



Understanding the Background of the US Role in the Middle East – 1953 Iranian Coup & America’s Role

Nicholas DeAntonis, Academy of Information Technology & Engineering, Stamford, CT

Grade level: 10

Number of class periods: 2

Objective

In the days, weeks, and months after 9/11 Iran was thrust into the center of a heated debate after President George W. Bush included Iran as part of the ‘Axis of Evil’, implying it had facilitated terrorism worldwide. This despite the fact no 9/11 hijackers were from Iran or were known to have assisted the hijackers. While Iran has been easily labeled as America's enemy following 9/11, what’s the broader history? Why has there been a historic discord between the United States & Iran? While many may point to the 1979 Islamic Revolution or the Iran hostage crisis, the story really starts in 1953. This assignment aims to provide the students a longer view of U.S - Iranian relations and unearth the genesis of discord, while placing in the context of 9/11's wake.

- Students will have a greater understanding of the role America played in Iran’s 1953 Coup.
- Students will learn how the 1953 coup sowed the seeds for the 1979 Iranian Revolution.
- Students will familiar themselves with American Cold War Policy and its consequences.

Common Core Standards

Comprehensive Common Core Alignments at end of lesson plan.

- Reading Standards for Informational Text 1
- Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies Standards 2, 3, 9

Resources

- [2002 State of the Union Address \(Axis of Evil Speech\), President George W. Bush](#)
- [“How a Plot Convulsed Iran in '53 \(and in '79\),” James Risen](#)
- ["Campaign to Install a Pro-Western Government in Iran," CIA summary draft of internal history of the coup, undated](#)
- [Reading Response Questions](#)

Optional Preparation

- Students should be familiar with the key figures: U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossedeqh, and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi “The Shah”.
- Students should have basic understanding of early 20th century Iranian history, including their oil deal with Great Britain.
- Students should have basic understanding of the 1979 Iranian Revolution.



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Activity

Students will first watch: President George W. Bush’s, *2002 State of the Union Address (Axis of Evil Speech)*
Students will then read James Risen’s article, *How a Plot Convulsed Iran in ‘53 (and ‘79)*, to gain a broad overview of the 1953 Iranian Coup.

Answer provided questions:

1. What “shared interest” did Washington and London have in planning the coup of Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh?
2. How did United States officials feel toward Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi?
3. What was Operation TP-Ajax?
4. Why has it been difficult to understand what happened in ‘53 Coup?
5. Who was Donald Wilber and what role does he play in telling this story?
6. Why was this event a turning point for U.S.-Iranian relations?
7. What did Madeleine K. Albright mean when she said, “... it is easy to see now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs”?
8. What connection did the ‘53 coup have with the 1979 Iranian Revolution?

Next, students will read a declassified CIA document that outlines America’s involvement in the coup.

Answer provided questions:

1. When was the document written?
2. What was the target and objective of the ‘53 coup?
3. How did the CIA plan to “disenchant the Iranian population with the myth of Mossadegh’s patriotism”?
4. What was the so called, “war of nerves” aimed at Mossadegh?

Finally, students will have an in-class discussion on this subject’s connection to 9/11.

Assessment/Reflection

- Students should demonstrate an understanding of the broader history between the US & Iran.
- A discussion should be explored regarding why Iran was branded as an enemy after 9/11 and the 1953 connect in anyway
- Students should demonstrate an understanding of the major arguments and key features of the documents.
- Students are meant to use textual support in their written answers.



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Common Core Alignments

These alignments are written for grades 9-10, however this lesson could easily be adjusted for use with high school juniors and seniors. This lesson aligns with the following standards, but questioning and assessments may need to be adjusted as appropriate for grade level and ability.

Reading Standards for Informational Texts

Key Ideas and Details

Standard 1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- Students will be using the text to answer questions that ask about details within the text but will also be answering questions that ask them to look deeper into the text and draw inferences.

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/ Social Studies

Key Ideas and Details

Standard 2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

- Students will use the secondary source articles to summarize the events of the 1953 coup and analyze the legacy and meaning of these events. They will also be able to explain how certain themes and ideas develop throughout the course of these articles.

Standard 3: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

- Students will be analyzing in detail the series of events of the 1953 Coup and will have to evaluate the connection between the 1953 Coup and the 1979 revolution.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Standard 9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

- Students will compare and contrast the treatment of the 1953 coup, the 1979 revolution as well as key individuals (including President Eisenhower, Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi) between the two articles. They will also be comparing the treatment of all of these topics with their prior knowledge and readings.