

27 March 1979

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: An Inventory of Iranian Political Groups

Enclosed is a series of papers analyzing the Iranian political spectrum from a variety of directions.

Annex A assesses political organizations,
Annex B assesses other pressure groups,
Annex C assesses socio-economic groups,
Annex D assesses ethnic and religious minorities,
Annex E analyzes the influence of third parties with
Ayatollah Khomeini.

We also attach a memorandum analyzing the influence and power of the various groups listed above and assessing their likely future role in Iran.

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INVENTORY OF THE IRANIAN POLITICAL SCENE

Forces Favoring a Leftist Takeover:

Tudeh Party
Fedayeen or Chariks*
Minor Leftist Parties

Forces Opposing a Leftist Takeover:

Islamic Movement and Ulema (clergy)
Liberation Movement of Iran
National Front
Bazaaris

Forces with Divided Loyalties:

Mujahadin*
National Democratic Front
Tribal Minorities*
Labor
Students
Middle Class

Forces Currently Playing Little or No Role:

Military*
Upper Classes
Lower Classes

*Groups with significant armed following

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ANNEX A

Political Groups

Islamic Movement--The term generally used to describe the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini. Based primarily upon his charisma, the Islamic movement uses centuries-old Islamic institutions to rally its followers on an ad hoc basis. It has formed a political party, the Islamic Republican Party, headed by Mohammed Beheshti. Leadership is provided, in part, by the Shia Islamic clergy or ulema as well as by secular leaders. [redacted]

The ulema is divided into numerous factions around prominent religious leaders and there is no well-defined hierarchy. Khomeini's goal is a strict, fundamentalist theocratic state which substantially reduces the rate of modernization. Other Ayatollahs prefer a more moderate approach and a more secularized Iran. A strong anti-Communist and deeply xenophobic, Khomeini has no known ties with any foreign governments but he has long been close to the Palestinian movement, especially Fatah. His residence in Paris did not lead to any ties to the French government. [redacted]

The People's Strugglers or Mujahadin--The Islamic guerrilla group closely tied to Khomeini since the mid-1970s. The Mujahadin now act as the paramilitary arm of the Islamic revolutionary government. Its supporters probably number in the tens of thousands, but most have little military training. Its principal leader is said to be Massoud Rajavi. [redacted]

There are several factions in the Mujahadin--while most appear to remain loyal to Khomeini, some have openly endorsed the demands of the leftist Fedayeen. The Mujahadin have long had close ties with Fatah. [redacted]

Liberation Movement in Iran--The political party of Prime Minister Bazargan. Long associated with the Islamic Movement, many of the current government's cabinet members are LMI leaders. The LMI seeks to act as the secular arm of the Islamic movement. Since coming to power it has differed with Khomeini, however, over the pace of change. Bazargan has urged a slower movement toward an Islamic state. He favors a strong stable central government, moderate oil production and economic development. He has no known ties to foreign governments and is anti-Soviet. [redacted]

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The National Front--A loose coalition of several minor parties. The National Front was created by former Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1949 and has generally reflected the political position of middle class, western-oriented Iranians and has been ideologically close to Western European social democracy. Vaguely socialist but anti-Soviet, the Front is neutralist in orientation. National Front leaders Karim Sanjabi and Darius Foruhar hold cabinet positions in the Bazargan government. The National Front has no organizational base and no mass following. It has no ties with foreign government. [redacted]

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The National Democratic Front--A new party established in early March by Hedayatollah Matin-Daftari, a relative by marriage of Mossadegh. The NDF, a splinter of the National Front, opposes the creation of a theocratic state. The NDF hopes to appeal to those middle class Iranians who are frightened by the narrow sectarianism of Khomeini and the Islamic movement. It is secular oriented, favors western influences and has no known foreign ties. [redacted]

The Toilers Party--A small socialist party founded in 1951. Virtually moribund today, it is led by Mazaffar Baghai. [redacted]

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The People's Sacrifice Guerrillas, often referred to as the Chariks or People's Fedayeen, is the leading Marxist-Leninist group. Its leaders profess to be anti-Soviet. They demand the formation of a People's Army, a complete reorganization of the government and the control of the economy by workers councils. The organization seeks to capitalize on dissatisfaction with Khomeini's strict Islamic policies in order to build its strength for an eventual challenge to the government. Fedayeen leaders have chosen to remain anonymous; they claim 5,000 supporters in Tehran and have others in provincial cities. They have long received some assistance from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, South Yemen and possibly Libya. [redacted]

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The pro-Soviet Communist Tudeh (Masses) Party, which recently began to operate openly in Iran even though it is technically an illegal party, for months had been working covertly in the government. The Tudeh apparently has a relatively small organization. The party's immediate goal is to participate in a united leftist front. [redacted]

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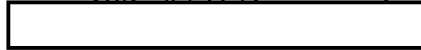
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The Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party and the Tufan (Storm) Party are very small splinters from the Tudeh which compete for the support among university groups within Iran and abroad. In the past, both groups have had some contacts with China and with the radical PFLP. The leaders of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party of Iran, which has had some success in gaining supporters in the oil producing areas, probably had some ties with their counterparts in the US. Numerous other miniscule leftists groups have long been underground in Iran and more are sprouting up in the relaxed security atmosphere.

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ANNEX B

Pressure Groups

Labor Unions--Under the Shah the Iranian labor movement consisted largely of company-sponsored associations whose leaders' allegiance was to the Ministry of Labor and, therefore, to the Shah. In the last year, however, the workers have discovered their economic and political power and have learned that they can bring the country to a standstill. The formation of worker organizations throughout the country is creating a powerful new force in the Iranian political equation. []

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We know very little about the leadership, organization, ideology and size of new labor organizations. In all likelihood there are many diverse interests and groups involved. The religious leadership still appears to exercise the greatest degree of influence, but it is certain that radical leftists and the Tudeh Party are making every effort to take advantage of the current chaos and confusion to improve their position among workers and within the committees being formed in factories. Moreover, rising unemployment will give leftist organizers fertile ground for their efforts. []

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The oil workers are an example. Reliable evidence indicates that the left--including the Tudeh and the Fedayeen or Chariks--who already have a foothold in the oilfields, are actively recruiting new supporters, particularly among young workers. At the same time the oil workers are split along ethnic lines--many are Arabs or Bakhtiari tribesmen. Khomeini has successfully encouraged the oilworkers to resume exports, but leftists may try to frustrate government on this point. We do not know whether Khomeini or the left would prevail if either side forced a showdown. []

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University and college students were the forefront in the struggle against the Shah and many now remain deeply involved in political life. The more than 150,000 students in institutions of higher education, however, are not united. The majority of the politically active students probably support Khomeini and his goals of ridding Iran of foreign influence and establishing some sort of Islamic state. The most militant have joined either the Fedayeen or the Mujahadin militia organizations. []

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In Tehran, at least, several Marxist groups compete for support on the college campuses. Many students, obviously disenchanted with Khomeini's Islamic model have joined the Fedayeen and provide the majority of the Fedayeen armed force. With the exception of the few students who apparently have joined the Tudeh Party, the students appear suspicious of all foreign powers. []

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The Military--The military at present has ceased to function as a pressure group. The military hierarchy traditionally looked to the Shah for leadership and has found no adequate substitute. Those senior officers that have been merely retired and not executed probably are being as unobtrusive as possible in order to avoid the ubiquitous late night knock on the door by revolutionary committees. Others have fled the country.

The remaining officer corps is mostly demoralized. Revolutionary committees are still reviewing personnel files to select their next victims. Radicalized regular soldiers, meanwhile, are rejecting their old officers and demanding the right to elect new leaders. Soldiers returning to their barracks are being greeted and disarmed by Mujahadin and Fedayeen irregulars. Under these circumstances it is difficult to see a viable military being established any time soon.

Naturally, military officers would want peace and stability to return to the country. They would hope that perquisites extended to the officer corps under the Shah's leadership would be permitted again. In the present situation, however, the future of the military establishment is being determined by persons and events beyond the control of the officer corps. The officers only hope would seem to be to survive and see what opportunities are presented by the creation of a Revolutionary Guard Corps or "Peoples Army."

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ANNEX C

Socio-Economic GroupsI. The Elite

Apart from the remnants of the royal family, the upper class includes between 100 and 200 elite families, of which about 50 are nationally prominent. Many are traditional native landowners and members of the tribal nobility. Neither their numbers nor their position is fixed: fortunes have risen and fallen according to connections, luck, and ability to represent their interests effectively with the current ruling group. Generally conservative, the portion of this group that has remained in Iran undoubtedly is apprehensive about its position in the new scheme of things. Their close ties to the recent ruling dynasty and widespread corruption leave them very vulnerable.

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The economic elite includes a large group of wealthy merchants, bankers, contractors, financiers, and industrialists that has developed almost entirely in the post World War II era. Some of its members came from the land-owning upper class; following land reform, they transferred their assets into commercial and industrial ventures. They are not closely tied to the traditional Iranian social structure and undoubtedly have been hurt by the economic impact of the revolution. Moreover, they have had extensive contacts with foreign business interests and are the group against whom the new regime heaped its accusations of widespread corruption. Many will probably flee abroad with their assets if the situation deteriorates further.

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The landless, rentier elite is composed of former landowners who did not turn to commercial ventures within Iran following the land reform. Instead, they sent capital abroad, often set up residences abroad, and many probably will remain outside the country. Thus they have minimal influence on events in Iran.

II. Middle ClassesA. Traditional

1. Civil servants have traditionally tended to be conservative but participated actively in anti-Shah protests. Although many government workers have returned to their jobs, they are not working, but are engaged in social activities and political discussions. They are, in essence, continuing to "sit it out" waiting for an end to the ongoing wave of interrogations and dismissals of managerial personnel. Most still voice support for Khomeini, but the "revolutionary committee" in the bureaucracy often ignore the government's instructions.

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2. It will be difficult for the government to convince this group that the revolution has been won and that it is time to return to productive activities. Their traditional conservatism may have been shattered, and they will be resistant to attempts to re-establish discipline over them. Eventually, they may see that a strong central-government, set on a secular foundation would benefit them most and, unless the revolutionary committees evolve into leftist-controlled groups, they probably would revert to an anti-Soviet, although not necessarily pro-US, outlook.

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3. Merchants, traders, businessmen, often referred to as "bazaaris," traditionally have been conservative but have struck out at upper classes when they felt their business interests endangered. In the recent past, the bazaar has handled one-third of the nation's imports, most non-oil exports, and two-thirds of retail trade. The bazaaris have supplied tens of millions of dollars to the Shiite religious leadership to provide food, clothing, and shelter for anti-Shah religious demonstrations. Although they are not deeply religious, the Shia religion is said to form the glue that cements this group. They have suffered serious economic losses in the past year and undoubtedly would benefit from a return to economic and political stability. One of the bases of their opposition to the Shah was their contention that in his headlong drive for economic development, he by-passed them in favor of his family and friends. They probably would favor a less than orthodox Islamic republic that would permit them to carry on with their traditional business practices--including price-haggling and usurious loan fees. Expanded oil sales and greater import revenues would be to their advantage.

B. Non-traditional

The intelligentsia includes members of the professions and the arts who owe their position to their skills and talents rather than to ownership or government affairs. Many have studied abroad where they have been exposed in varying degrees to Western political philosophies, thoughts, and ideas. United in their opposition to the Shah, many have been heavily influenced by Marxist philosophy.

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III. Lower Classes

Rural dwellers once dominated the Iranian population, but by 1978 about half of the population resided in urban areas. They did not, by and large, participate actively in anti-Shah activities during the year and may well be cynical about the latest round of promises that agriculture will be favored over industry. They have always opposed strong central governments and are very sympathetic to the idea of a more fundamentally religious Iran. They have little interest in Iran's foreign relations.

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The industrial working class grew rapidly in the post-1973 oil boom years. In 1976, almost one million of the urban working class was unemployed. They live largely on the fringes of a modernizing society and have benefitted little from it. They were mobilized for anti-Shah activities and provide a very fertile ground for further mobilization. This group probably believes that only a religious government will feel obliged to meet their basic needs. Unless political stability and economic progress resume, however, this class will suffer most through a lack of available jobs. This could drive them toward the left.

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ANNEX D

Ethnic and Religious Minority Groups

The estimated 3.5 million Sunni KURDS in the northwest have seized de facto autonomy in their homeland and the government has promised them considerable local rule. Heavily armed with smuggled and confiscated military weapons, they have threatened to ensure their "rights" by force if the government does not accede to their demands. The Kurdish Democratic Party (Secretary-General Abdul Rahman Qassem) resurfaced recently. Its leaders, some of whom have also returned, were linked with the Soviets and the Tudeh Party in the 1940s and early 1950s, both have renewed ties with Kurdish dissident groups. [Redacted]

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The predominant Kurdish religious leader, and tribal spokesman, is Sheikh Ezzedin Hosseini. Two experienced guerrilla bands have been backing autonomy: Jelal Talebani and his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan have a generally leftist image [Redacted]

[Redacted] the Barzani band formerly led by the late Mustafa Barzani and now controlled by his sons, Masud and Idris, has a western orientation. There is also a tribal faction, led by Foreign Minister Sanjabi, that is loyal to the Bazargan government.

[Redacted]

[Large Redacted Block]

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~~The Azarbayjani Democratic Party~~ which may be providing some of the organization and personnel for the "committees"--was reconstituted earlier this year. It had a symbiotic relationship with the Tudeh party and, like its Kurdish counterpart, led a short-lived independent republic under Soviet tutelage after World War II. One source indicates that the Party has won the support of some of the military units in Azarbayjan. [Redacted]

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[REDACTED]

The estimated 600,000 TURKOMEN in the northern provinces have armed themselves with confiscated military weapons, and have been clashing with local Shia Muslims over land ownership and renaming towns in the area. Their religious and political leaders are Seyh Ana Kilic Naksibendi and Muhammet Seri respectively. The tribe wants a Turkoman province with tribesmen in control of civilian and military posts, Turkish as its official language, representation in the central government in proportion to their numbers, cancellation of payments on agricultural loans, and greater government investment in the area. [REDACTED]

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The estimated 600,000 Sunni BALUCHIS in the southeast are also demanding autonomy. Their religious leader Maulavi Abdul Aziz also speaks for the newly formed Islamic Unity Party. The leftist dissident Baluchi Liberation Front and Baluchi Student Movement have been active in Pakistan and Afghanistan. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] These groups are alleged to have contacts with the USSR, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and the Palestinians. The Baluchis are armed with smuggled and confiscated weapons, but no guerrilla bands have surfaced and the IUP has not threatened to use force. The Party wants Baluchi control of provincial civilian and military posts, use of Baluchi in schools and instruction in Sunni rites, increased investment, constitutional guarantees of tribal autonomy and Sunni equality, and "full" representation in the constituent assembly that will ratify the constitution. [REDACTED]

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The estimated 500,000 Sunni and Shia ARABS along the Gulf coast have formed two groups to advance their claims to autonomy: the Islamic Arab Revolutionary Front, led by Abdul-Amur Tafir al-Kabi, seeks Iraqi, Kurdish, Iranian leftist, and Palestinian aid. The Arab Strugglers Front, led by Sheikh Mohammad Taner asn-Shobeyr Khaqani, a Sunni cleric, claims "thousands" of adherents. They are armed with smuggled and confiscated weapons. The IARF wants 60 percent of oil revenues spent on "the people," increased government investment, representation in the national cabinet, preferences for Arabs in the local administration, and use of Arabic as the official language of the area. [REDACTED]

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The estimated 500,000 Shia QASHQAI in the southwest between Tehran and the oil fields have been relatively quiet. Their leaders, Naser Khan Qashqai and Khosrow Khan Qashqai have reportedly agreed to help the government "establish order" in their area in return for Khomeini's promise that local religious leaders will not meddle in

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tribal affairs. The tribe has been arming with smuggled weapons,
partly with help from the Kurds.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

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ANNEX E

Third Parties with Influence with Khomeini

At this point, the only outside party with any significant ability to influence Iran's revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, is the Palestine Liberation Organization. Even the PLO's influence is probably limited to a few issues but the PLO has been invited to assist the new regime in building up its military forces--the only group the Iranians have turned to on this key issue.

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Pakistan is the only neighbor of Iran which has moved rapidly to establish good ties with Khomeini and Tehran. Pakistan and Iran appear to be working more or less together on Afghanistan. We doubt that the Pakistanis have much real influence with Khomeini. Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq and the USSR have cool relations with the Islamic regime.

No European government has developed meaningful ties to Tehran. Despite Khomeini's brief residence near Paris, he has no liking for any Western government.

Khomeini has sharply criticized the conservative Arab regimes like Saudi Arabia as backward monarchies. His relations with Libya are uneasy. Khomeini may be favorably disposed to regimes like Syria and Algeria.

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Implications for the US

Even minimal US interests are in jeopardy because the new leaders in Tehran have been unable to assume effective control over the country. They are beset by political divisions in their own ranks, troubled by nascent autonomy movements in several provinces, and severely challenged by heavily armed and committed leftists. Prime Minister Bazargan's ability to cope with these problems is limited by the collapse of the military and security forces. Moreover, Ayatollah Khomeini's strict fundamentalism is driving many moderate, secular Iranians, who might eventually be a force for stability, into the hands of the left. As leftist strength grows, a crucial question for the US is whether the center and the Islamic right are strong enough to prevent the left from taking over.

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Iranian politics have been traditionally characterized by political fractionalism. The fragile unity of Iranians in opposition to the Shah in the last months of 1978 and early 1979 was an aberration not likely to be repeated again in the near future. Since the creation on 11 February of the revolutionary government loyal to Ayatollah Khomeini, the traditional divisions of Iranian politics have rapidly reemerged.

The types of divisions, which have emerged in the last month are far more complex than a simple left-right polarization. While ideological differences do exist, there are equally important cleavages along sociological, ethnic, economic and even generational

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SUBJECT: Implications for the US

lines. Indeed, the generational cleavage is probably of considerable significance because over 50 percent of the country is under 21. We have little information on the goals of the new generation of Iranian students, for example, but we assume they will not be as responsive to traditional leadership or as easily dissuaded from seeking a greater political role for themselves as their predecessors.

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At present, an inventory of the various political forces at work in Iran suggests that the left is in a pivotal position, capable of weakening any government by fomenting chaos and perhaps even capable of seizing power. It is difficult, however, to measure the real strength of either the leftist or the non-leftist forces and it is possible that the left is weaker than it appears in the present unstable situation. Ultimately, a combination of Islamic fundamentalism and traditional Iranian antipathy toward the Soviets may fuel a coalition of forces that could effectively curb the left.

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But if the center and right potentially have great strength, the center at present is either disorganized or demoralized and the rightist extremists are undertaking actions that are undercutting the Bazargan government. The rightist Islamic Movement, which forms the core of Khomeini's support, is too amorphous by itself to be a bulwark against the left. Its paramilitary arm, the Mujahadin--which has been performing security duties for the government, lacks cohesion and many members of the group are having difficulty deciding whether the social change they seek is best answered by Marx or the Mullahs. The military, while it yet may become a major center-right bastion in the future, is presently disorganized.

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In addition, Iranian moderates historically have been "fence sitters" on important issues. For example, Prime Minister Bakhtiar was never able to marshal significant center-right support for his government. Moreover, the center-right is mostly disarmed, depending almost completely on the unreliable Mujahadin for security. Finally, Khomeini himself tends to the extreme and has been ambivalent about the value of center support. His attitude has been that some of the educated, technologically-oriented elite are important for some jobs in the country, but the rest are free to go.

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Iran is still in a revolutionary period. The dynamics of the situation lead to the conclusion that the country is likely to become further radicalized in the future: the left and right will become more extreme and the moderates will be pushed to the sidelines.
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SUBJECT: Implications for the US

Ultimately, the left could come to power in a number of ways. It could build up its military capability and seize power by force, or it could maintain political pressure on the government, forcing it to make concessions, while infiltrating it from within. It now appears that the only way the center-right can preempt the left is to move quickly to build its own military capability and to suppress the leftist forces. [redacted]

Implications for the US

The resolution of the struggle for power in Iran is likely to turn ultimately upon a test of arms between the leftists and forces dominated by the extreme Islamic right. Although an even more extreme Islamic rightist government would be difficult to deal with, minimal US interests are likely to be served better than under a leftist dominated government. [redacted]

Any leftist dominated government would probably move closer to the USSR and be anti-US in orientation. A Tudeh Party government would enthusiastically support Soviet policies and almost certainly import large numbers of advisors from the USSR to assist in solidifying control over the government and military apparatus. A government dominated by the People's Fedayeen, which is Marxist and anti-Soviet, would seek to prevent Soviet penetration, but might be forced to turn to the USSR for economic and military assistance. [redacted]

None of the major political forces in Iran has expressed much interest in forging an alliance with the US to resist the left. Although some in the traditional elite and among the commercial classes may privately desire a working relationship with the US, they are intimidated by the xenophobic nature of the Iranian revolution. Public expression of American support for any group in Iran in the current circumstances is likely to be counterproductive. At best, there are intangibles that the US could exploit. These are the concerns of the conservative Islamic leaders over the threat from the left, traditional Iranian hostility toward the USSR, the continued need for oil revenues, and the predominance of Western ideals and values among the Iranian elite. [redacted]

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CONTROL NO. _____

Bob - This is an excellent paper - just the kind I forward looking out look we need. I'd like to see you move the "Implications for US" section up front, use others as an EIM (3) or EA

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