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### 1953 Iranian Coup d'état and Waltz's 3 Level Analysis

On August 19, 1953 the Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh was overthrown in a coup orchestrated by Britain and the United States, which lead to increased tensions in relations between the U.S. and Iran. The diverse array of aspects surrounding the coup can be better understood by classifying them through Kenneth Waltz's tri-level analysis. For example Mossadegh, Churchill and Eisenhower, Fazlollah Zahedi, and British society can all be classified as first image sources. While aspects such as the C.I.A, and nationalistic tendencies fit into the second category. Lastly, the third level includes Britian- U.S. relations, Cold War relations, and control of Iranian oil.

The first level of Waltz analysis is something he classifies as, "the nature and behavior of man"<sup>1</sup>. This can be interpreted to include individual leaders and elites, societal beliefs, and the media or anything else that has to do with human behavior. In this specific instance a key first image source is Mohammad Mossadegh. Mossadegh was democratically elected to be Prime Minister of Iran in 1951. To pursue the goals of independence, democracy, and improving the lot of his people, he nationalized the Anglo- Iranian Oil Company<sup>2</sup>. Thus putting an end to the looting of country's main natural resource by the British<sup>3</sup>. This ends up ultimately spurring the coup because it upset the British government, a second image source, causing them to retaliate. This is classified as a first image source in Waltz's analysis because it was Mossadegh's decision to nationalize the company, which had a direct effect upon causing the coup.

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<sup>1</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954. 16. Print.

<sup>2</sup> "The Mohammad Mossadegh Project." *Mossadegh and the 1953 Coup*. N.p., - 2004. Web. 29 Jan. 2011.  
<<http://www.mohammadmossadegh.com/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Another first image source is Eisenhower and his decision to help the British implement the coup. The Eisenhower administration believed its actions to help the British with the coup were justified for strategic reasons<sup>4</sup>. Ultimately Eisenhower felt that he had to get involved or else he would lose control of Iranian oil and the British as an ally. It is this personal decision that causes him to be classified as a first image source because it in part leads to the implementation of the coup. Through this type of logic, Churchill can also be classified in the first image category. Since he chose to go after Iran and felt like he needed to maintain Britain's superiority, it directly lead him to implement a coup.

In addition to these ideas another first image source is Fazlollah Zahedi who was chosen by the United States and Britain to take over after the coup. He played a huge part in the overthrow of Mossadegh by agreeing to come to power and making a deal with Britain and the U.S, becoming the face of the new government. Zahedi and his followers staged the militant coup and then sent out thousands of copies of the proclamation of himself as Prime Minister<sup>5</sup>. Since he agreed to become the head of the government and became the face of the coup (so the CIA and Britain could remain anonymous) he can be classified into the first image.

In addition to specific people being a first image source, British societal expectations play a role as well. Britain was a huge super power at the time of the coup and this mindset of being the supreme ruling power became infused into British society. As a result, Britain could not just let Mossadegh nationalize this mutli-national company that was bringing in a lot of wealth for them. This would mean that their position in the world would be at jeopardy. They would be succumbing to the rules of these smaller nations and if one small nation suggests this, who is to

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<sup>4</sup> "History of Iran: A short account of 1953 Coup." *Iran Chamber Society*. N.p., - 2001. Web. 29 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.iranchamber.com/history/coup53/coup53p1.php>>.

<sup>5</sup> "Fazlollah Zahedi." *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. Web. 29 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/766427/Fazlollah-Zahedi>>.

say another small country won't do the same. This idea of having to be on top was embedded in the psyche of the British, ultimately influencing the government to cause a coup to change the regime, to regain control.

Moving away from first image sources, the next image is expanded to “international conflict and the internal structure of states”<sup>6</sup>. This includes aspects such as state structure, leadership roles, agencies, and ideology. One important second image source in this case is the CIA. The CIA was the main force,

“orchestrating the Iran coup working directly with royal Iranian military officers, handpicked the prime minister replacement, sent a stream of envoys to bolster the shah’s courage, directed a campaign of bombings by Iranians posing as members of the Communist Party”<sup>7</sup>.

The CIA is therefore a second image source because it is an agency that has a direct effect in the overthrow of Mossadegh.

Another important second image is the idea of nationalistic ideology, more specifically Mossadegh’s nationalistic tendencies. Mossadegh wanted to nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. This act not only symbolizes taking control of oil, but acted as a demonstration of seizing control of Iran from the imperialistic powers. As stated earlier Mossadegh wanted to, “pursue the goals of independence, democracy and improving the lots of his people”<sup>8</sup>. He was acting as a nationalist, wanting to have complete control over his country and give his people a chance to be completely free. He wanted nationalism both in theory and practice. It was this

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<sup>6</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954. 80. Print.

<sup>7</sup> "How the United States Destroyed Democracy in Iran 1953." *Historical and Investigative Research*. Ed. Francisco Gil-White. New York Times, 16 Apr. 2000. Web. 29 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.hirhome.com/iraniraq/iran-coup.htm>>.

<sup>8</sup> "The Mohammad Mossadegh Project." *Mossadegh and the 1953 Coup*. N.p., - 2004. Web. 29 Jan. 2011. <<http://www.mohammadmossadegh.com/>>.

ideology that drove him to make the choice to nationalize the oil, causing an uproar that spurred his overthrow.

The third image in Waltz's analysis deals with the idea of international anarchy<sup>9</sup>. It includes such aspects as systemic relations, balance of power networks, and alliances. A third image source are the relations between Britain and the U.S. The United States and Britain, being superpowers in the world, had a very close alliance agreeing on most international issues. So when Britain was having this issue with Iran the United States felt obligated to side with Britain because they had a previous alliance that the U.S. did not want to upset. This demonstrates Waltz idea of alliances playing into international relations, fitting with the third image.

Another important third image is this balance of power for oil. Mossadegh wanted to nationalize Iran's oil in order to gain more control over it and increase Iranian autonomy and international standing. While Britain could not let this occur because it was a huge source of revenue for them. The Iranian government was being paid royalties of 10-12 percent of the company's net proceeds, while the British government received as much as 30 percent of these in taxes alone<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, Britain needed to control Iran's oil and was not going to let Mossadegh ever nationalize it.

Both of these sources are examples of Waltz's third image, both demonstrating international relations and international anarchy. Britain can take over Iran's oil as long as they have the capacity to do so. Countries are allowed to make alliances and help each other out in certain situations against another country because there is no international sovereign to prevent them from occurring. There are no rules or regulations preventing Britain from taking advantage

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<sup>9</sup> Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1954. 159. Print.

<sup>10</sup> "The Coup in Iran, 1953." . Ed. Mark Curtis. N.p., 12 Feb. 2007. Web. 29 Jan. 2011.  
<<http://markcurtis.wordpress.com/2007/02/12/the-coup-in-iran-1953/>>.

of Iran, demonstrating a state of international anarchy, where one state is objected to the will of another because they can not defend themselves.

In addition to Waltz's three images, history also plays a huge role in the outcome of events in the 1953 coup. The Cold War plays a huge role in defining all of the relations between Iran and the U.S. One of the main reasons that the United States got involved in the coup is because it is scared to loose control in Iran as well. The Cold War was at its height in the 1950s and since Iran was a neighbor of the Soviet Union, the U.S. was scared of loosing Iran to communism at any time. If they gained control over all of their oil, it could make them more powerful. On top of that if they also fell to communism they would be an even bigger risk that U.S. would not be able to handle. Therefore the U.S. had to take control and overthrow the threat.

The overthrow of Iran's Prime Minister Mossadegh occurred as a result of a number of different factors. One way to better understand these factors is to subject them to Waltz's three image analysis. The first image factors include societal beliefs such as the beliefs of British society as well as the individual leaders of Mossadegh, Churchill, Eisenhower, and Zahedi. The second image moves to a larger scale including state structure, agencies, and ideology. The CIA and nationalistic ideology are examples in this specific event. Lastly, the third image of international anarchy including balance of power between the Britain, U.S. and Iran for oil and the Britain- U.S. alliance. All of these factors combined with elements of history ultimately lead to the overthrow of Iran's Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1953.

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