



CRISIS COMMITTEES | 2014



IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, 1979



Dear Delegates,

We are in the midst of the Iran Hostage Crisis, and there is no time to spare. Our situation is grave and desperate, and together we will find a solution into dealing with the recent events regarding the kidnapping of 52 Americans from the United States embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979. Indeed there are many sides to this issue, and debates will be tense. The dichotomy between the many people being represented in this committee will surely lead to many disputes and tough agreements. Can the situation remain diplomatic? Or will it lead to something else? It shall remain up to you.

It is with great pleasure, as director of this committee, to welcome you to our 2014 UTMUN conference. My name is Stanley Treivus, and alongside our Crisis manager Meerah Haq, we look forward to this thrilling weekend of debate that awaits us. We are both first year students studying Political Science and International relations and this will be our first time being involved in UTMUN. This conference will appeal to all delegates, experienced or novice. And our hope is that you will leave this committee with not only profound knowledge on the subject, but with a better sense of communication and improved debating skills than you had before.

The issues we will be discussing will surround the many topics that relate directly to the Iran Hostage Crisis. We will look at foreign relations between the United States and Iran shortly before and during the crisis. We will also debate the situation of the Shah and his relevance to the Iran hostage crisis, and of course the debacle will be surrounded on the premise of negotiations between American politicians and their various advisors. The events of this crisis shall take place at around spring of 1980, shortly after the hostage-taking.

The Iran Hostage Crisis created a long-lasting deterioration of diplomacy between the United States and Iran, and highlighted the existing anti-western sentiment that recently begun to grow from Islamists. This continuing clash of civilizations has created a massive ideological divide in the world, and will create a great challenge into the negotiations that our fellow delegates will have to face. Despite the circumstances and difficulty of the situation; we must tentatively cooperate and work together to save our diplomats.

I wish you best of luck to your preparations, and I look forward to the debates.

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444 days. That's how long it took for the hostages to be released. The Iran Hostage Crisis is commonly cited as a failure of United States diplomacy. It's inability to take action when needed, and thus symbolizes the common failure of American governance. But did this lengthy process represent carelessness in the US whitehouse? Or did it actually represent the tough situation that the United States was in? Iran has just had a revolution, overthrowing the US-backed Shah. The United States had limited options if they wished to preserve some form of stability both domestically and on the international level. There is only so much that economic sanctions or military operations could do. But perhaps there are other solutions that can be agreed, or forced upon.

Background: Iran and USA before 1979

Much of the precursor towards the 1979 revolution began more than 50 years previously when the Pahlavi dynasty came to power in 1925. After much instability in the country, specifically due to Soviet-military presence in the country, the first Shah, known as Reza 'Shah' Pahlavi took power through a coup, and made an agreement with the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops from Persia, which threatened to take over the capital Tehran. The exception made in the treaty was that the Soviet Union would be allowed to reinvade had its national interests required it to.

Reza Shah enacted many reforms of modernity and secularization, and suppressed radical Islamism in favour of western culture. Much of his reforms introduced Western law with an attempt to forcibly secularize the population. His reforms pushed for more gender equality, and the Woman's Awakening between 1936 and 1941 was heavily enforced by his policies of modernization, which pushed to get rid of traditional customs such as the Islamic veil and gender segregation. Reza Shah continued to have bitter relations with the Iranian clergy during his reign, with many records of violence perpetrated against Islamic supporters who were against the Shah's policies.



Reza Shah remained in power until 1941, when he was deposed by British and Soviet invaders for being accused of colluding with the Nazi's. He was replaced by his son Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, who reigned until his overthrow in 1979. Pahlavi continued similar policies of modernization and

westernization that his father set up and continued to have difficult relations with the Shia clergy of Iran. This growing resentment set the building blocks for his eventual deposition. However his reign did not go uninterrupted, and this is where the United States first becomes involved in Iranian affairs.

In 1951, pro-democratic Mohammad Mosaddegh was elected as prime minister of Iran. He enacted many progressive reforms to the country, such as social security, and invested in public development. However he was most renowned for enforcing the nationalization of the Oil Industry. Before the Pahlavi dynasty took power, Britain had already set up the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APIC), which took much of Iran's oil to support the British economy. Due to growing nationalism and much resentment to constant flight of capital (oil profits leaving the country), the Iranian parliament voted on nationalizing the industry and elected Mossadegh right after, who on May 1st, 1951, brought the APIC under state control. Despite the domestic popularity of his actions, they brought outrage to the British, who asked the United States for help in restoring the ownership of the oil fields through a regime change. Despite much disinterest from Trumann, newly elected Eisenhower was persuaded to assist Britain in overthrowing Mossadegh on the pretext that he was an ally of communism.



Mohammad Reza Shah and Farah Pahlavi attending an official function (circa 1967).

Mossadegh meanwhile was expanding parliamentary powers and reducing that of the Shah's. The Shah was not politically active until 1949 after an assassination attempt, in which he began to expand his power. As a result, the balance of power was challenged by the two. The dichotomy between the two began to grow despite the Shah's support of Mossadegh's initiative in nationalizing the oil industry.

However the United Kingdom, with international support, implemented trade embargos and sanctions on Iran and cut off Iran's ability to export its recently-owned oil, thus crippling Iran's economy. Resentment grew against Mossadegh as a result, and the British and Americans used this opportunity to stage a coup. During this crisis, Mossadegh dissolved parliament and increased his own powers, while reducing the Shah's. Mossadegh lost further support, allied with only the Tudeh party, who were communists.

Codenamed Operation Ajax, the recently formed CIA with the help of the British MI6 began the process of overthrowing the elected Mohammed Mossadegh. They persuaded the reluctant reigning Shah to join them, under the warning that he would be deposed too if he refused. Using a campaign of propaganda and paid protesters, they quickly destabilized the country until the military joined the side of the Shah and overthrew Mossadegh under the leadership of General Fazlollah Zahedi, who was working with the CIA. The Shah, who fled during the coup due to fear of backlash, returned and restored his powers while Prime Minister Mossadegh was replaced by Zahedi.



The deposition of Mossadegh and reinstatement of Mohammad Pahlavi brought Iran's oil supply back onto international control. However due to powerful public opinion in Iran, the oil was not brought back to British control and remained under Iranian possession. However an agreement allowed for a consortium of oil companies to manage the oil, promising 50 percent of profits to Iran. However lack of transparency in the financial records skewed accounting records, and helped significantly increased the profits for the oil companies who held a stake in the oil industry.

The incentive for CIA's participation in the 1953 coup was predominantly the promise of a share in its oil, which it did receive. This initiated American interest in Iran and its oil industry, and as a result, pushed for better relations with a pro-Western Iran under the Shah. During the Shah's reign, he became more authoritative, and continued to implement policies that reflected Westernization. However his authoritative nature helped spur resentment against him. For example, he set up the American and Israeli funded secret police SAVAK, which became notorious for political oppression. His constant violation of the constitution and increasing corruption also brought further opposition from many factions in Iran. During his reign, dissenters were arrested, and using police and the military, political opposition and public demonstrators were crushed. He began a series of continued reforms under the name of White Revolution, which brought further westernization and modernization to Iran. His policies brought women's suffrage, and ended a system of feudalism, in where he gave land to the

peasantry. His reforms were intended to help increase his support from the peasants and working poor; however they had many unintended consequences, which created intense backlash.

Despite the economic progress it did bring, land reform failed and many peasants became loose political cannons, with no allegiance to the Shah. His lack of democratic reform deteriorated the situation, as his white revolution simply increased the size of the working class and the intellectuals, who continuously criticized the lack of democracy and representation. His reforms also brought further inequality as wealth became more unevenly divided due to misguided beliefs of trickled down economics from his support of elites. As a result, a disgruntled populace began to unite against the Shah.

Ayatollah Khomeini and the 1979 Revolution

Animosity between the religious clergy and the Shah had always existed, but accelerated as a result of the failures of the White revolution. Religious clerks constantly felt threatened by the Shah's policy of secularization, and feared for the preservation of Islam. A voice of Islam emerged under the White revolution from Ruhollah Khomeini, a shia cleric. Before the revolution, he was exiled for 14 years, but continued to preach anti-Westernism and anti-Shahism from abroad. Deteriorating economic conditions and increasing inequality popularized Khomeini's messages against the Shah and the current system that existed.



In the same time, leftists, nationalists and Islamists grew further opposed to the Shah, but many Islamists remained divided in terms of allegiance. Khomeini however attempted to unite all factions to garnish a more organized opposition. For a steady period of time in the 1970's, political suppression and an active SAVAK managed to maintain a calm dissatisfaction in Iran. However in 1977, the Shah, due to American pressure, liberalized some of his policies and allowed the right to protest. This brought forth massive demonstration, and as Khomeini called for large protests, the Shah became more frustrated. The Shah then decided to implement martial law, and as a result, many protesters were killed on "Black Friday" on September 8th of 1978. The violence led to further discontent of the government. In



the same time, Khomeini's popularity grew and was increasingly seen as the saviour for Iran. By January of 1979, the Shah left with his family to Egypt, and Khomeini arrived in Iran from exile. The Prime-minister under the Shah remained in government, and attempted to restore order by shutting down the SAVAK, freeing political prisoners, promising free elections and allowing for demonstrations to take place. However he was still opposed by Khomeini, who continued to gather support, especially from the military. Eventually most of the army sided with Khomeini, and successfully formed a new government. As Supreme leader, he created a new Iran now governed by Islamic law. He continued to defeat opposition groups and stopped local rebellions until his rule was solidified in 1982.

Iran Hostage Crisis and the Shah

The Shah was admitted into the United States on October 22nd of 1979 by Jimmy Carter in order to seek treatment for gallstones. During this time, Islamists and leftist groups demanded for his return to Iran so that he could be tried and executed. Much resentment against the United States, especially from the coup of 1953, exacerbated anti-American sentiment. As a result, young Islamist university students planned a takeover the US embassy as a response to the Americans giving asylum to the Shah. The students also feared a repeat of 1953, and knew that the American embassy would be the base of operations for any such action. However the biggest motive was vengeance, and to display Iran's strength over American influence. 500 students stormed the embassy on November 4th, and effectively kidnapped 52 Americans. Six however did manage to escape capture and hid under the care of Canadian and Swedish ambassadors. Staying within the homes of the ambassadors and from assistance by the CIA, they were able to safely return home by January of 1980. 14 Americans were also released during the capturing, which included women, African Americans and one man who was seriously ill. However the rest of the 52 Americans remained in danger. Despite the demand of the hostage-takers, the Americans responded by claiming that the Shah was only in the US to receive medical treatment. However according to Pahlavi himself, the Americans refused to give him health care, and in fact asked him to leave. The Shah did not stay long in the US, and left for Panama, but eventually settled back in Egypt.





The hostage situation proved highly popular in Iran, and Khomeini commended the students responsible for the situation. Iranian propaganda claimed that the hostages were being treated fairly, however much doubt existed. The government gave four demands to the United States during the crisis:

1. Return of the Shah for a trial
2. Return of his personal wealth to Iran
3. The promise for no more interference from the US
4. An apology

These four demands will be the core of the discussion in the committee. 52 hostages are now under the thumb of a radical Iranian government. The hostage crisis marks the beginning of a long battle against Islamic extremism. The United States responded with things such as



economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Iranian oil stopped being bought and Iranian assets in US were frozen. This however, could only resolve so much. It was not until January 20th of 1981 during the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, were the hostages released, as a result of many negotiations leading to the Algiers Accords. These accords promised to release frozen funds in the United States, immunity from lawsuits and no future intervention from the USA in any shape or form.



Positions

This committee for this crisis will be the National Security Council (NSC) during President Carter's reign. Also present will be a few emissaries from other countries who have involvement within the crisis. It is prudent that you become familiar with your character in regards to his views, ideas and personal motives. We highly recommend for you to expand your research beyond simply Wikipedia.

Jimmy Carter: Carter served a single term as **President** of the United States from 1977 to 1981 under the democrats. Before the revolution, he kept close relations with the Shah which contributed to the growing distaste for the United States from many Iranian people. Jimmy Carter attempted to normalize relations with the new revolutionary government. His admittance of the Shah however in October of 1979 was a crucial decision point and played an important role in determining the events that were to follow. Carter was faced with a difficult period of economic crisis and stagflation, and much of his indecisiveness led to his inability to deal with the crisis. As a result, his approval rating plummeted.

Walter Mondale: Mondale is **Vice-President** under Jimmy Carter who previously served as the attorney general and a senator. During the vice presidency, he became heavily involved in traveling around the US, and was the first vice president to have his own office. He was dubbed as an activist vice president, and transformed his role from being a figurehead to an actual advisor. Mondale received the same briefings as the president, and despite many disagreements during their tenure, he remained loyal to his boss.

Zbigniew Brzezinski: Brzezinski served as the **National Security Advisor** under Carter and played an important part during the discussion relating to the hostage crisis. Brzezinski was known for advocating for increased military strength to combat the Soviet Union. During the Iranian revolution, he advised Carter to counter the revolution using military strength in order to prevent Khomeini from acquiring power. Brzezinski later advised for rescue missions in order to save the hostages.

Cyrus Vance: Vance served as **Secretary of State** between 1977 and 1980, previously serving as Secretary of the Army and Deputy Secretary of State. Vance had a bitter relationship with Brzezinski, who both shared very different positions on how to handle the Hostage crisis. Vance called for arms reduction during his tenure, and favored negotiations over military missions in order to deal with the hostage crisis. This dichotomy led to his resignation after



Jimmy Carter approved of Operation Eagle Claw; a mission to save the hostages in Iran, which later failed and resulted in the death of eight American servicemen.

Harold Brown: Brown was **Secretary of Defence** under Carter who previously served as Director of Defence Research and Engineering and Secretary of the Air Force under Lyndon B. Johnson. Brown is a physicist, and championed for arms control between the USA and Soviet Union but supported the constant need to upgrade the military. During the Hostage Crisis, he worked closely with Carter to organize Operation Eagle Claw. The failure of it was mainly redirected on Brown himself.

Charles Duncan Jr: Duncan served as the second **Secretary of Energy** under Carter from 1979-81. He previously served as the Deputy Secretary of Defence during the Iranian revolution before being appointed. As Deputy, he served under Harold Brown, and took many trips, including to Iran, in attempt to deal with the Iranian revolution. He became Secretary of Energy after the previous secretary James R. Schlesinger was dismissed. Schlesinger served as the first Secretary of Energy under Jimmy Carter from 1977-79, where he previously served as Secretary of Defence under Nixon and Ford from 1973-75. He was appointed after impressing Carter with his experience and intelligence. Schlesinger however was very arrogant and could not deal with congress, and was dismissed in 1979 by Carter. Duncan was heavily involved in the corporate sphere, working for both Duncan Coffee Company and Coca-Cola before becoming deputy.

David C. Jones: Jones is the **Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff** under Carter and served as a general in the United States Air force. Jones oversought much of the rescue operation during the Hostage Crisis. Despite criticism for the failure, he managed to maintain his position.

Stansfield Turner: Turner was the **CIA director** under Carter's presidency, previously serving as an Admiral in the US Navy. He studied at Oxford, graduating with a degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Turner played an instrumental role in the CIA operation of rescuing the six hostages with the help of Canada.

Hamilton Jordan: Jordan was the **White House Chief of Staff** for Jimmy Carter. He graduated from University of Georgia with a degree in Political Science. Known for his irresponsible and unprofessional behaviour, being accused of cocaine use at one point. However Jordan played a very subtle, but key role during the crisis as a secret negotiator between important figures such as the the Iranian foreign minister with attempts to release the hostages.



Warren Christopher: Christopher served as **Deputy Secretary of State** for Carter from 1977 to 1981. He played an important role by negotiating the release of the Hostages in Algeria. Despite the difficulty of translation and coming towards a sound resolution, and the negotiations led to the Algiers Accord, which released all 52 hostages.

David L. Aaron: Aaron served as **Deputy National Security Advisor** under Brzezinski. He attended Occidental College and Princeton University, and served in the National Security Council under Nixon, and also served as a Legislative assistant to Walter Mondale during years as a senator. He worked as a special Envoy, and participated in many important discussions with famous leaders during his tenure.

Benjamin Civiletti: Civiletti was appointed as **Attorney General** under Carter from August of 1979 until 1981. He was serving as Deputy Attorney General until Griffin Bell, his boss, resigned. Civiletti played a prominent role by arguing on behalf of the Security Council and the American hostages in the International Course of Justice (ICJ), on their case against Iran. He continuously stressed the importance of international law, and for Iran to release the hostages. Iran did not participate in the proceedings, despite the judgement that the hostages should be released and the embassy restored.

G. William Miller: Miller served as **Secretary of Treasury** from 1979 to 1981, previously serving as Chairman of the Federal Reserve until being appointed by Carter. As Treasurer, he was primarily responsible for failing to deal with the economic stagflation, by allowing the dollar to drop in value. Miller however played an important role in managing the freezing and unfreezing of over \$12 billion on Iranian funds in the United States.

Andrew Young: Young served as the **Ambassador to the UN** under Carter from 1979 to 1981. He attended Illinois State university, and spent most of his life as a diplomat in foreign affairs. He served as the main envoy to the United Nations during the Hostage Crisis.

Lloyd Cutler: Cutler was an attorney who served as the **White House Counsel** for Carter between 1979 and 1981. His role as Counsel was to advise the President on any legal issues that came about with his policy making, and played an important role in ensuring stability between Iranian and American negotiations, specifically on the transferring of money and assets.

Kenneth D. Taylor: Ken Taylor was the **Ambassador to Iran for Canada** between 1977 and 1981, and played a huge role by assisting six Americans by providing refuge at his home. He



helped them escape by providing fake Canadian passports. He will be present in the Security Council to discuss Canada's role in saving the hostages.

Sadegh Ghotbzadeh: Ghotbzadeh served as the first **Minister of Foreign Affairs** under the revolutionary government between 1979 and 1980. He participated in a series of negotiations with Chief of Staff Hamilton Gordon. Despite being anti-shah, he was not completely anti-American.



Topics of the Committee

The Situation of the Shah:

During the Committee, we will discuss the relative importance of the Shah and his presence in the United States. Debates will consist of if the Shah should be returned or not, and how the Shah contributed to the ordeal.

Intervention in Iran?

This debate will consider the various options that the United States has in rescuing its hostages. Topics of intervention can include military operations, or diplomatic/economic pressure.

Assessing Iran's relationship with United States

How should the United States respond in terms of diplomacy? These discussions will look at America's future with Iran and will consider the many options of either restoring relations or completely cutting them off.

How to prevent similar situations in the future

The biggest problem that faces the council. Why did this all have to even happen? It is important to assess the history of American presence within the Middle East, and the relationship that the USA shared with the Shah. The events leading to the revolution were hugely influenced by the States, and it is essential that the council attempt to recognize its role and how it should be prevented or dealt with in future events.



Questions to Consider

1. What options does the United States have? And under Iran's current circumstances, how can the US government effectively respond to a proudly anti-western government?
2. What role do other countries have in this situation?
3. What brought US to this conflict, and how should one reflect on the American role in the middle east?