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THE IRANIAN CRISIS (1945–1946) AS A PRELUDE TO THE COLD WAR

(Summary)

The outbreak of World War II thwarted the aspirations of Reza Shah to modernization and independent development of Iran. Officially neutral Iran failed to conceal the German influence and the occurrence of certain sympathy for the ideology of Nazism among the ruling circles in Tehran. Soon after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, Britain and the Soviet Union agreed to occupy Iran to cut off any supply of German troops from south. Their strategic positions in Baku and Khuzestan were seriously threatened by several thousand resident Nazi agents in the country. On August 25 in a joint operation, the Soviet and British troops invaded Iran and in a few hours took control over the major cities. The Iranian distrust to the intentions of the occupiers compelled London and Moscow to allow the government to seek US support. Washington was initially confused and frightened by the Iranian call for help. For the Roosevelt administration, the victory over Nazi Germany was vital for the security of the US and Western Europe, but such intervention, alongside Britain and the Soviet Union, required a clear political vision and a well-trained staff to develop it. Involved in the complex relationship between Iran and its occupiers, the State Department did not intend to affect the British and Soviet interest in the country. But later circumstances made it impossible to maintain neutral position for long. At the beginning of 1942 Britain, the Soviet Union and Iran began negotiations for troop withdrawal within 6 months after the end of the war and on January 29 they signed a tripartite agreement. But the nascent rivalry between the allies put aside the initial reason for the occupation and they started planning the post-war

situation in Iran, which remained the last oil bastion in the Gulf. The occupation of Iran by the Allied forces fueled the competition for the acquisition of oil concessions. With the closing of the Tehran conference it became clear to the three Great Powers that Iran would become a point of intersection of imperial interests. On the one hand, Britain sought to continue the exploitation of Iranian oil and to ensure security of the Indian borders to the south. On the other hand, the Soviet Union sought to obtain a share from the oil production and Iran's refusal of the proposed economic cooperation forced Stalin to intervene in its internal affairs by supporting the communists from the "Tudeh" party. Meanwhile the period for withdrawal of the troops from Iran was extended in favor of the Great Powers along with the deepening of the contradictions between them. The Iranian crisis revealed the genuine plans of the Great Powers for the postwar situation. The outcome crystallized the competition in the New World Order and marked the beginning of the Cold War – a confrontation of ideologies, a battle for resources and a technological rush.