

THE BRITISH PLOT TO REMOVE IRAN'S DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED PRIME MINISTER FROM POWER

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ABSTRACT

On 20 March 1951 (29 Esfand 1329), Iran's oil industry was nationalized under the leadership of the very respected Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq. A patriotic democrat committed to re-establishing democracy and a constitutional monarchy, Dr. Mossadeq was elected as Iran's prime minister by unanimous vote in the Majlis on 28 April 1951. For nearly fifty years Iran's oil industry was controlled by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), later known as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Dr. Mosaddeq played a significant role in overcoming the British dominance of Iran's oil industry and successfully shut out their immensely profitable AIOC, which was a cornerstone of Britain's economic and political clout in the entire region. This study reports details of subsequent British decisions and operations that served to eventually remove Dr. Mosaddeq from power by any means necessary, including assassination. Dr. Mosaddeq consequently faced a political climate of chaos in Tehran that allowed for a continuum of British actions that prepared the stage for the 1953 coup conducted by the American CIA.

Keywords: Iran, nationalization of the oil industry, Dr. Mosaddeq, Durbar, British, 1953 coup

IL COMLOTTO BRITANNICO PER RIMUOVERE DAL POTERE IL PRIMO MINISTRO IRANIANO ELETTO DEMOCRATICAMENTE

SINTESI

Il 20 marzo 1951 (il 29 esfand 1329, secondo il calendario persiano), l'industria petrolifera iraniana fu nazionalizzata sotto la guida del Primo Ministro, l'onorevole dott. Mohammad Mosaddeq. Patriota e democratico, impegnato a ristabilire la democrazia e una monarchia costituzionale, il dott. Mosaddeq fu eletto Primo Ministro all'unanimità dal Parlamento iraniano, il Majles, il 28 aprile 1951. Al tempo, l'industria petrolifera iraniana era stata, da quasi cinquant'anni, controllata dalla compagnia Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), successivamente conosciuta con il nome Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Il dott. Mosaddeq svolse un ruolo importante nell'eliminare la domina-

zione dei britannici sull'industria petrolifera iraniana, riuscendo ad escluderli dall'immensamente redditizio AIOC, che rappresentava un pilastro dell'influenza economica e politica degli inglesi nell'intera regione. Questo studio riporta i dettagli delle successive decisioni e operazioni della Gran Bretagna intese, alla fine, a rimuovere il dott. Mosaddeq dal potere con ogni mezzo necessario, incluso l'attentato. Di conseguenza, il dott. Mosaddeq dovette affrontare a Teheran una situazione di caos politico che permise ai britannici di continuare a preparare il terreno per il colpo di Stato, condotto nel 1953 dagli agenti americani della CIA.

Parole chiave: Iran, nazionalizzazione dell'industria petrolifera, Mosaddeq, Durbar, britannici, colpo di Stato del 1953

INTRODUCTION

On 20 March 1951 (29 Esfand 1329), Iran's oil industry was nationalized under the leadership of the very respected Prime Minister, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq. A patriotic democrat committed to re-establishing democracy and a constitutional monarchy, Dr. Mossadeq was elected as Iran's prime minister by unanimous vote in the Majlis on 28 April 1951. For nearly fifty years Iran's oil industry was controlled by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), later known as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). Dr. Mosaddeq played a significant role in overcoming the British dominance of Iran's oil industry and successfully shut out their immensely profitable AIOC, which was a cornerstone of Britain's economic and political clout in the entire region.

Fierce nationalist sentiments and dissatisfaction with the Iranian government's failure to solve domestic problems, especially economic issues, contributed to the political victory of the Nationalist party. Among many disconsolate activists was Dr. Mosaddeq, a tenacious politician who began to earnestly establish democratic reforms but was confronted by the British who had adopted aggressive opposition to Majlis' decisions under his government (Ebrahimi et al., 2012). The British wished to preserve the status quo by negotiating a solution with Iran's government that did not affect their oil operations. At this point, however, they refused to comply with Iranian government demands. In early October 1951, things came to a head with the cessation of negotiations with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) and the expulsion of British workers, which negatively affected the people of Iran (Ebrahimi, Yusoff, 2015). Those close to the Royal Court and others dependent on Britain consequently became actively anti-Mosaddeq which divided the National Front whereby those who favoured an agreement with Britain distanced themselves from Dr. Mosaddeq.

Furthermore, according to his commitment to the Constitution, Dr. Mosaddeq found it necessary to give legitimate leeway for the police force to suppress any opposition to

the Shah so as not to be accused by the Shah of taking actions against the Constitution. Although the majority of those around Dr. Mosaddeq favoured keeping the Monarchy, the result was that some from the Royal Court took advantage of the opportunity to conspire against him by equipping the police and army, under the guise of confronting anti-Monarchists and anti-Americans. Thus, they fomented an environment of pressure and disturbances that favoured an anti-nationalist coup.

Discovery of the conspiracy and the arrest of a group of well-known figures, including army officers and major merchants, gravely disturbed the government, especially as it became clear that the core of conspiracy and intrigue was found within the army. With his authority as the Minister of National Defence, Dr. Mosaddeq discharged many army officers including General Fazlollah Zahedi, the Minister of the Interior. However, those officers who participated directly in the conspiracy against the legitimate government were all released in less than a month. Dr. Mosaddeq's relevant speech to the Majlis referred to them as follows:

[...] the British agents in the Majlis, the British agents in the government, the British agents in the society, the British agents in the Royal Court, they are everywhere (Rūznāmah-i Rasmī-i Kishvar, 27 Sep. 1951: Dr. Mosaddeq's speech in Majlis Session, 9 Sep. 1951).

Looking back at these incidents reveal that the opposition's activity reached an apex during October of 1951 when Dr. Mosaddeq travelled to the U.S. Nevertheless, the oil conflict remained unresolved and by November the opposition had penetrated the universities and most other important centres. Dr. Mosaddeq's government viewed these events as British intervention in Iran's internal affairs. The network of protestors had well defined contacts within the British embassy and it is clear that the British intended to cause disturbances leading to open revolt. The British agents arranged to stir up public emotions against Dr. Mosaddeq (Muvahhid, 2007/1386, Vol. 1, 404; TNA, FO 371/98670, G10105/206, Minutes by RJ/RJ, 28 May 1952).

THE PLAN TO OVERTHROW DR. MOSADDEQ'S GOVERNMENT

K. S. (Nancy) Lambton was then the top Persian policy advisor on Iranian affairs. She prevented the British from *entente* with Dr. Mosaddeq and thus, isolated him (Muvahhid, 2007/1386, Vol. 1, 194; Louis, 1984, 659) and was the first to propose Dr. Mosaddeq's overthrow via "covert operations" (Gasirowski, Byrne, 2004, 130–131).

Miss Lambton suggested that H.M.G. should, about a month ago, have quietly strengthened up their Public Relations side in Tehran with a view by covert means (a) to under-mine the position of Mr. Moussadek; and (b) to give encouragement to the substantial body of Persian friends we still have who are unlikely to show their faces and risk being called traitors without some support. (TNA FO 248/1514, EP1531/674, E. A. Berthoud, 15 June 1951).

She believed that without a campaign on the above lines is not possible to create the sort of climate in Tehran in order to change the regime. On 19 November 1951, the British embassy asserted that any government is better than Dr. Mosaddeq's government (Muvahhid, 2007/1386, Vol. 1, 206; TNA FO 248/1514, G10101/453/51, From Tehran to FO, 19 Nov. 1951) and decided to remove his government (TNA FO 248/1514, 10 Nov. 1951) with the ultimate goal of bringing a chosen dictator to power. They favoured a powerful Prime Minister who would suppress all opposition and prepare the necessary conditions to solve the oil conflict amicably in a manner that favoured British interests (TNA FO 248/1514, G10101/59/51, Telegram No.174 From Tehran to FO, 9 Mar. 1951, repeated for information to Washington & B.M.E.O). Hence, in late 1951 they decided to replace Dr. Mosaddeq with their top candidate, Qavām, their most suitable man for the job (TNA FO 248/1514, Middleton to Furlong, 19 Nov. 1951). The British actually tried to persuade Dr. Mosaddeq to resign through one of their Iranian agents, Zahir-ul-Islam who believed that "*he can influence Musaddiq into resigning – for a consideration*" by money (TNA FO 371/98670, G10105/204, Minutes by S. Falle, 27 May 1952) and received a lucky break when Dr. Mosaddeq's requests for exclusive authority for six months and control of the army were rejected by the Shah, thus, causing him to resign. Britain, therefore had a golden opportunity. However, Qavām remained in power for only four days when Dr. Mosaddeq was returned to power as the result of a national uprising (21 July 1952/30 Tir 1331) encouraged by statements from the National Front and endorsed by Kashani – a rare instance where the clergy intervened in politics as a member of the National Front.

After Qavām's failure and the severing of diplomatic relations between Britain and Iran (Gasiorowski, Byrne, 2004, 129; Kinzer, 2008, 147), the AIOC was more than ready to compromise with the Americans and consequently offered concrete proposals for cooperation. Kermit Roosevelt, the leader of the 19 August 1953 coup, admitted that precisely at that moment in time, the AIOC had asked him to cooperatively investigate and boost a plan to remove Dr. Mosaddeq from power. According to Roosevelt, British officers had close relationships with both the Royal Court and army and Anglo-American conspirators were certain that the junior officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men were pro-Shah (Roosevelt, 1979, 106–110). Indeed, the army was under the control of Dr. Mosaddeq but in September of 1952 news from the army was that an Imperial Guard Division had taken positions around Tehran and planned to attack under cover of an "Army Manoeuvre". The action caused Dr. Mosaddeq to dissolve the Guards, which temporarily diluted concentrated forces for the planned coup. Arrests then followed of retired Major-General 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Ḥijāzī, Ājūdān-i Makhsūs-i Shāh and Rashīdiyān, brothers of the Bāzār merchants who had close relations with the British embassy (Kiyhān, 13 Oct. 1952/21 Mehr 1331). A government spokesman, Fāṭimī, announced the detentions explaining that these people, with the aid of Zahedi and others with Parliamentary Immunity, had been detained for "provocation and conspiracy" (Muvahhid, 2007/1386, Vol. 2, 611). Dr. Mosaddeq, thus suppressed the pro-Zahedi movement.

THE SCHEME TO ELIMINATE DR. MOSADDEQ

The Chaos of 28 February 1953 (9 Esfand 1331)

The Shah was scheduled to leave the country on Thursday morning but postponed his departure to Saturday 28 February 1953. Dr. Mosaddeq's scheduled meeting with the Shah, also scheduled for early morning on the same day, was changed to 10 am (Kiyhān, 1 Mar. 1953/10 Esfand 1331). The purpose of the change of schedule was to implement the plan for 28 February as the conspirators needed more time to gather people and leaders for the purposes of Mosaddeq's murder and consolidation of anticipated gains. The Shah emphasized a need to keep his travel plans secret (Akbarī, 2009/1388, 185), which forced Dr. Mosaddeq to personally prepare and deliver passports for the Shah as well as for his family and entourage (Kiyhān, 1 Mar. 1953/10 Esfand 1331). Dr. Mosaddeq also ordered the police to secure the Shah's route of travel.

Moreover, by the time the Shah wished to depart, the rumour of his abdication spread through the Bāzār. Immediately, Bāzāriyān, and particularly the heads of various market unions decided to close the Bāzār and many shops were shut. Bāzāriyān went to Bibbahānī's house and requested to go to the Royal Court to stop the Shah from leaving (Kiyhān, 28 Feb. 1953/9 Esfand 1331). Many people cried and others yelled that the country was finished (Kiyhān, 28 Feb. 1953/9 Esfand 1331). Meanwhile, groups under the leadership of Ṭayyib Ḥāj Rizā'ī and Ramazān Yakhī started moving from I'dām and Amīn al-Sulṭān Squares towards the Bāzār. Groups under Sha'bān Bī'mukh and Ahmad 'Ishqī joined the throng but these were hoodlums and ruffians who violently threatened to close Bāzār while shouting "*Zindah Bād Shāh*", meaning the Shah will be alive forever. In addition, together with Malaki I'tizādī and Parī Ghaffārī, prostitutes from Qal'ih-i Shahr-i Naw also joined – all gravitated towards the Shah's palace joined by groups under 'Abbās Shāhandah, Biyūk Šābir and Jamāl Imāmī and Ahmad Mu'īnī, a previously dismissed police detective and manager of the *Shāh Dūst* newspaper, along with other mobs known as 'Abbās Kāvūsī and Ṭāhir. The growing throng of people were all shouting "*Zindah Bād Shāh*". Mixed in with the surging turbulence were officers of the Military Governor and sundry constables who supported and protected the various mobs of ruffians. In the end, these several groups united in front of Kākh-i Mar'mar, the Shah's palace (Interview with Mohammad Ali Amouei, 29 Jan. 2011). Probably, this mass movement was just one component of a well coordinated British effort to bring chaos to the nation.

The arrangement was dramatic and precisely aimed at the perfect end (Nahavandi, 2009, 443) of either arresting or killing Dr. Mosaddeq (Afshār, 1980/1359, 128). While Dr. Mosaddeq was in the Royal Court, the U.S. Embassy sent him an urgent message requesting an emergency meeting with the U.S. ambassador ("*without delay*"). But as it turned out, the ambassador had no such intention and the request was merely a ploy for Dr. Mosaddeq to leave the safety of the palace only to confront a mob of angry brutes who would conveniently murder him (Akbarī, 2009/1388, 189). Fortunately, Dr. Mosaddeq was warned off by Major Khir'khāh, a Tudeh officer (Javānshīr, 1980/1359, 250). He immediately changed his route to the Shams Pahlavī palace in the north, after which

he scurried home. The mob and its agents of coup instigators followed and attacked his house. They even managed to break through the entrance as Dr. Mosaddeq and Fāṭimī dramatically escaped to a neighbour's house via the rooftops and then went to the General Staff and at last took refuge in the Majlis (Iṭilā'āt, 1 Aug. 1953/10 Mordad 1332).

During these events, General Bahārmast, the General Chief of Staff who was relieved from office after the events of 28 February, did not support Dr. Mosaddeq in the least. Furthermore, to keep order and security for himself and the Shah, Ḥamīd Rizā Pahlavī, the Shah's brother, terminated the police force that was appointed by Dr. Mosaddeq, which, in turn, facilitated the attack on Dr. Mosaddeq's house by the unrestrained mob (Akbarī, 2009/1388, 189). By then, most of the clergy had publicly announced their support to the Shah (Mokhtari, 2008). On 28 February, Kashani, together with his sons, Sayyid Muṣṭafā and Sayyid Abū al-Ma'ālī, distributed three letters and proclamations related to the plot. The contents of those letters were in defence and support of the Shah with the intention of preventing his departure (Kiyhān, 28 Feb. 1953/9 Esfand 1331). Sayyid Muṣṭafā sent his father's letter to the Shah's palace (Kiyhān, 1 Mar. 1953/10 Esfand 1331). Another clergyman was Bihbahānī, who gave a lecture to those gathered (Kiyhān, 28 Feb. 1953/9 Esfand 1331). Although claiming he had no interest in politics, Bihbahānī mentioned that the demand of those who wished to prevent the Shah from leaving was reason enough for his intervention (Kiyhān, 1 Mar. 1953/10 Esfand 1331). In addition, some representatives from the Majlis including Ḥā'irī'zādah (the Majlis deputy), Muḥammad Zulfāqārī (the Vice President of the Majlis), and Bahādūrī (the Tabrīz representative), jointly decided to meet with the Shah to prevent his travel (Bākhtar-i Imrūz, 28 Feb. 1953/9 Esfand 1331; Kiyhān, 1 Mar. 1953/10 Esfand 1331).

Obviously, political leaders and traditional clergymen had all united to join with some Majlis deputies who were pro-Durbar and pro-Shah. They mobilized for the purpose of keeping the Shah and thus, turned their backs on Dr. Mosaddeq (Kiyhān, 2 Mar. 1953/11 Esfand 1331 and 28 Feb. 1953/9 Esfand 1331). Indeed, the distance between Kashani and Dr. Mosaddeq widened and for this reason the Tehran's Bazar was not fully pro-Mosaddeq. Bāzāriyān was as yet doubtful, not knowing whether to support Dr. Mosaddeq or Kashani and Bihbahānī. The people fearfully waited and some called the Bākhtar-i Imrūz newspaper office to ask about the Majlis and the government's situation as to what they should do (Bākhtar-i Imrūz, 1 Mar. 1953/10 Esfand 1331).

As a result, events on 28 February negatively affected Iranian society in the worst way, and served to widen the gap between Dr. Mosaddeq and the opposition, ultimately leading to his final overthrow. Hence, it appeared all these many opponents had gathered to stand in line with one common desire (Developments, 1954, Comment and Chronology).

The fact of the matter was that the controversy over the Shah's departure was completely bogus and intended only for appearances. Even when "*Mr. Henderson had sent a message advising the Shah not to leave*", the Shah responded by stating he was "*only pretending*" and that Dr. Mosaddeq, having changed his mind, insisted "*the Shah should stay*" (TNA FO 371/104562, Letter signed by A. D. M. Ross, 28 Feb. 1953). However, Henderson believed the Shah intended to leave the country that day (TNA FO 371/104562, Letter signed by A. D. M. Ross, 28 Feb. 1953) – a view that made American authorities

very wary of the Iranian situation. But the Shah, as per his British handlers, played his role well: “*The Shah’s plan was to let himself be persuaded by Musaddiq at the last minute and not leave*” (TNA FO 371/104562, Letter signed by A. D. M. Ross, 28 Feb. 1953). Hence, in essence, the man submitted to British dominion and executed the commands given at that time (Mahdavy, 1965). The Shah’s presence in Iran was incredibly useful for the British and their plan, as infused by agents within the Royal Court, was to advocate the disagreement over whether or not the Shah would leave the country. The British held that “*the worst of all possibilities would be that the Shah should go and leave Dr. Musaddiq in power*” (TNA FO 371/104562, Letter signed by A. D. M. Ross, 26 Feb. 1953). So it was that the British made an effort to prevent the Shah’s exit (TNA FO 371/104562, From Secretary of State On Board, R. M. S. Queen Elizabeth to Foreign Office, 27 Feb. 1953), but the Shah was determined and intended to travel secretly on 28 February to Baghdad (TNA FO 371/104562/EP1015/54G, 27 Feb. 1953).

The British held no doubt that the Prime Minister was more powerful than of the Shah, yet it was clear that Dr. Mosaddeq had no intention of denying the Shah’s influence over the nation. Therefore, Britain appeared to take a cautionary approach by deciding “*the Shah may be leaving Persia in the immediate future, ostensibly on a temporary visit to Europe*” (TNA FO 371/104562, From Foreign Office to Washington 27 Feb. 1953). But the events of 28 February laid bare that British demands were most definitive and obviously predefined.

British action affecting the events of 28 February 1953 had five fronts. First, they conclusively decided the Shah should travel and insisted that travel plans be kept secret. Second, within the Royal Court they had a top-notch informer:

1. ‘Alā was appointed to report secretly all news to the U.S. embassy and Kashani and Bihbahānī (TNA FO 371/104562/EP1015/46, 27 Feb. 1953).
2. ‘Alā was also the mediator between the Shah and Kashani (TNA FO 371/104562/EP1015/46 (C), 24 Feb. 1953).
3. ‘Alā had been reporting to Henderson on a regular basis and had talked about “*a temporary composure of differences between Musaddiq and Kashani*” before the event (TNA FO 371/104562/EP1015/46 (C), 24 Feb. 1953).

Thirdly, ruffian mobs and groups of demonstrators had gathered as prearranged by agents of the Royal Court. These groups played a major role with their protests and support of the Shah. Fourthly, the army was pro-Durbar and in no way resisted the protesters. The British had learned from the previous experience of the 21 July 1952 uprising where the army had joined the people and thus, they took special care not to repeat that failure. On 28 February, the army’s support of the demonstrators was a profound act of treason, especially when General Bahārmast prevented reinforcements for the defense of Dr. Mosaddeq’s residence (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 7 Apr. 1953). Fifthly were the clergy, with Kashani and Bihbahānī at the top, both of whom were convinced that if the Shah left country, Iran would have no cohesive leader strong enough to maintain nationwide political and social integrity. Furthermore, most clergymen believed the Tudehies were communists who would take advantage of the situation to assert their dominion, although the British and Americans knew well that Tudeh demonstrations and street ac-

tivities were of negligible effect (TNA FO 371/104562/EP1015/52 (E), 28 Feb. 1953). Hence, all demands were directed at the Shah who, apparently, comfortably awaited the command of British masters.

The Consequence of 28 February 1953 (9 Esfand 1331)

The day after 28 February, pro-Mosaddeq crowds gathered in the streets (1 March) in front of the Majlis and again in April (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 8 Apr. 1953; Nahavandi, 2009, 445–449). Two groups, pro- and anti-government antagonized each other and on 9 April 1953 pro-Shah and pro-Mosaddeq groups thronged yet again but without incident as they were controlled by police (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 10 Apr. 1953). But the situation was daily deteriorating as relations between the Royal Court and the government worsened.

The events of 28 February proved the Royal Court complicity as a centre of plotting against Dr. Mosaddeq who clearly saw insubordination from both the army and police in deference to the Shah. Finally, relations between Dr. Mosaddeq and the Shah broke completely when Dr. Mosaddeq failed to attend the Royal Court to wish the Shah good fortune for Nawruz, the Iranian New Year. Newspaper reports fanned the flames of revolt by indicating excessive remarks from the clergy in favour of the Shah. In March of 1953, the Shah therefore, in keeping with the age old charade, highlighted his image as a religious man by meeting with clergy and Ayatollahs in the Royal Court. Shortly thereafter, he and the Queen made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Imām Rizā in Mashhad and sent gifts to the families of Āyyat al-lāh Ḥujjat and Khvānsārī in Qum. A public prayer meeting at the tomb of Rizā Shāh iced the cake of pretense with the appearance of more clergymen and high-ranking military officers (Iṭilā'āt, 8 and 10 Fravardīn 1332/28 and 30 Mar. 1953).

The news of Kashani's support for the Shah also captured the foreign press. The Majallah al-Muṣavvar, published in Cairo, interviewed Kashani in Tehran where Kashani stated:

[...] if the Shah travelled on conditions stated by Dr. Mosaddeq, this could have caused intrigue and corruption in Iran and created a dangerous situation. For this reason, I prevented the Shah from travelling (Iṭilā'āt, 10 Fravardīn 1332 / 30 Mar. 1953).

It is also important to mention that Kashani's estrangement from the government did not reflect the position of all clergymen in the national movement as Iranian clergymen, based on class and social position. For instance, on the day after the events of 28 February, some notable clergymen in Tehran (the Jāmi'ī-yi 'Ilmī-yi Tehran) supported Dr. Mosaddeq by issuing a fully-described declaration published in the Bākhtar-i Imrūz newspaper. This statement was signed by Ḥāj Shīkh Bāqir Rasūlī, 'Alī al-Razavī Qumī, Rizā al-Mūsavī Zanjānī, Ahmad Ḥusayn Gharavī Shahrīstānī, Ḥāj'āqā Buzurg'nūrī, Sayyid Yahyā al-dīn Ṭāliqānī, Sayyid Muḥammad Nabavī, 'Alī Aṣghar Mūsavī Jāzāyirī, Abū al-Ḥasan Muddaris Tihrānī and Sayyid Muḥammad Ṣādiq Razavī – all of whom, together with Ḥujjat al-Islām Shabīstānī, Angajī, Ḥāj Sayyid Javadī, Jalālī and Mīlānī, publicly voiced support for Dr. Mosaddeq.

In addition, after 28 February, the Majlis selected a ‘committee of eight’ including Dr. Mu‘azzamī, Dr. Sanjābī, Ḥusayn Makkī, Dr. Muzaffar Baqā’ī, Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan Ḥā’irī’zādah, Qā’im’maqām al-Mulk Rafī’, Ganjih’ī and Majd’zādah, from among Majlis deputies to resolve the dispute (Nahavandi, 2009, 446). This committee delineated the disagreements between the Shah and the government concerning the monarch’s budget and jurisdiction over the cabinet, with particular regard to the use of military force. On 12 March 1953, the committee published its report in the *Iṭilā’āt* newspaper (issue 8049) as cited by Sayyid Ḥāmid Akbarī (Akbarī, 2009/1388, 193). Dr. Mosaddeq knew the extent of the threat from the Royal Court against his government and insisted on fast-forwarding the committee’s report through the Majlis with the intent of “*requesting ratification of the committee’s report*” by the Majlis (TNA FO 371/104564, Letter from Henderson, American Embassy, London, 9 Apr. 1953). It was generally perceived that a delay in settling the issue would make the possibility of any resolutions of differences forever impossible. The nation required the legal approval of government decisions by the Majlis.

Nevertheless, the progress Dr. Mosaddeq expected was not forthcoming. In fact, the committee’s report initiated a political crisis: “*The opposition, though still not united, seem determined to refuse to let the report be debated in the Majlis*” (TNA FO 371/104565/EP1015/112, Minutes by A.K. Rothnie, 13 Apr. 1953). The Majlis attempted several open sessions to review the report in April but these were never convened due to the lack of a quorum. This represented an intentional policy adopted to obstruct the Majlis by the absence of oppositional members. The opposition also tried “*to embarrass Musaddiq by raising questions such as the extension of martial law in Tehran and the plenary powers question*” (TNA FO 371/104565/EP1015/112, Minutes by A.K. Rothnie, 13 Apr. 1953). The fact is that Majlis deputies knew of the disagreements between Dr. Mosaddeq and the Shah, but many did not completely understand their duty with regard to opposing the government.

ASSESSING STATUS: PRIME MINISTER FOR THE COUP’S GOVERNMENT

A report dated 22 February related that Dr. Mosaddeq “*has fallen out with the Shah and threatened to resign unless the Shah ceases to interfere*” (TNA FO 371/104562/EP1015/41, 22 Feb. 1953). It was clear, however, that the Shah did not stop his interference and that Dr. Mosaddeq did not wish to resign. If he did, the British would have achieved their goal much easier and perhaps the 1953 coup would never have happened. The British were, however, assured by reports from both Henderson and ‘Alā that Dr. Mosaddeq had no intention of resigning. As a result, a new prime minister was elected on 23 February (TNA FO 371/104562, Quarrel between Musaddiq and the Shah, 23 Feb. 1953). The succession of the prime minister was a fundamental problem and the British position was that Zahedi, its agent, would take power by helping internal elements such as ‘Alā, as he was most effective at obtaining the Shah’s favour:

Ala said that he had done everything he could to persuade the Shah that Mossadeq would probably obtain all the reins of power unless the Shah took some definite step in opposition (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 7 Apr. 1953).

‘Alā discouraged the Shah regarding Dr. Mosaddeq in different ways and reminded him that Dr. Mosaddeq:

[...] was set on forcing the Majlis to approve the report of the eight-man committee. He would interpret the committee's approval as authorization for his becoming the actual Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and also for his controlling revenues which were currently accruing directly to the Crown (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 7 Apr. 1953).

‘Alā also whispered to the Shah that Zahedi was the only candidate capable of overcoming Dr. Mosaddeq (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 7 Apr. 1953).

Zahedi – he favoured British choice for prime minister (TNA FO 371/98670, Letter from S. Falle to FO, 7 Aug. 1952) – had been arrested under Martial Law on 25 February (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 7 Apr. 1953), possibly to prevent his involvement or implication in the events of 28 February so if the traitors won the day, Zahedi would then have appeared as an acceptable candidate of adequate character acceptable to Iranian society. Secondly, his arrest assured the “*future Prime Minister's security*” so that once Dr. Mosaddeq was removed they would resurrect him from his sanctuary. Moreover, the British hoped that with the formation of a Zahedi led government, his new regime would be soundly established (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/105G, 15 Apr. 1953; Spain, 1954). However, the British also knew that their support of Zahedi must not be revealed to the Iranian public. Zahedi had also attempted to secure firm endorsements from “*Kashani, Haerizadeh and other dissident members of the national movement*” (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/107, 7 Apr. 1953), as well as from army officers. Kashani's supporters consisted of different groups, especially merchants (Mokhtari, 2008) whose ultimate goal was to assure an oil settlement in deference to the British ‘status quo’ (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/105G, 15 Apr. 1953). Meanwhile, the British considered “*suitably relaxing any existing restrictions on exports and Persia's use of sterling*” (TNA FO 371/104564/EP1015/105G, 15 Apr. 1953). Great Britain's goal was blatantly obvious as their struggle for dominion in Iran unveiled itself on 28 February 1953. After many years, declassified documents (Byrne, 2014) describe in great detail that “*The original proposal for AJAX [the American Coup, engineered by Kermit Roosevelt] came from the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC)*” and that “[...] *the original proposal for AJAX came from British Intelligence*” (Byrne, 2014); thus, vindicating this study's stated purpose.

CONCLUSION

The nationalization of its oil industry was a turning point in Iran's modern history. Dr. Mosaddeq, a lawyer who initiated his political activities to secure of Iranian rights (increased profits from oil revenues) while establishing democratic reforms made him a modern Iranian hero. Britain had gained control of Iran's oil industry through its ownership of shares in the AIOC but its share of oil revenue evaporated with the nationalization

which led to strained relations between Britain and Iran. To secure its vested advantage, Britain took several steps to revise the 'status-quo' which included plans for political intervention in Iran's affairs.

Significant internal political events occurred before and after the chaos of February 1953. According to reliable documents, assassinating the prime minister was an option that attracted anti-government favour. Although the prime minister succeeded in avoiding a number of attempts, the inordinate pressure of numerous opponents continued until he suffered the final blow.

In the final stages, vital blows, delivered by treacherous colleagues as well as by British lackeys in the Royal Court, terminally weakened Dr. Mosaddeq's government which was finally overthrown by the CIA's 'Operation Ajax' in the 1953 coup. The 'how and why' so many Iranians forsook their previously heartfelt support of a beloved prime minister to join the cause of Western powers, both intentionally and unintentionally, is a theme that requires further detailed research. Many hold to this day that Iran's hopes and ideals for a better society were crushed with the loss of Dr. Mosaddeq's leadership.

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BRITANSKI NAČRT ZA ODSTRANITEV IRANSKEGA DEMOKRATIČNO
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POVZETEK

Dvajsetega marca 1951 (29. esfanda 1329 po perzijskem koledarju) je bila iranska naftna industrija nacionalizirana pod vodstvom velecenjenega premiera dr. Mohameda Mosadeka (Mohammad Mosaddeq). Vsa iranska družba je slavila nacionalizacijo nafte. Vsi Iranci, prodemokratična, prokomunistična in cerkvena duhovščina so se pridružili Nacionalni fronti, pogumnemu gibanju dr. Mohameda Mosadeka, da bi državi prinesli politično neodvisnost in gospodarski razcvet. Toda po razglasitvi nacionalizacije v začetku leta 1951 je Velika Britanija slednji na številne načine nasprotovala in leta 1953 so dr. Mosadeka strmoglavili. Avtorja v pričujoči študiji preučujeta vpletenost Velike Britanije v ta dogodek, skupaj z vlogo britanskih agentov v Iranu, ki so vneto sabotirali Mosadekovo demokratično izvoljeno vlado. S sklicevanjem na podatke Narodnega arhiva (v london-skem okrožju Kew), kot tudi na najvidnejše iranske pisatelje in priznane mednarodne službe ter s pomočjo kvalitativne analize avtorja raziskujeta podrobnosti o nadaljnjih britanskih odločitvah in operacijah, ki naj bi služile končni odstranitvi dr. Mosadeka z oblasti z uporabo vseh mogočih sredstev, vključno z atentatom. Ti zgodovinski zapisi dokazujejo, da so različne iranske skupine sodelovale z Britanci, in tega dejstva ne gre zanemariti. Dr. Mosadek se je moral v Teheranu soočiti s kaotičnimi političnimi razmerami, ki so Veliki Britaniji omogočile nadaljevanje priprav za državni udar, ki ga je leta 1953 vodila ameriška CIA.

Ključne besede: Iran, nacionalizacija naftne industrije, dr. Mosadek (Mosaddeq), Durbar (kraljeva palača), Britanci, državni udar iz leta 1953

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