



**NHSMUN**

**HISTORICAL CRISIS**

**UPDATE PAPER**

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**Renata Venzor**

Hello Delegates,

First off, welcome to the Historical Crisis: 1952 Cabinet of Iran! My name is Albert Paton Puig, and I will be your Assistant Director for Session I for NHSMUN 2025! This is my first year as an NHSMUN staffer but will be my third year attending NHSMUN.

I am from Hamilton, ON, but I live in London, UK, and am a first-year student at University College London studying Politics and International Relations. Outside of Model UN, I love traveling, spending time with my friends, and listening to music. I also have an obsession with rewatching the same couple of shows over and over, instead of watching new shows.

I have been part of Model UN since Grade 9, and it has been an incredibly influential force in my life. Not only has it taught me how to be a better communicator and collaborator, but it has taught me time management, leadership, and research skills. I attended NHSMUN 2023 and 2024 as a delegate, and it was an unforgettable experience, both in committee with great debate and out of committee, meeting new people worldwide. Crisis committees were some of the most fun committees I ever partook in – they are dynamic and allow you to learn a whole new element of life and Model UN. I hope your Model UN path can prove as useful to you as it did to me!

This update paper serves to provide you with context leading up to the start date of the committee, specifically with the July 21 uprising and further updates with the AIOC nationalization. This is another element of the difficult decisions that the Mossadegh cabinet must make when choosing what path to bring Iran towards. Please feel free to use this update paper to guide you as you continue to prepare for the committee leading up to New York in March!

I am eagerly awaiting to see all of you make your best points in moderated caucuses, hammer out a deal in unmoderated causes, and see your secret plots come to fruition through your crisis arcs. Remember to come prepared, listen to the committee, and most importantly, enjoy yourself! Feel free to reach out with any questions, and I cannot wait to see all of you on the committee shortly!

Best,

Albert Paton Puig

Historical Crisis: Cabinet of the Imperial State of Iran (1952)

Session I

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**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Marcus Gonzalez, and I would like to warmly welcome you all to the Historical Crisis: Cabinet of the Imperial State of Iran (1952). I will be your Assistant Director for Session II of NHSMUN, and I could not be more excited to join everyone as we explore this complex and fascinating topic.

This is my first-year staffing NHSMUN, but I have done Model UN since my sophomore year of high school. Last year, I attended NHSMUN in the Pakistan Crisis committee, and I am ecstatic to return to NHSMUN crisis committees. Outside of NHSMUN, I have attended numerous invitationals throughout the country, and coincidentally enough, have played Iran several times. Model UN has played an integral part in teaching me how to find compromise and convey ideas to others. It has also taught me how to make friends in unlikely places and how to strengthen my bonds with my past team, ultimately resulting in amazing memories.

I am from Miami, Florida, and am currently a freshman at Fordham University studying International Political Economy and Environmental Studies (though I will pretend that my majors do not change at least once a month). I am incredibly interested in the sustainable and equitable development of global economic systems. I'm currently interning with Fordham's Office of Sustainability to research solutions to growing food waste issues on and around campus. Additionally, I am an editor of both the Fordham Undergraduate Research Journal and the Ram's Economic Digest as I want to make academia and information more accessible to everyone. In my free time, I love reading novels (mysteries and classics are my favorites), running, and musical theater. Coming to university in New York City has been both extremely overwhelming and fun, so feel free to ask about any recommendations for activities or restaurants in the city. My favorite movie has to be *The Devil Wears Prada*, and my favorite singer right now is Charli XCX.

While the issues in 1952 Iran are reminiscent of an eternal struggle between imperial powers and developing states, the specific problem of oil nationalization and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company are exceedingly complex. Hopefully, the following Update Paper will clarify the exact status of Iran at the start of the committee. Best of luck, and I cannot wait to meet you all.

Sincerely,

Marcus Gonzalez

Historical Crisis: Cabinet of the Imperial State of Iran (1952)

Session II

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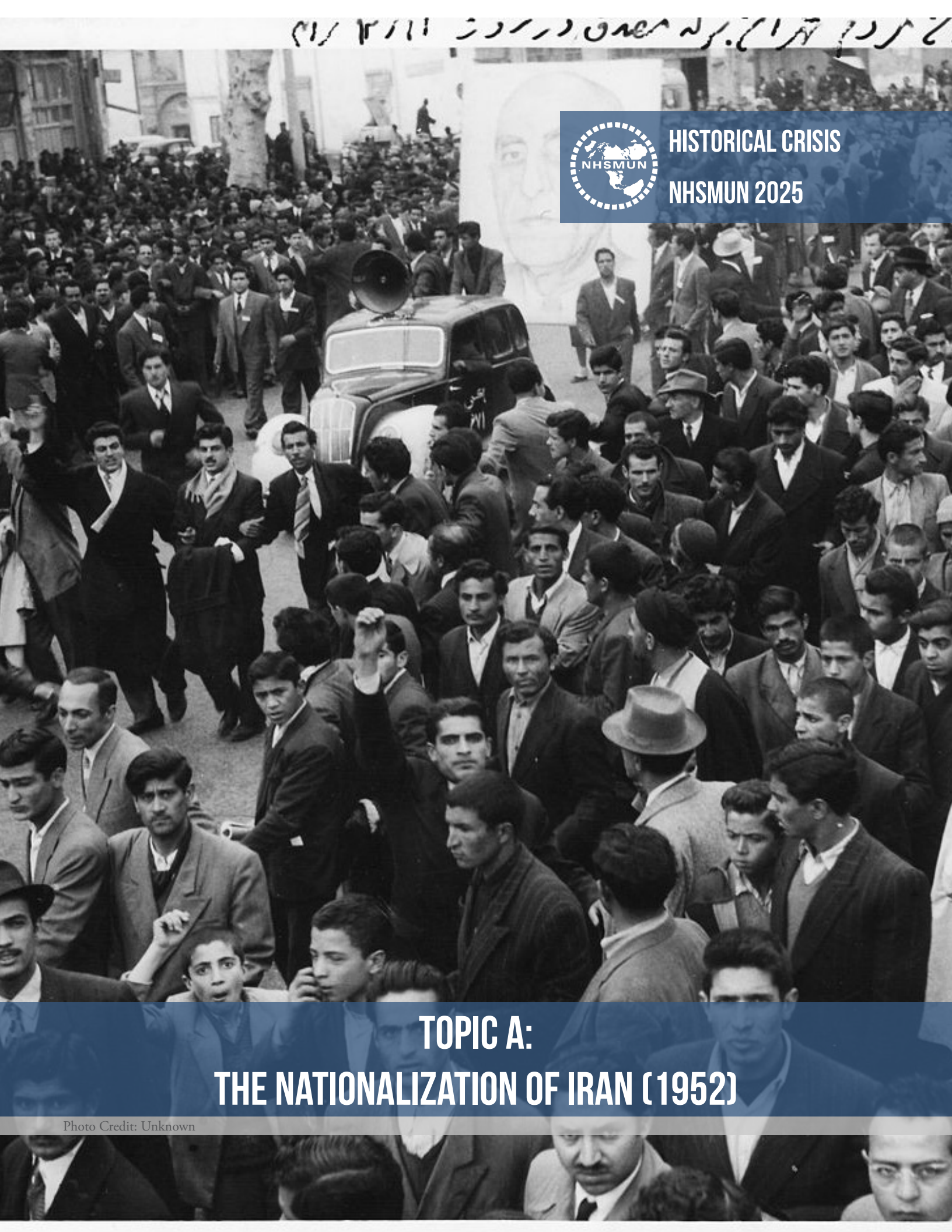


کتابخانه ملی ایران



HISTORICAL CRISIS

NHSMUN 2025



**TOPIC A:**

**THE NATIONALIZATION OF IRAN (1952)**

Photo Credit: Unknown

## Introduction

Iran finds itself at the crossroads of turmoil, both at home, and abroad. Tensions simmering between the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his dutiful Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, have strained the unity of the government. On the international front, the topic of oil caused numerous countries to intervene, as they sought to profit from the young state's resources. Through the next few months, the country would undergo numerous changes, which would shake the state to its core, and set a precedent for how the world would view Iran.

The relationship between the Shah and Prime Minister Mossadegh has been tense since Mossadegh's election in 1951.<sup>1</sup> They were often in disagreement, especially regarding the nationalization of the AIOC and who runs the government. Moreover, both wanted to take control of the government and remake it by themselves at the center of government. On July 16, 1952, the Shah removed Mossadegh from power, because of demands by Mossadegh to be able to choose the war minister, which used to be the responsibility of the Shah. In his place, he brought in Ahmad Ghavam, in an attempt to get back control of his hands. While Mossadegh was removed, his ideas were not, as Ghavam shared many of his policies.<sup>2</sup> This included the most controversial decision that Mossadegh had taken: the nationalization of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (AIOC) by Mossadegh a year prior, under protest of the British government.<sup>3</sup>

While the AIOC was successfully completed, it was beset with numerous problems. These problems range from a decline in revenue to violations of international law. Additionally, Iran is finding itself increasingly isolated on the international stage, despite attempting to further relations with both American

and British officials.<sup>4</sup> The heart of the matter is a complex web of legal claims, economic dependencies, and geopolitical strategies, reflective of the country's struggle as a developing state, especially in an era of anti-imperialism. Given the lack of British personnel to oversee the major oil refineries, the flow of oil, which is the livelihood of the Iranian economy, has slowed to a trickle. Additionally, there have been numerous delays in properly training Iranian technicians to manage production. Finally, the British embargo has resulted in virtually no oil exports since nationalization.<sup>5</sup> This has severely cut revenues for the company. The lack of income has caused economic turmoil in Iran since oil exports represent a significant portion of the country's economy.

This era of Iran, which commenced with the removal of Mossadegh by the Shah, would go on to define the status of Iran, for years to come. Balancing international and domestic struggles, the leaders of Iran would have to ensure their citizens are uplifted, while also establishing their own reputation on the world stage.

1 Scott Koch, "The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, August 1953" (Central Intelligence Agency, June 1998), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/the%20central%20intelligence%20%5B15369853%5D.pdf>.

2 Albion Ross, "Hundreds Seized in Iranian Rioting Over Ghavam Rule," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1952, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/072152iran-riots.html>.

3 "World Court Bars Ruling on Iran Oil," *The New York Times*, July 23, 1952, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/072352iran-world.html>.

4 Akhtar Adil Razwy, "THE ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL DISPUTE," *Pakistan Horizon* 6, no. 2 (1953): 75–85, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41392569>.

5 Bruce McKern and United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division, *Transnational Corporations and the Exploitation of Natural Resources* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/206877?ln=en>.

## Mossadegh's Restoration

The removal of Mohammad Mossadegh triggered a massive public response, as Iranians took to the streets in protest.<sup>6</sup> Even as Ghavam continued to reassure protestors that their concerns would be listened to by his government, they continued to protest to restore the democratically elected government of Iran. As these continued past the first day, rioting broke out across Iran, and hundreds were detained.<sup>7</sup> Martial law was implemented, and tanks and the military were on the streets in an attempt to quell the riots. The protests, however, continued and by July 21, the Shah had begun to reconsider his decision to remove Mossadegh.<sup>8</sup>

The National Front, the name of Mossadegh's political party, called for a general strike on July 21. This was meant to force a complete shutdown of the Iranian economy until the Shah ceded to their demands.<sup>9</sup> This was followed by Ayatollah Kashani, a prominent Islamic cleric in Iran, to issue a *fatwa* (meaning a religious ruling) ordering soldiers to participate in

6 Ross, "Hundreds Seized in Iranian Rioting Over Ghavam Rule."

7 Ross, "Hundreds Seized in Iranian Rioting Over Ghavam Rule."

8 Albion Ross, "Mossadegh Is Back as Premier of Iran; Order Is Restored," *The New York Times*, July 23, 1952, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/072352iran-order.html>.

9 Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008).

10 Koch, "The Central Intelligence Agency and the Fall of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, August 1953."

11 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.

12 Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 3 (1987): 26186.

13 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.

14 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 140.

15 Ross, "Mossadegh Is Back as Premier of Iran; Order Is Restored."

the protests, in conjunction with the Islamist group Fedayin-i-Islam.<sup>10</sup> This caused many soldiers and officers to abandon their posts and government orders, and join the protests in favor of Mossadegh's government.<sup>11</sup> The pro-Mossadegh Qashqai tribe had also attacked the Bakhtiari tribe, who were largely anti-Mossadegh.<sup>12</sup> This day of protests led to dozens dying as Ghavam attempted to restore control to his leadership.<sup>13</sup> Even then, Ghavam was unable to restore order in Iran. It seemed like the Iranian people would not stop their protests until their chant, "Death or Mossadegh", was sufficiently answered.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Ghavam resigned from his job after only five days in power, and the Shah was faced with a new set of options.

On July 22, the Shah invited Mossadegh to form a government. Mossadegh was able to form a government when the Iranian legislature, the Majlis, voted for him to return.<sup>15</sup> This brought Mossadegh back to power and meant that Mossadegh was granted his wish of having a War Minister subordinate to him. This was a substantial weakening of the Shah's power. He no



Military vehicles of Iranian Army - 21 July

Credit: Unknown author

longer had control over the military and was now required to yield to Mossadegh and his government. This was exemplified by Mossadegh's appointment of the next War Minister: himself.<sup>16</sup> Mossadegh therefore was seemingly in absolute control of the government.

The Shah and Mossadegh soon became locked in a power struggle to be the most powerful man in Iran. After the formation of a government in mid-July, Mossadegh presented the Shah with a demand to be in control of the War Ministry, in keeping with his wish for democratic civilian control over the government. The Shah had been in control of the military for many years. This gave the Shah the power to maintain his government in check, which he believed was important to keep the state stable. Indeed, Mossadegh was worried that the Shah was trying to hurt his government through both his influence of the military and through his contacts in Britain. Mossadegh was concerned that, unless he controlled all levers of government, he would not be able to complete "the final phase of the national struggle."<sup>17</sup> This meant that he would be unable to finish the improvement project of Iran that had started with the AIOC nationalization a year prior.

The Shah, however, was not a neutral actor either. Mossadegh viewed him as helping the British to infiltrate the Majlis.<sup>18</sup> This was a result of the nationalization of the AIOC, with the British attempting to wrestle control of Majlis into their hands so that they could torpedo any nationalization attempt. However, Mossadegh froze seat counting before the British being able to take any substantial advantage in parliament. This made Mossadegh untrusting of the Shah, who he viewed as a foreign agent who was attempting to sink his government.<sup>19</sup> The British were, at the very least, somewhat involved in the Shah's attempt at stopping Mossadegh, although the extent is not yet clear.<sup>20</sup>

Mossadegh, on the contrary, is generally supported by the people. In areas without vote rigging, his party, the National Front, won most seats in the Majlis.<sup>21</sup> Vote rigging in Iran is primarily in rural areas, where parties are unable to have observers watching.<sup>22</sup> This means that anti-democratic forces can change vote counts through threats and bribes. July 21 protestors were in favor of the prime minister, who was considered to be a palatable option by all of the different interest groups (communists, Islamists).<sup>23</sup> They rallied around his decision to nationalize the AIOC, many of them being strong nationalists who strongly support the idea of Iran being as independent as possible. Even if they were not entirely supportive of the prime minister, hatred of foreign forces and the Shah was a far more pressing concern, causing greater support for Mossadegh.

The July 21 Uprising reflected this uneasy truce. The riots on the street were large. Parts of society joined together to participate against the Shah and the government of Ghavam.<sup>24</sup> This included uniting a variety of different opposition groups—Tudeh, the communist party; Ayatollah Kashani's supporters; and supporters of Mossadegh and his party, the National Front. Although they are currently united, their many disagreements remain a sticking point. Tudeh is in favor of social reforms and workers' rights. Meanwhile, Kashani is in favor of Islamist conservative rule. Finally, the National Front is primarily a nationalist party aiming at restoring sovereignty to Iran. They are currently within a very fragile truce, and supporters of both factions are not entirely committed to supporting Mossadegh.<sup>25</sup>

Even within the big-tent National Front, there are rumors of tension going on between the different factions.<sup>26</sup> This creates a state of very uneasy tension for Prime Minister Mossadegh. Although he just won a strong victory in the streets and against the Shah, his coalition that has helped bring him back

16 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.

17 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*, 135.

18 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.

19 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.

20 Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran."

21 Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran."

22 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.

23 Mark Curtis, "Iran 1953: MI6 Plots with Islamists to Overthrow Democracy," *Declassified UK* (blog), August 1, 2023, <https://www.declassifieduk.org/iran-1953-mi6-plots-with-islamists-to-overthrow-democracy/>.

24 Curtis, "Iran 1953: MI6 Plots with Islamists to Overthrow Democracy."

25 Curtis, "Iran 1953: MI6 Plots with Islamists to Overthrow Democracy."

26 Curtis, "Iran 1953: MI6 Plots with Islamists to Overthrow Democracy."

to power against the wishes of the British government and the Shah will not necessarily support him as he continues to embark on governance. Indeed, the first test of this public support would take place at the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

## The State of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company

The law nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) was passed on March 15, 1951. While there has been relatively strong public support for Mossadegh's vision for the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), there remain legal and business issues within the country and internationally.<sup>27</sup> For example, the UK and AIOC have attempted to force arbitration with Iran, or binding negotiations. Mossadegh however argued that Iran had the right to nationalize its assets as part of its sovereignty. When the UK took the matter to court, the international court sided with Iran, stating the UK had no right to interfere in an internal Iranian issue.<sup>28</sup> This means that there is no expectation for Mossadegh's government to discuss with the British government before arriving at a decision. The power to determine the course of the now National Iranian Oil Company lies in the hands of Iran. Notably, this crisis is occurring during a time of major anti-imperialism abroad. This meant that Iran's actions were an important step in legitimizing that Iran was truly independent from foreign influence. Some dissenters believed that the AIOC and Iran would be best off splitting profits 50/50. Ultimately there were no internal legal challenges to the nationalization law paving a clear path for the country.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, with the nationalization of the oil industry, there was a sense of unity that stemmed from the act that extended to all. Some described that it had "brought honor and pride to Iranians" and it "would never be put[...] back."<sup>30</sup> The situation demonstrates a broader trend in post-

war economics and nationalism of the current world. Along with this, developing countries are seeking to assert control over natural resources dominated by foreign entities.

However, on an international scale, the criticism of nationalization vastly outweighed its praise. Immediately after the Majlis approved the nationalization of the AIOC, the World Court and the UK asked the International Court of Justice to stop the process of nationalization. They wanted to force Iran to come back to previously held negotiations.<sup>31</sup> Britain sought to return at least fifty percent ownership of the AIOC revenues to themselves. Yet, Mossadegh's government argued that the courts had no jurisdiction over the issue. The ICJ initially ordered that, until a final decision could be made, the AIOC should still be able to perform its pre-nationalization functions. The Iranian people and government became concerned that their resource independence would come to a swift end. However, on July 22, 1952, the ICJ held that international law held no jurisdiction over the issue.<sup>32</sup> The Court believed that because the AIOC is a company the ICJ can only judge treaties between countries. This reaffirmed the legality of the AIOC being a solely Iranian company.

Despite global anti-imperialist sentiment which would lend itself to a developing country, Iran still finds itself relatively alone and without strong diplomatic allies in the world. At the heart of this isolation is Britain's global empire and diplomatic power that can coerce or force almost any country to join its side. Currently, Britain still maintains control over 70 overseas territories, spanning Africa, the Middle East, and the rest of the world.<sup>33</sup> Due to this, many other developing countries are scared to stand against the British Empire. Looking at larger international countries, due to the Cold War tensions, countries like France and the United States are unlikely to side against their ally.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Iran has been very wary of the Soviet Union since the USSR's invasion in the early 1940s.

27 Reza Ghasimi, "Iran's Oil Nationalization and Mossadegh's Involvement with the World Bank," *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 3 (2011): 442–56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23012174>.

28 Razwy, "THE ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL DISPUTE"

29 Ghobad Fakhimi, "30 Years Iran Oil: From Nationalization to Islamic Revolution," *Chapter Two: Oil Nationalization Movement 1950-1956*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, [www.neiu.edu/sites/neiu.edu/files/migrated-business-body/documents/acannova/Fakhimi%20Book%20Excerpt.pdf](http://www.neiu.edu/sites/neiu.edu/files/migrated-business-body/documents/acannova/Fakhimi%20Book%20Excerpt.pdf).

30 Fakhimi, "30 Years Iran Oil: From Nationalization to Islamic Revolution," 31

31 International Court of Justice, "Order of 5 July 1951," July 5, 1951, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/16/orders>.

32 International Court of Justice, "Judgment of 22 July 1952," July 22, 1952, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/16/judgments>.

33 Adam Taylor, "The Rise and Fall of the British Empire," *The Washington Post*, 6 Sept. 2015, [www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/08/map-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-british-empire](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/08/map-the-rise-and-fall-of-the-british-empire).

34 Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men*.





Final hearing of the ICJ regarding the nationalization of the AIOC.

Credit: Daan Noske / Anefo

Impartial groups, like the World Bank, have also tried to resolve the problem. On three separate missions to Iran, officials offered advice, agreements, and even loans, done to ensure smooth oil production.<sup>35</sup> However, negotiations fell apart over the issue of British workers being brought back to the plants, as Mossadegh wanted to provide jobs for Iranian workers. Compounding this was the Sunni-Shia split that resulted in tension and a lack of cooperation between Islamic states.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, ongoing tension between primarily Sunni, Gulf countries, and the Shia-majority Iran has been heightened. This is because countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia scaled up oil production to exploit the market gap.<sup>37</sup> Combined, this means that Iran is unlikely to find allies with them. Yet, there is hope. Other developing states, like Pakistan, have a strong interest in following Iran's path of nationalization.<sup>38</sup> This means that other countries in this same situation would be more willing to aid Iran and work with them.

As it stands now, the AIOC remains a constant topic of

<sup>35</sup> Ghasimi, "Iran's Oil Nationalization and Mossadegh's Involvement with the World Bank",

<sup>36</sup> Sarah Pruitt, "Islam's Sunni-Shia Divide, Explained," *HISTORY*, 10 Jan. 2022, [www.history.com/news/sunni-shia-divide-islam-muslim](http://www.history.com/news/sunni-shia-divide-islam-muslim). Accessed 18 Dec. 2024.

<sup>37</sup> McKern and United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division, *Transnational Corporations and the Exploitation of Natural Resources*.

<sup>38</sup> Ghasimi, "Iran's Oil Nationalization and Mossadegh's Involvement with the World Bank"

<sup>39</sup> Razwy, "THE ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL DISPUTE"

<sup>40</sup> McKern and United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division, *Transnational Corporations and the Exploitation of Natural Resources*.

<sup>41</sup> Fakhimi, "30 Years of Iran Oil: From Nationalization to Islamic Revolution."

<sup>42</sup> Fakhimi, "30 Years of Iran Oil: From Nationalization to Islamic Revolution."

<sup>43</sup> McKern and United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division, *Transnational Corporations and the Exploitation of*

controversy, where every action can result in changes. When the AIOC was nationalized, British employees either left or were removed from the country.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently, there was a sudden drop in capacity to produce crude oil and refine it. While the country produced over 242 million barrels of oil in 1950, this was cut down to just 10 million in 1952.<sup>40</sup> This is because the British technicians had the most hands-on experience. This is due to the AIOC's policy that banned Iranian engineers from operating infrastructure.<sup>41</sup> This would make it much more difficult for production to ramp back up to pre-nationalization standards. However, Iran does have trained technicians who know how to operate the industrial technology given time.<sup>42</sup>

However, even with the promises of production, the British embargo remains disastrous to the Iranian economy. When the AIOC was nationalized, British Petroleum, the owner of AIOC, coordinated with every oil company. They organized a total boycott of Iranian oil products.<sup>43</sup> Since nationalization,

only 300 barrels of oil have been exported.<sup>44</sup> This has killed the economy. It has decreased the rial's value and led to increased unemployment. Until an agreement is settled, there is almost no hope for exporting oil.

Yet, the Iranian economy is not dependent on oil. There are many other avenues for economic stability. Oil revenues were important to the government. However, experts estimate that the non-oil Gross National Product per capita is equal to Turkey's.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the main activity in Iran is agriculture, which is not affected. Also, a rise in global demand for primary goods provides alternatives for the country's economy. Primary goods are items like textiles or minerals. This cabinet can create unique solutions to the situation in Iran without compromising on the embargo.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion

The National Iranian Oil Company still faces a concerning number of challenges. While it has been recently declared a legal nationalization, the UK still views the act as hostile and is seeking to find a way to get what it claims is theirs. Their hostile actions internationally have slowed the export of Iranian oil to a crawl and has tarnished Iran's efforts to establish itself on the world stage. Only through addressing each problem together can this government right the state and chart a new course for it. The government needs a deal to lift the embargo or a creative solution to fix the country's economic woes, along with crafting a new national image to contend with the imperialistic states of the old.

As ministers within this cabinet, delegates must work together to create and maintain a coalition that puts Iran first. With international forces like the United Kingdom lurking outside of national borders, and the Shah and rising factions within the very halls of government growing in power, Mossadegh certainly will have a difficult time managing his cabinet. Outside influence will aim to stop the policies of Mossadegh that have been supported by the people, so ministers will have to think

about what is best for them, their portfolio, and the country. Ultimately, these ministers must cast aside selfish intentions and work to make Iran the model of anti-imperialism that it is and not succumb to the pressure of ever-present imperialistic countries.

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*Natural Resources.*

44 McKern and United Nations Transnational Corporations and Management Division, *Transnational Corporations and the Exploitation of Natural Resources.*

45 M. G. Majd, "The 1951-53 Oil Nationalization Dispute and the Iranian Economy: A Rejoinder," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 3 (1995): 449-59, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4283736>.

46 M. G. Majd, "The 1951-53 Oil Nationalization Dispute and the Iranian Economy: A Rejoinder."

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