2015

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

Volume XVI, No. 30 (2015)
6 July 2015

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Roundtable and Web Production Editor: George Fujii
Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas R. Maddux

Introduction by Malcolm Byrne

Roham Alvandi. ***Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*****.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780199375691 (hardcover, $55.00).

URL: http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XVI-30

Contents

Introduction by Malcolm Byrne, National Security Archive, George Washington University

David Newsom, a distinguished foreign service officer who rose to the top rungs of the State Department in the late 1970s – just as Iran was being swallowed up by revolution – once described being "belabored" by a foreign minister (unnamed) who blamed the United States for stirring up various global crises. Newsom finally interrupted the critique, telling the official: "Sir, if we were half as influential as you say we are, we would not be in the mess we are in."[1]

U.S. decision-makers have long understood that there are practical limits on their influence. That big powers cannot simply dictate events at will seems self-evident in theory but is not always easy for casual observers to accept. One major constraint that both superpowers regularly faced even at the height of their dominance in the Cold War was the difficulty of managing the behavior of client states. This phenomenon of smaller allies manipulating their bigger brothers has become a recurring theme recently for scholars. Odd Arne Westad, James Hershberg, Vladislav Zubok, Csaba Bekes, Hope Harrison, Piero Gleijeses, and Fred Logevall[2] are among those who have spotlighted the complicated interactions between the great powers and their clients – from Cuba, India, Pakistan, North and South Vietnam to East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Iraq, Israel, and elsewhere.

Lately, the last Shah of Iran has become the subject of similar reassessments. In the popular imagination, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi is still usually seen as the archetypal American puppet who mainly reveled in the trappings of monarchy and flaunted his U.S.-supplied arsenal. Even among those who knew or observed him firsthand, opinions have varied widely. Declassified American documents reflect different judgments over the years about whether he was weak, even cowardly, as Ambassador Loy Henderson and others regarded him in the early 1950s, or a visionary leader capable of building a modernizing regional power, as U.S. diplomats tended to see him a decade or two later. President Richard Nixon, who first met him after the 1953 U.S.-backed coup that restored the Pahlavi "dynasty," later described his own partiality for the Shah as "stronger than horseradish."[3]

---

[1] Newsom e-mails to author, March 9-11, 2006.

[2] See, for example, Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); James G. Hershberg, (Stanford University Press, 2012); Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union and the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Csaba Bekes, *Cold War, Détente, Revolution: Hungary, the Soviet Bloc and World Politics, 1945-1964* (Columbia University Press, 2012); Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton University Press, 2003); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2012).

[3] "Conversation Among President Nixon, Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II, and General Alexander Haig, Washington, April 8, 1971, 3:56-4:21 p.m.," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Volume E-4, "Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972," Document 122, (also cited in Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, 58).

The debate has meaning for international history and Cold War studies, but even more so for contemporary Iranian politics where factions inside and outside of the country continually seek to affix blame for Iran's historical and current difficulties. Iran scholars, particularly biographers, have been just as divided over what kind of ruler the Shah was, whether he was really a democrat or a megalomaniac, and whether he was Iran's best hope or a failure responsible for its descent into revolution. Two recent biographies, one by a former deputy minister under the monarchy, Gholam Reza Afkhami, the other by émigré scholar Abbas Milani, once a political prisoner during that era, are examples of this divergence of assessments.[4]

There is very little disagreement that Nixon considered Iran a key part of his strategic vision for the post-Vietnam world order. On the other hand, most scholars have downplayed if not altogether ignored the possibility that the Shah may have actively prodded Nixon to adapt American policy in Iran's favor. Iran experts from Bruce Kuniholm to James Bill to Mark Gasiorowski and James Goode[5] have understandably identified what the Soviets used to call 'objective' factors – like the country's long shared border with the USSR and, of course, its petroleum reserves – as the main justifications for the White House decision to promote the Shah as the gendarme of the Gulf. Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger were at pains to try to keep Soviet power contained while the United States began to shrink its global presence in the wake of Vietnam, and Iran was considered a vital strategic interest well before Mohammad Reza emerged as a quasi-independent leader. Gasiorowski and others have also pointed to other benefits he brought to the table, including unwavering support for Israel and Pakistan and billions in extravagant arms purchases. But the Shah himself is generally not given much credit for being an active agent in maneuvering his country into a position of such prominence. He may have made clear his eagerness to be a player, the consensus seems to be, but the impetus came from Washington.

Weighing in on this topic is Roham Alvandi, whose engaging new book aims to show that whatever one may think of the Shah as a personality or a ruler, he had a far more substantial impact on his erstwhile patrons than many people have assumed. It may have taken years to build up his stature sufficiently – three successive U.S. presidents emphatically did not regard him as a full partner – and his success was fairly short-lived since, as Alvandi writes, the mutual respect he enjoyed with Nixon did not convey to the President's successor. But it was a highly significant achievement nonetheless, Alvandi believes.

---

[4] Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Abbas Milani, *The Shah*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). The Shah himself wrote three memoirs of his rule that were translated into English.

[5] Bruce Robellet Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton University Press, 1980); Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Cornell University Press, 1991); James F. Goode, *The United States and Iran, 1946-51: The Diplomacy of Neglect* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1989).

Alvandi's goal is not only to show the Shah as an autonomous player on the international stage but to make a broader point about the significance of Third-World 'agency' during the Cold War. To accomplish both objectives in a manageable way he sensibly avoids the burden of retracing the entire history of U.S.-Iranian relations. Instead he draws on three case studies: Nixon's appeal to the Shah to become a key component of the Nixon Doctrine; the Shah's successful effort to entangle Washington in his feud with Iraq involving the Kurds; and the Ford administration's rebuff of Iran's nuclear ambitions (underscoring, by contrast, the importance of the Shah's ties to President Ford's predecessor). While he fully acknowledges that events on the ground in both countries and the world at large – from Vietnam, to domestic politics in the United States, to the mounting impact of oil on international politics – helped to shape Nixon's and later Ford's thinking, Alvandi makes a well-sourced argument for why he believes they are not enough to explain the Shah's rise to primacy in U.S. Gulf policy. Rather, the Shah himself, the skills he possessed, and his strong personal connection to a particular U.S. president also were critical to the shift from previous administrations.

That is not necessarily an easy argument to make. For one thing, there are nagging bits of evidence that test this thesis, such as former Ambassador Richard Helms's supposed remark years after the fact that neither Kissinger nor he ever took the Shah seriously.[6] But there is also a broader historiographical challenge: how to highlight a single factor out of many that helped define a complex historical period without falling into the trap of overstatement, or distorting what actually happened. These points are touched on briefly in the following roundtable, but happily the judgment of the participants is that Alvandi has done an outstanding job and has delivered an impressively researched, thoughtfully argued, and well-written volume that will be of genuine academic value and public interest.

As all three prominent scholar-commentators point out in their essays, the book does a service simply by covering a period that has frequently been overlooked in favor of 'more interesting' episodes. Most of the literature centers on the major peaks and valleys of U.S.-Iranian relations – the crises of 1953 and 1978-79, and more recently the horrific Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, not to mention the current topic *du jour*: Iran's nuclear ambitions. Instead, Alvandi has chosen an era of relative quiet in the relationship – in fact the high point of the two countries' association, as he puts it. Here he adds to and expands on a relatively compact body of recent, mostly journal-length studies of Iranian policy during the Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon presidencies by the likes of Andrew Johns, James Goode, Tore T. Peterson, and of course Alvandi himself.[7] The benefits of this kind of study are obviously

[6] Andrew Scott Cooper, *The Oil Kings: How the U.S., Iran, and Saudi Arabia Changed the Balance of Power in the Middle East*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).

[7] Andrew L. Johns, "The Johnson Administration, the Shah of Iran, and the Changing Pattern of U.S.-Iranian Relations, 1965-1967: 'Tired of Being Treated Like a Schoolboy,'" *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 2 (2007): 64-94; James F. Goode, "Reforming Iran during the Kennedy Years," *Diplomatic History* 15, no. 1 (1991): 13-29; Tore T. Peterson, *Richard Nixon, Great Britain and the Anglo-American Alignment in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula: Making Allies out of Clients*, (Brighton, UK: Sussex Academic Press, 2009); Roham

considerable. Not only does it fill in missing pieces in the historical timeline, but periods of comparative calm often have as much to tell as do times of upheaval.

It is no exaggeration to say that members of the roundtable are highly enthusiastic about this book. All three evaluations are sober and considered, and they are not without a few critiques or points of disagreement with the book, but each contributor holds the volume and its author in justifiably high regard.

As a general matter, Andrew Johns finds "a great deal to admire" in the manuscript; Anoush Ehteshami calls it an "exemplary book;" and Taylor Fain is "deeply impressed" with an "original and much-needed contribution to the international history of the Cold War." Johns especially appreciates the writing, studious research and variety of insights. Fain finds the thesis provocative but persuasive, and praises the quality of research, especially the author's use of Farsi resources which "sets his book apart." Fain also applauds the "adept analysis," particularly of Washington policymaking. Ehteshami also praises the exploration of multiple sources and the "close study" of the Nixon administration's relations with the Shah.

All agree that the book adds to the existing literature. Ehteshami compliments Alvandi for "shedding additional and indeed new light on the role that Pahlavi Iran played at critical points in the 1960s and 1970s and how this helped shape his regime's policies and actions to the end." Fain admires the "adept analysis" of the complexities of U.S. decision-making, for example the explanation for Washington's abandonment of Saudi Arabia as the second pillar of its Middle East strategy, which he describes as the "most detailed and persuasive" account he has read. Even more rewarding for Fain, and the "real centerpiece" of the book, is the story of the U.S. role in Iran's competition with Iraq.

One point of analytical difference to be found in these reviews relates to the proper weight to be given to the Shah personally rather than to other factors in determining U.S. policy. Johns suggests the Shah may not have had as much autonomy and influence nor possessed quite the level of power-broking skills that Alvandi ascribes to him. Fain raises a parallel question about the definitions of "client" and "partner" in the text. He grants that Alvandi "has clearly grappled thoughtfully" with the issue but believes his use of the terms does not adequately allow for the possibility of different degrees of (in)dependence on the parts of the players involved. "Mohammad Reza Shah was an affluent and willful client, but a client nonetheless," Fain argues.

Johns and Fain each express a desire for more in-depth assessments of the domestic side of the story, in terms of both politics and policymaking. Johns believes more detail on each country's political scene would have been helpful, particularly on the question of the Shah's political security. Fain sees Alvandi's study of the U.S. policy process as outstanding but notes a "gulf" between that effort and the analysis of Iranian decision-making. At the same

---

Alvandi, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The Origins of Iranian Primacy in the Persian Gulf," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 2 (2012): 337-372.

time, Johns is quick to note that domestic issues were not the main focus of the volume, and Fain acknowledges the lack of Iranian documentation and the problem posed by the closed nature of the Shah's rule.

Fain adds a final point about the portrayal of the book's main characters. While the author is persuasive about the important role of personalities in the U.S.-Iran partnership, Fain notes, "neither Nixon nor the Shah, two of the most complex and polarizing figures of the Cold War era, emerges from these pages as a fully realized human being." The same more or less goes for Kissinger, he contends, concluding that "[m]ore personal analysis of the key players in the drama would have added texture and nuance."

But these points are mainly "quibbles," as one of the reviewers puts it, which in no way detract from Alvandi's accomplishment, nor his obvious skills as a writer, multi-lingual researcher, and analyst. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* is a rich contribution to our understanding of recent Middle Eastern history and a reminder of the challenges U.S. policy-makers face in defining and advancing American interests in the region.

Participants:

Roham Alvandi is Associate Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is the author of *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, 2014), which was selected by the *Financial Times* as one of its 2014 History Books of Year. His current research examines the role of human rights activism in the origins of the 1979 Iranian Revolution

Malcolm Byrne is deputy director and research director at the nongovernmental National Security Archive based at The George Washington University. His latest book on Iran is *Iran-Contra: Reagan's Scandal and the Unchecked Abuse of Presidential Power*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2014). Previous volumes on Iran include *Becoming Enemies: U.S.-Iran Relations and the Iran-Iraq War, 1979-1988*, with James G. Blight *et al*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012) and *Mohammad Mosaddeq and the 1953 Coup in Iran*, with Mark Gasiorowski, (Syracuse University Press, 2004) which won the biennial Mosaddeq Foundation Award (Geneva) for best book on Iran, 2003-2004. He has a B.A. from Tufts University and a Masters from Johns Hopkins / SAIS. His current principal focus is on U.S.-Iran relations during the reform period, 1997-2005.

Anoush Ehteshami is the Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah Chair in International Relations and Director of the *HH Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah Programme in International Relations, Regional Politics and Security* in the School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University. He is Joint Director of the RCUK-funded Durham-Edinburgh-Manchester Universities' Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW), whose research focus since 2012 has been the 'Arab World in Transition'. He is Editor of three major book series on the Middle East and the wider Muslim world, and is member of Editorial Board of seven international journals. His many book-length publications include: *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (co-editor) (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2014); *Dynamics of Change in the Persian Gulf: Political Economy, War and Revolution* (New York,

NY: Routledge, 2013); *Iran and the International System* (co-editor) (New York, NY, Routledge, 2012); *The International Politics of the Red Sea* (with Emma Murphy) (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011); *Dynamics of Power in Contemporary Iran* (Emirates Occasional Papers Series), (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2010).

W. Taylor Fain is associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Fain received his Masters of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and his Ph.D. in the history of American foreign relations from the University of Virginia. He specializes in the history of the United States' relations with the wider world and American history in global context. His research interests include the evolution of the Anglo-American relationship, the international history of the Cold War, the United States' roles in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf regions, and the American response to European imperial retrenchment in the post war era. He is the author of *American Ascendance and British Retreat in the Persian Gulf Region* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) and has published articles in *Diplomacy & Statecraft* and *Middle Eastern Studies*.

Andrew L. Johns is Associate Professor of History at Brigham Young University and the David M. Kennedy Center for International Studies. He is the author of *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War* (2010); the co-editor of *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (2006) and *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (2014); and the editor of *A Companion to Ronald Reagan* (2015). In addition, he is the editor of *Passport: The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Review*, and general editor of the Studies in Conflict, Diplomacy, and Peace books series, published by the University Press of Kentucky. His current projects include a foreign relations biography of Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) and a global history of 1972.

Review by Anoush Ehteshami, Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah Chair in International Relations, School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University

The opponents of the Shah of Iran have always portrayed him as a stooge of the United States, beholden to Washington for saving his crown from the fires of political turmoil ignited by Premier Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq in the 1950s. Since the 1979 revolution which overthrew the Pahlavi monarchy, the narrative of subjugation has formed one of the main pillars of the Islamic Republic's attack on the West, and most notably the United States. The Shah's regime was caricatured as a puppet of the United States; so much so that the monarchy's foreign policy was often reduced to a simplistic set of calculations linking the Pahlavi state to the *diktats* of Washington. In this critical narrative the Shah was admonished for costing Iran its independence, and it was not surprising therefore that the Islamist revolutionaries adopted the slogan of 'Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic' as their battle cry against the Shah and the basis on which to construct the new republic.

But evidence from archival sources, records, and diaries of the members of the Shah's elite all paint a far more complex picture than the simplistic narrative of Shah's total dependence on the United States; indeed his regime's submission to the West. Scholarship from before the revolution provides much evidence for Pahlavi's confident foreign and defence policy calculations, showing them to be effective and detailed. But, sadly, the excellent works[1] following the revolution which focused on the character of the monarch himself, and also the fact that he acted as an absolute ruler, contributed to a more reductionist reading of the Shah's regional policies and his relationship with his Western allies. And this is where Roham Alvandi enters the fray. In his exemplary book, using important American archival sources, he adds to the existing strong literature on Iran in the Cold War by shedding additional and indeed new light on the role that Pahlavi Iran played at critical points in the 1960s and 1970s and how this helped shape his regime's policies and actions to the end.

Of particular interest is the book's close study of the Nixon administration's relations with the Shah. Although this has been a well-trodden research path,[2] Alvandi's use of the Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon Presidential archives adds wonderful texture to the existing literature on this pivotal relationship. Importantly, he charts the evolution of what he refers to as the "one pillar policy" (50) and the Nixon administration's growing reliance on Iran in west Asia, which accelerated after the withdrawal of British forces from the Persian Gulf. A lasting legacy of this fast-moving relationship is seen in the tensions in the triangle

[1] Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Abbas Milani, *The Shah* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Marvin Zonis, *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[2] James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Mark J, Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); James F. Goode, *The United States and Iran: In the Shadow of Mussaddiq* (Basingtoke, UK: Macmillan, 1997); and Gary Sick, *American's Fateful Encounter with Iran* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1985).

of power in this sub-region between the Islamic Republic, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. First, was the Shah the best horse to back? While in 1970 Imperial Iran might have appeared to have been more solid an ally than next door Saudi Arabia, by the end of the decade it was the Persian monarchy that lost its footing and not the al-Sauds. After all, U.S. intelligence sources were picking up signals about Iran's growing social instability beginning in the mid-1970s. Second, the fact that it was the Shah who lost his kingdom to a highly motivated coalition of Islamists, liberals, and leftists meant that the United States would very quickly have to shift its considerable weight behind Saudi Arabia – both to protect it from the radical winds blowing from Iran and also to fashion of the Saudi kingdom a strong, dependable and obliging ally. The relationship between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia was already decades-old and also quite close, but it was not of the same magnitude as that which had emerged between Pahlavi's Iran and the U.S. (particularly at the elite level) since the early 1960s. Thirdly, this transformation in the Persian Gulf's power relations, against the backdrop of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, took place so quickly that the United States never took stock of what its new (intimate) relationship with Riyadh would mean for Saudi Arabia as well as for the United States' broader relationship with the Muslim world. While the U.S. was confident that it and the Shah saw the world in (nearly) the same way, the same has never been true of the complex relationship between Riyadh and Washington. Another lasting legacy of the 'one-pillar policy' has been the regional and international tensions arising from Iran's programme which was initially encouraged by the White House but, after concerns over proliferation, turned into a thorn in the side of Iran-U.S. security cooperation. Since the early 2000s, the same programme that the Shah began has turned Iran into an international pariah, bringing upon it an avalanche of unilateral and multilateral sanctions. Alvandi ably shows that the many issues facing the international community today were apparent then: the peacefulness of Iran's nuclear programme, its reprocessing and nuclear fuel ambitions, and Iran's endgame in its race for mastering the nuclear fuel and power cycle.

Finally, it is one of the ironies of history that American concern about access to Iranian oil and its denial to the Soviet Union should have helped to bolster U.S.-Iran relations from the 1950s, and a similar concern about oil in the 1970s – this time about spiralling oil prices apparently encouraged by the Shah in order to help cover his extravagant public expenditure – should have fuelled American suspicions of their closest ally in the Middle East.

Review by W. Taylor Fain, University of North Carolina Wilmington

"When Political Clients become Diplomatic Partners: Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and the Shah of Iran."

Roham Alvandi has written a very impressive book. From its first pages, he makes clear his intention to write Mohammad Reza Shah solidly into the history of the Cold War, and in an even more ambitious vein, to "restore agency to Third World actors like the shah and place them firmly at the center of the worldwide struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States" (179). He has produced a provocative and persuasive revisionist account of U.S.-Iranian relations in the 1970s that marshals a wealth of evidence in English and Farsi to argue that Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was not merely a client of the United States but a full partner in implementing the Nixon Doctrine in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia. In doing so, Alvandi makes an original and much-needed contribution to the international history of the Cold War in the Middle East, and his study will no doubt become required reading for scholars in the field.

In constructing his book, Alvandi takes a risk by choosing to build his analysis of U.S.-Iranian relations around three case studies rather than attempt a comprehensive history of his subject. The risk pays off. Alvandi first dissects the series of diplomatic crises in Iran during the early years of the Cold War before examining in turn the efforts of President Richard Nixon and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger to make the Shah a partner in U.S. efforts to police the Persian Gulf region, U.S. support for the Shah's proxy war against the Iraqi Baathist regime using the Kurds in the early and mid-1970s, and the Shah's bid to acquire nuclear technology from the Nixon and Ford administrations. In doing so Alvandi is able to illuminate clearly the contours of the whole relationship. At the same time, he skillfully avoids the pitfall of stringing together a disjointed selection of chapters on discrete subjects.

Where Alvandi's work is especially valuable is in the quality of its research. The evidentiary base on which his analysis rests is formidably wide and extremely deep. What sets his book apart from other accounts of U.S.-Iranian relations is his ability to incorporate Farsi-language sources into his narrative. Alavandi appears to have mined documents from every archive in the United States and Britain and exploited every digitized collection available to scholars as well. Most notably he has made extensive use of the Foundation for Iranian Studies Oral History Collection, the Harvard University Iranian Oral History Project, and the five volumes of Iranian courtier Asadollah Alam's diaries. Additionally, he has conducted interviews with former U.S. and Iranian officials who were active in the 1970s. This is marvelous stuff.

Perhaps Alvandi's most important contributions are in his adept analysis of the complexities of decision making in Washington surrounding Iran's place in the United States' Persian Gulf policies. Alvandi presents the most detailed and persuasive explanation I have read of the reasons behind Nixon's abandonment of his predecessors' balancing policy between the Saudi and Iranian 'twin pillars' in the Gulf and his acceptance of Iranian

primacy in the region. The Saudis' unwillingness to leave themselves vulnerable to Arab nationalist charges that they were complicit with U.S. and Iranian 'imperialism' in the Middle East, King Faisal's vocal support for the Palestinian cause against Israel, and the apparent instability of the Saudi monarchy convinced Nixon and Kissinger that the Shah offered the most capable and forward-looking option as an ally and executor of the Nixon Doctrine in the Persian Gulf region. The Shah, Alvandi demonstrates, worked relentless to convince the American President that this was the case.

The most rewarding portion of *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, and its real centerpiece, is Alvandi's account the United States' role in the Shah's secret war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, including his cynical manipulation of the Kurds to destabilize the Baathist regime in Baghdad. This is the most deeply researched, analytically rich, and densely textured chapter in Alvandi's book. In assessing an often-neglected and tragic chapter of U.S. policy in the Middle East, Alvandi illuminates a host of issues with obvious contemporary resonance. His depiction of Iranian-Israeli cooperation to support the Kurds against their common enemy, Baathist Iraq, is particularly fascinating. Alvandi's placement of the Nixon administration's Kurdish policy within the context of its other foreign policy priorities and domestic travails, (Vietnam, détente, China, Watergate) is especially well-executed. The number and variety of primary sources Alvandi exploits in this chapter is stunning, and his use of former CIA director Richard Helms's papers adds an important dimension to the chapter.

So far, so good. Of course no work is perfect, and I must make mention here of three specific issues concerning the quality and persuasiveness of Alvandi's arguments: first is his definition of a diplomatic 'client' versus a 'partner.' This is an issue with which he has clearly grappled thoughtfully but about which he will doubtless face some sharp criticism from other historians. Second is the gulf between the quality of his analysis of U.S. policy making and Iranian policy making. Third is the question of how fully he realizes his portraits of Mohammad Reza Shah, Richard Nixon, and Henry Kissinger, the central figures in his narrative.

Alvandi's central contention in this study is that while U.S. presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Lyndon Baines Johnson treated the Shah's Iran as a client state, Richard Nixon's strategy of relying on regional proxies for American power in the Third World elevated Iran to a status of co-equal partner with the United States in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia. Imperial Iran enjoyed a remarkable degree of foreign-policy autonomy in this area. It often contradicted U.S. policy or drew the United States into issues that were of great importance to the Shah but of marginal concern to America. Alvandi points to Nixon's oft-cited May 1972 plea to the Shah to "protect me" (63) in the Middle East as evidence of the qualitative change in U.S.-Iranian relations during this period. But how does Alvandi define the terms 'client' and 'partner'? A client, he contends, is a junior power whose sovereignty is often violated by its great power patron. A 'partner,' on the other hand, is able to exercise complete sovereignty free from the interference of this patron (179). This is a very narrow definition. Surely there are different degrees of independence in diplomatic relationships between clients and their patrons. The rapid erosion of the Shah's influence in Washington and purchase on power in Tehran following Nixon's and

Kissinger's exits from power suggest that his status as a diplomatic 'partner' of the United States depended largely on their patronage. Mohammad Reza Shah was an affluent and willful client, but a client nonetheless. This patron/client/partner issue could be clarified. Perhaps Alvandi could have cited some other examples of 'cliency' relationships with which to compare the U.S.-Iran association.

While Alvandi's characterization of the U.S.-Iranian 'partnership' may not be completely persuasive, his treatment of U.S. foreign-policy making during the 1970s is of a very high order. He skillfully assesses the competing interests and views of the White House and National Security Council, the Departments of State and Defense, as well as the various elements of the U.S. intelligence community as they struggled to fashion U.S. diplomacy with the Shah's Iran. His use of records in presidential libraries and the National Archives, as well as the documents available through the electronic FOIA reading rooms of the State Department and CIA is exemplary. His depiction of foreign-policy making in Tehran, however, is not nearly so accomplished. In many ways this is understandable given the dearth of available Iranian sources and the centralized and autocratic nature of the Shah's regime. Alvandi attempts with some success to address this problem by relying on oral history and interview materials from former Iranian officials. His account would be stronger, however, if he had provided the reader with a concise explanation of Iranian policy-making institutions and procedures.

Finally, Alvandi depicts as crucially important to the U.S-Iran partnership in the 1970s the personal rapport established by Richard Nixon and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in the years before Nixon entered the White House. The human factor is thus central to his argument. Alvandi is correct to note the important role of personal relationships in shaping Richard Nixon's foreign policy. Nixon delighted in his own and the Shah's reputation as grand geopolitical thinkers, and he always favored those foreign leaders, like the Shah, who treated him with the dignity he believed he deserved. I find it completely plausible that this transformed the tone and substance of the U.S.-Iranian relationship during the early 1970s. Yet, neither Nixon nor the Shah, two of the most complex and polarizing figures of the Cold War era, emerges from these pages as a fully realized human being. The Shah, in particular, is something of a cipher in the book. Clearly, Alvandi's is a revisionist's depiction of the man. On these pages the Shah emerges as a keen student of regional and global geopolitics, a forceful champion of Iran's interests in the world, and a skillful diplomat who maneuvers adroitly between the superpowers. Yet, he remains two dimensional. Occasionally we seen him chafing at the patronizing tone of U.S. diplomacy towards Tehran, but nowhere do we see the mercurial nature of the man, forceful and statesmanlike one moment, paralyzed by anxiety and insecurity the next. Likewise, Nixon (and Kissinger, as well) are vaguely sketched personalities. In only one place in the manuscript do we get a bit of vintage Nixon telling U.S. ambassador to Tehran Douglas MacArthur II that he is "stronger than horseradish" for the Shah and that "some of those other bastards out there [in the Persian Gulf] I don't like" (58). More personal analysis of the key players in the drama would have added texture and nuance to Alvandi's narrative.

These are quibbles. On the whole I am deeply impressed by Alvandi's work. His book is clearly the product of years of hard work in the archives and many more of serious

reflection on what he has found. I know of no other monograph that so capably explores this important topic in such great depth and so subtly evaluates its intricacies.

Review by Andrew L. Johns, Brigham Young University

"Partners in Power."

When one considers the most pressing and potentially dangerous foreign policy challenges currently facing the Obama administration, the mutual enmity between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran is near the top of the list. Intent on seeking regional hegemony, establishing theological supremacy, and acquiring nuclear weapons while supporting anti-American terrorism–not to mention looming as an omnipresent and unpredictable challenge to two significant U.S. interests in the Middle East, Israel and access to oil–the Tehran regime poses a confounding obstacle to traditional U.S. foreign policy goals of peace and stability. Since the Iranian revolution in 1978 and the subsequent hostage crisis, the lack of formal diplomatic ties, complicated by incendiary rhetoric on both sides, has created a nearly insurmountable chasm with little incentive on either side to make the requisite concessions that would fundamentally change the *status quo*.[1]

Yet the U.S.-Iranian relationship was once Washington's most significant diplomatic partnership in the region, a pillar of President Richard Nixon's post-Vietnam era foreign policy, and a major cornerstone of the U.S. strategic architecture aimed at containing the Soviet Union and its influence in the Middle East. Despite this, U. S.-Iranian relations have received little attention from historians. An overwhelming majority of the existing scholarship focuses either on the Eisenhower administration's covert action in 1953 to restore the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, or on the 1978 revolution and its aftermath. Rarely have observers considered U.S. policy toward the Shah's regime during the two decades between the events of 1953 and the end of the Nixon administration.[2] In *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*, Roham Alvandi examines the zenith of the relationship between Washington and Tehran in the 1970s. He demonstrates that Iran became "the clearest expression of the Nixon Doctrine" and a crucial part of Nixon's and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger's efforts to promote regional and global stability in an era

[1] Of course, the legacy of the Eisenhower administration's 1953 covert action in Iran also remains a source of friction in the U.S.-Iranian relationship. Indeed, such is the delicate state of affairs between Washington and Tehran that in September 2014, the Office of the Historian in the U.S. Department of State announced at a meeting of the Historical Advisory Committee that the Foreign Relations of the United States supplemental volume covering the 1953 CIA operation in Iran would be delayed "because of ongoing negotiations with Iran" despite opposition from members of the HAC. For the minutes of the meeting, see http://history.state.gov/about/hac/september-2014 (accessed 18 December 2014).

[2] On various aspects of the 1953-1978 period, see for example Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991); Andrew L. Johns, "The Johnson Administration, the Shah of Iran, and the Changing Pattern of U.S.-Iranian Relations: 'Tired of Being Treated Like a Schoolboy,'" *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9/2 (Spring 2007), 64-94; Ali Ghassemi, "U.S.-Iranian Relationships, 1953-1978: A Case Study of Patron-Client State Relationships," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1988; James Goode, "Reforming Iran During the Kennedy Years," *Diplomatic History* 15/1 (1991), 13-29; and Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1975).

of relatively declining American power (174).

From the outset, Alvandi seeks to cast this period in a new light, arguing that rather than being "America's proxy," the Shah of Iran played a key role "in shaping and implementing American strategies of containment" (3). Alvandi makes his case by briefly tracing the origins of the U.S.-Iranian relationship during the Cold War, including the 1946 Azerbaijan crisis and the 1953 overthrow of Mohammad Mosaddeq; examining the "heart of this partnership…the personal friendship between" Nixon and the shah; and looking closely at two case studies: a detailed history of the CIA's covert operation in Iraqi Kurdistan from 1972 to 1975; and the failed negotiations between the Shah and the Ford administration regarding Iran's acquisition of nuclear material (4).[3] Alvandi concludes that as a partner with the United States in the 1970s, Iran "became an autonomous Cold War actor" so vitally important to U.S. strategic goals that Nixon and Kissinger "allowed [the Shah] to shape the Nixon Doctrine according to Iranian interests" in order to preserve regional order (177).

The foundation of the transformation of U.S.-Iranian relations during the Nixon administration was the personal connection Nixon and the Shah had that dated back two decades. Not only were they friends, but they shared a "mutual esteem for one another as grand geo-strategic thinkers" (95, 126). As a result, Nixon and Kissinger saw the Shah as perfectly suited to be the instrument of implementation for the Nixon Doctrine in the Middle East. Yet their faith in himled to U.S. decisions that ironically produced a dependent relationship in the opposite direction, one in which Nixon and Kissinger relied so heavily on the Shah for intelligence and support for U.S. policy in the region that it frequently turned into a tail-wagging-the-dog situation. Indeed, as Alvandi points out, the 1975 Pike Committee concluded that the U.S.-Iranian partnership had linked America's national interest with the Shah's and characterized Nixon and Kissinger as "the shah's 'junior partners' in the Kurdish episode" (123) .[4]

This near-juxtaposition of the relationship between the United States and Iran is part of Alvandi's broader argument that the Shah should not be narrowly perceived as an American pawn. Rather, he was "a far more complex figure than the caricature his critics drew" and a more nuanced leader than he is typically characterized by historians (178). Alvandi emphasizes the "autonomy and leverage" the Shah enjoyed in his relationship with the United States, which vaulted him into regional primacy and international diplomatic significance (3). More generally, Alvandi suggests that the case of the U.S.-Iranian relationship demonstrates the agency of Third-World actors during the long global struggle of the Cold War. Building on a great deal of existing scholarship, Alvandi points out that although the U.S.-Soviet conflict dominated international relations for four decades,

[3] The Azerbaijan crisis in 1946 stemmed from the Soviet Union's refusal to relinquish occupied territory in Iran. It was one of the earliest manifestations of the Soviet-American conflict in the immediate postwar period that evolved into the Cold War.

[4] The Pike Committee, the colloquial name for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence from 1975-1976, investigated illegal activities by the CIA, FBI, and NSA.

countries on the periphery were not merely spectators or puppets used by Washington and Moscow, but rather acted as "active agents of history who often abetted and manipulated the superpowers in the pursuit of their own local ambitions and interests" (3). This was true not just in the 1970s, but also in the 1960s as the relationship between Washington and Tehran evolved. During the Johnson administration, for example, the Shah recognized and took advantage of the leverage he possessed, using the specter of closer ties with the Soviet Union to convince the United States to provide expanded arms sales to Iran.[5] Alvandi probably credits the Shah with too much autonomy and influence throughout the book, but even so it is a useful corrective to the typically monochromatic portraits of the Iranian monarch painted by his detractors and found in much of the literature.

One of the ironic sections of the book, especially given contemporary concerns over Iranian efforts to join the ranks of the nuclear powers, is Alvandi's recounting of Kissinger's strong advocacy of the Shah's attempts to acquire nuclear technology and material in the early 1970s. Given the anxiety about nuclear proliferation in the early 1970s, it might be surprising to realize just how forcefully Kissinger supported the notion of a nuclear Iran. The effort failed despite the support of "a significant 'Pahlavi lobby'" that included Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, Senators Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) and Jacob Javits (R-NY), and Kissinger. Not only did the United States insist on stringent nuclear safeguards on Iran, but the Ford administration reverted at least partially to treating the Shah like a client rather than as a partner, with consecutive secretaries of defense James Schlesinger and Donald Rumsfeld opposing Kissinger's position and expressing concern about the divergence of U.S. and Iranian interests in the mid-1970s (128-130). Another critical factor in undermining the talks was the "growing domestic political saliency of nuclear proliferation" in the 1976 presidential campaign, which "increasingly narrowed Ford's options in the nuclear negotiations with Iran" (163). One cannot help wondering, counterfactually, what might have transpired in 1978-1979, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, and in recent years had these negotiations been successful.

Also of interest to contemporary observers of the turmoil in the Middle East is the chapter on the tensions between Iran and Iraq, which both underscores Alvandi's main argument regarding Iran's primacy in the Middle East and provides historical background for this on-going rivalry in the Gulf. Largely in deference to its ally's concerns, the United States covertly underwrote Iranian support of Iraqi Kurds as part of the U.S. commitment to the Shah's regional primacy and to prevent Soviet-backed Iraq from posing a threat to Iran or the Persian Gulf. This involvement, Alvandi argues, "illustrates the complex dynamics of the Nixon-Kissinger-Pahlavi partnership" (68). Without the Shah's insistence on supporting the Kurds, Alvandi argues, it is unlikely that the Nixon administration would have intervened in such a low-priority situation, especially given the myriad other foreign policy (and domestic scandal) concerns facing Nixon during this period. The Shah's "paramount role" in the U.S. decisions to initiate, escalate, and terminate involvement in Kurdistan "demonstrates the extraordinary influence he enjoyed in the Nixon White House as a Cold

[5] See Johns, "The Johnson Administration, the Shah of Iran, and the Changing Pattern of U.S.-Iranian Relations."

War partner of the United States" (123). The chapter is particularly intriguing when one considers this relatively obscure CIA operation in the longer context of U.S. involvement with the Kurdish population in Iraq, particularly during the second Gulf War.

One area where the author could have been more explicit in his analysis is in the degree to which domestic political considerations influenced foreign policy in both the United States and Iran during this period. Although Alvandi alludes to the role played by domestic politics in the United States on the U.S.-Iranian relationship on several occasions–for instance, detailing the influence of the Vietnam conflict on U.S. public opinion in regard to international commitments and U.S. involvement with leaders like the Shah; and recognizing that because Watergate severely restricted Nixon's participation in foreign relations, the Shah "began to question…the U.S.-Iran partnership. He worried whether the Nixon Doctrine could endure without Nixon" (92). Alvandi never fully exploits the analytical value of this nexus. For example, the author points out that Iran's oil wealth had skyrocketed since the mid-1960s, allowing the Shah not only to expand considerably the size of his armed forces but also lifting "the few remaining constraints and inhibitions on his arbitrary rule. There was little concern within the Nixon administration that the shah faced any serious domestic threat to his rule" (66). It would have been interesting to explore the Shah's domestic political security more deeply, especially given what we know in retrospect about the opposition to the regime. The same holds true on the U.S. side, as questions of U.S. foreign policy strategies and relationships became much more inflammatory and controversial in the mid-1970s, notably in the 1976 presidential election. To be fair, this was not the primary focus on the book, and Alvandi should be commended for highlighting examples of the influence of domestic politics on both sides. But he merely scratches the surface on this point, and hopefully other scholars will seize on the opportunity to explore it in more detail.

There is a great deal to admire in this relatively brief but compelling book. *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* is a well written, studiously researched, and insightful examination of a lost relationship that invites further scrutiny of this important period in the history of U.S. foreign relations in the Middle East. One may not agree with all of Alvandi's conclusions–for example, his assessment of the Shah's independence and skill as an international power broker does occasionally overshadow the roles played by Nixon and Kissinger in the relationship, overstating its realities despite identifying an important dynamic at play between Washington and Tehran–but the book deserves serious consideration by anyone interested in the tumultuous history of U.S.-Iranian relations and the evolution of U.S. foreign policy in the 1970s.

Author's Response by Roham Alvandi, London School of Economics and Political Science

I am very grateful to Tom Maddux for commissioning this roundtable, and to Andrew Johns, Taylor Fain, and Anoush Ehteshami for their thoughtful and generous reviews of *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah*. I am deeply gratified that such esteemed colleagues would find merit in my first book and I thank them wholeheartedly for their praise and their balanced and fair criticism. I have little to add to their insightful comments, other than to perhaps clarify some of the choices I made when writing the book and to share some thoughts on the future direction of the historiography on U.S.-Iranian relations.

As I was working on this book, I was keenly aware of a deeply ingrained narrative in the historiography that portrays Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as nothing more than a 'puppet' or a 'proxy' of the United States during his long reign as the last Shah of Iran from 1941 to 1979. Questioning this orthodoxy and introducing readers to a more complex and nuanced understanding of U.S.-Iran relations during the Cold War would be an uphill battle. As Johns notes in his review, I hoped that my book would advance the historiography beyond the usual discussion of the Eisenhower administration's role in the 1953 coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq or the Carter administration's role in the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution. Instead of focusing on American acts of commission or omission, I wanted to examine the role of Mohammad Reza Shah in the understudied decade of the 1970s, when Pahlavi Iran had emerged as a significant international actor in the era of rising oil prices, the Vietnam War, superpower détente, and the Nixon Doctrine.

The first contribution of *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* is to recast the U.S.-Iran relationship as a 'partnership' between President Richard Nixon, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, and Mohammad Reza Shah, in contrast with the 'patron-client' relationship that prevailed under Nixon's predecessors. Fain quite rightly asks what I mean by this. I borrowed and adapted these terms from a large theoretical literature on typologies of states during the Cold War.[1] Particularly useful was the work of Hedley Bull, the English School theorist of International Relations, who argues that great powers unilaterally exercise a preponderance of power by employing varying degrees of force and showing varying degrees of disregard for the universal norm of sovereignty in their relations with minor powers. I found this to be a useful way of thinking about superpower relations with Third-World states such as Iran. Bull distinguishes between relationships of "dominance" where

[1] See for example Annette Baker Fox, "The Small States in the International System, 1919-1969," *International Journal*, 24/4 (1969): 751-764; Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981); Michael I. Handel, "Does the Dog Wag the Tail or Vice Versa? Patron-Client Relations," *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, 6/2 (1982): 24-35; Paul Keal, *Unspoken Rules and Superpower Dominance* (London: Macmillan, 1983); Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23/2 (1969): 291-310; Klaus Knorr, *The Power of Nations: The Political Economy of International Relations* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Iver B. Neumann, ed., *Regional Great Powers in International Politics* (Basingstoke: St Martin's Press, 1992); Christopher C. Shoemaker and John Spanier, *Patron-Client State Relationships: Multilateral Crises in a Nuclear Age* (New York: Praegar, 1984); Jan F. Triska, ed., *Dominant Powers and Subordinate States: the United States in Latin America and the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986).

such behaviour was "habitual"; "hegemony" where this behaviour was "occasional and reluctant"; and "primacy" where "leadership" was attained without the resort to force. He argues that dominance, which is synonymous with empire, "has ceased to represent a viable form of great power preponderance" after the Second World War. Bull offers Soviet intervention in Central and Eastern Europe and American intervention in Central America and the Caribbean as examples of hegemony, while he points to the U.S. position in the Atlantic community as an example of primacy.[2]

Where, then, should we locate the Nixon-Kissinger-Pahlavi relationship along this spectrum between American 'dominance' and 'primacy'? Few would dispute that in the aftermath of the CIA-backed 1953 coup, Iran was transformed into a U.S. client state. Mohammad Reza Shah's relations with the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations could be characterised as one of uneasy American dominance or hegemony. As Mark Gasiorowski argues, this patron-client relationship allowed the Pahlavi state to become highly autonomous from Iranian society in the 1950s and 1960s, ultimately alienating the Shah from his people. However, Gasiorowski also points out that "although it is rarely admitted by critics of the shah," by the 1970s, Pahlavi Iran had become "quite independent of the United States, much to the disappointment of U.S. policy makers."[3] My contention is that in the last decade of the Shah's reign the U.S.-Iranian relationship had shifted along Bull's spectrum to one of U.S. primacy, whereby Iran supported American global leadership, while the United States embraced Iran as its regional partner in the Persian Gulf region. This process had begun in the late 1960s during the Johnson administration and coincided with the impending British withdrawal 'east of Suez,' but reached fruition during Nixon's first term in office. The Nixon-Kissinger-Pahlavi partnership was characterised by more bargaining and reciprocity between Tehran and Washington, and less American coercion or interference in Iran's internal affairs. While the reviewers are not entirely convinced by my characterisation of this new relationship as a 'partnership,' I am deeply gratified that Johns credits my book with being "a useful corrective to the typically monochromatic portraits of the Iranian monarch painted by his detractors and found in much of the literature."

In addition to this revisionist account of Iranian agency during the Cold War, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* offers a detailed study of three episodes that map the rise and fall of the U.S.-Iranian partnership during the 1970s. Fain generously praises the book as offering "the most detailed and persuasive explanation" for the Nixon administration's embrace of Iranian primacy in the Persian Gulf. This policy reached its apex with the CIA's support for Iran's covert sponsorship of the Kurdish insurgency in northern Iraq between 1972 and 1975. The book then examines the unravelling of the partnership in the aftermath of Watergate and Nixon's resignation by exploring the failed nuclear negotiations between the Ford administration and Iran. In selecting these episodes, I hoped to advance the

[2] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 214-216.

[3] Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 209.

historiography beyond the well-trodden ground of oil prices and arms sales by delving into issues that were relevant to the global Cold War beyond Iran's borders. The reviewers graciously acknowledge the depth of my research, including the use of Persian-language sources, and I am particularly pleased that my somewhat risky decision to eschew a comprehensive chronological narrative meets with their approval.

One of the greatest obstacles I faced when writing *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* was my inability to access the Iranian state archives. While I collected a great deal of published Persian-language material during my research trips to Iran, I was denied access to various archives in Tehran, most importantly the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Consequently, as both Johns and Fain point out, my discussion of decision-making in Washington is far richer than my consideration of the inner workings of Mohammad Reza Shah's court in Tehran. Nonetheless, I am also sceptical that these archives would have shed much more light on the Shah's decision-making, given the highly personalised and secretive nature of the Shah's rule. As I write in Chapter Two, by the early 1970s the Shah had exiled, imprisoned, or co-opted his political opponents. Few domestic constraints remained on his foreign policy, thanks to the autonomy that rising oil prices afforded the Pahlavi state. The Shah rarely sought the advice of his ministers, presenting them instead with *faits accomplis* in his foreign policy decisions.[4] It is unlikely that his inner thoughts or intimate conversations were ever committed to paper. As for my discussion of the impact of American domestic politics on U.S.-Iranian relations, this is dealt with extensively in Chapter Four, where I discuss the role of Watergate, rising oil prices, human rights activism, and Congressional concerns about nuclear proliferation and arms sales in the decline of U.S.-Iranian relations during Gerald Ford's presidency.

As the declassification horizon inches forward, we can expect to see many more books published on the global history of the 1970s, in which Iran will feature prominently. Moreover, the contemporary relevance of research on Iran was made abundantly clear by the framework nuclear agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany) in Lausanne in April of this year. Coming to terms with the troubled history of U.S.-Iranian relations is vital to any meaningful détente between Tehran and Washington. As an Iranian historian, I hope that this thaw will encourage a candid and honest debate in Iran about the Pahlavi era that moves beyond what Anoush Ehteshami calls "the narrative of subjugation." There certainly seems to be an appetite amongst many Iranians to revisit and reassess Mohammad Reza Shah's place in history.[5] Similarly, as I have argued elsewhere, I hope détente will allow the U.S. government to finally release the long-awaited *Foreign Relations of the United State*s volume on the

[4] Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The United States and Iran in the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 39-40.

[5] Bill Spindle, 'Can Iran Tolerate its own History?' *Wall Street Journal*, 27 March 2015, available at: http://www.wsj.com/articles/can-iran-tolerate-its-own-history-1427465388.

Eisenhower administration and Iran and any other remaining classified records on the CIA's role in the 1953 coup.[6]

Once again, I want to express my thanks to the reviewers for their time and kind consideration of my book and to H-Diplo for the opportunity to contribute to this roundtable.

[6] Roham Alvandi, 'Open the Files on the Iran Coup,' *International New York Times*, 9 July 2014, available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/10/opinion/open-the-files-on-the-iran-coup.html.