “needs” and these needs appear to be carefully studied, evaluated and considered by the Monarch, assisted by expert confidants from Iran, the United States and the international community.

*Impact on US-Iranian Relations.* Iran is an example of one nation depending almost wholly upon another nation for arms. Iranian dependence upon the United States for military equipment, spare parts, training, etc., is quite substantial. This dependence is expected to expand considerably in the mid-range period as a result of Iran's post-acquisition of arms from the United States and a desire on part of the Iranian leadership to maintain, if not expand, the US-Iranian ties.

The US Congress has the power to stop the provision of spare parts to Iran. This capability is comprehensive, including the provision of spare parts, follow-on support and training. It is a tremendous leverage held by the Congress on the conduct of US foreign policy and on the future course of US relations with Iran. For example, in case of a war between Iran and one of its neighbors, the Congress may use such a last resort but highly effective weapon. Without a doubt even an extended delay in the delivery of spare parts is a critical leverage, as shown by the Egyptian dependence upon the USSR.

Several studies have pointed out that the Iranian armed forces cannot fight a war lasting very long, without receiving spare parts from the United States. Iran's dependence on logistics support from the United States is probably as valuable as the weapons themselves, and the dependence created by Iran's need for such support is a tremendous leverage to ensure that the weapons purchased by Iran are used defensively and to maintain stability in the region. One analyst states that:

Complex, sophisticated weapons systems to Iran and Saudi Arabia have made these two countries so dependent on long-range US follow-on training and support that such arms programs nearly approximate a treaty.<sup>76</sup>

Increased military capabilities of friendly nations such as Iran and Saudi Arabia through Foreign Military Sales (FMS) can reduce the likelihood of US military involvement in a crisis situation in this area and can contribute toward regional stability.<sup>77</sup>

Sidney Sober, the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, in spelling out Iran-US relations, indicated that the coming decade will mark an "increasing partnership" between the two nations. In summarizing his speech, Sober mentioned that: "The close relationship between our two countries [rests] on shared interests and goals—or to put it another way, on a broad overlap of our national interests. We expect the range of these shared interests to grow in the decade ahead . . ."<sup>78</sup>

*Impact on Regional Stability.* According to an Iranian author, in dealing with stability and instability as an outcome regarding the transfer of arms, Western authors tend to use a double standard. On the one hand, arms transfer and real increases in NATO countries' share of GNP for defense are stabilizing, while increased defense expenditure and procurement by friendly states can be destabilizing. On the other hand, it is generally considered essential that NATO nations acquire the new military hardware available, but the introduction of such weapons and hardware into other areas are viewed as dangerous.<sup>79</sup>

The transfer of arms ensures the maintenance of stability, as it has been shown in Western Europe and the Korean Peninsula. In the Persian Gulf area, the transfer of arms appears to have been instrumental during the past decade in strengthening the hands of the moderate, pro-Western regimes and weakening the posture of the revolutionary, pro-Soviet elements. As such the transfer of arms has contributed toward stabilizing the region, an impact worth consideration. The continuing focus upon possible destabilizing impact and the portrayal of Iran as a nation "attempting to gain hegemony as a sub-empire . . ." or to view Iran's arms acquisition "as a prelude to a possible US-Soviet confrontation" appear exaggerated.<sup>80</sup> For example, in the March 1973 clash between Iraq and Kuwait, Iran immediately offered military assistance to the tiny shaikhdom of Kuwait, which helped stabilize and prevent a potential conflict between two Persian Gulf Arab littoral states.<sup>81</sup>

During the past decade or since the withdrawal of British security forces from the Persian Gulf, Iran's relations with its neighbors in the Gulf have improved considerably, as indicated by Iran's relinquishing its claim to Bahrain, entering into continental shelf agreements with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Dubai, and Oman. In 1975 Iran and Iraq resolved their dispute over the Shatt al-Arab estuary, thus removing one of the principal sources of tension between Iran and its contiguous Arab neighbor. In this regard, the Iran-Iraq Coordination Office for Shatt al-Arab Affairs began its activities in late November 1976 in Tehran, aimed at improving navigation in this estuary, dredging the waterway, training pilots, setting tolls to be levied on merchant vessels, formulating new regulations in order to cut red-tape, and preparing the 50-mile estuary to handle a much greater amount of maritime trade.<sup>82</sup> Since the "arms buildup" began in the early 1970's, there has been a substantial overall reduction of tensions between the states of the Gulf area. The number of issues that have been resolved between the Gulf

states in the 1970's have been remarkable, which to some extent should be attributed to the impact of arms transfer upon regional stability. Indeed, countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia do not need to search for greater responsibilities than those already bearing upon their shoulders, namely, the defense of their homeland and their vital interests, and the development the military capability needed to accomplish both of these herculean tasks.

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