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# Historical Security Council

## The Question of The Iran Crisis of 1946



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THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

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## Introduction

Following the end of World War II, tensions between the “Big Three” allied forces are rapidly escalating in the Imperial State of Iran, and their ideal continuation of post-war peace is being put into question.

This conflict originated from The Soviet Union’s refusal to relinquish their occupation over Iran by the date agreed upon with The United Kingdom, on March 2, 1946. Shortly after this deadline, Stalin decided to invest in arms and training of the Pro-Soviet Iranians which had previously formed the illegitimate Azerbaijan People’s Republic and the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. These troops engaged in multiple conflicts, such as the Battle of Mamashash, fighting for these territories, fighting against the Imperial Iranian Army.

The USA’s newly elected president, Harry S. Truman brought this crisis into the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as an attempt to diplomatically solve the situation at hand. Indeed, following *resolution 3* being passed, USSR removed their troops, with the additional promise of oil concessions from Iran.

As of today, 31. December 1946, the hostility between the USA and the USSR remains heightened. Truman’s suspicions about USSR under Stalin’s rule predict aggressive attempts at rapid expansionism. For this reason, when Iran reneged on agreed terms for the USSR’s oil concessions, Stalin did not re-enter with armed forces.

Solutions need to be found to de-escalate the situation between the USA and the USSR, as well as to compensate Iran for the depletion of their natural resources and to perhaps help them regain territory lost to the short-lived pro-Soviet states.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Self-Governing Unrecognized States

A state that is *de jure* independent, but *de facto* controlled by an external power is known as a self-governing unrecognized state (informally known as 'puppet states'). Such states retain their sovereignty but follow orders given by an external force or state, effectively acting as an organ to the latter. For this reason, such states are considered illegitimate by International law.

### Tripartite Treaty

This treaty, agreed upon by Iran, the UK, and the USSR, laid out a stipulated period within which the foreign troops had to be withdrawn from Iranian soil. This deadline was for March 2, 1946, 6 months after the end of WWII.

### Tehran Conference

At this conference (28 November - 1 December 1943), Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill strategized how they would proceed after the Anglo-Soviet Invasion of Iran. They agreed upon the importance of maintaining Iran's sovereignty and providing aid to Iran for the post-war economic effects and the presence of the invading countries. Hence, it was agreed that all troops would be removed 6 months following the end of the war and that said nations will continue to provide economic assistance to the Iranian government.

### Potsdam Conference

This conference (17 July- 2 August 1945) was the first time President Harry S. Truman met Premier Joseph Stalin, in addition to Winston Churchill. Here, Churchill proposed Allied withdrawal from Iran to happen earlier than what was proposed at Tehran, however, Stalin objected to this. Truman's and Stalin's relationship worsened for this reason, and instigated Truman's anti-Soviet campaigning.

### The Peshmerga

The Peshmerga is the military force of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. They were fully endorsed by the Soviet Union, having sent more than 60 Kurds to Soviet Azerbaijan to be trained. The Peshmerga consisted of 1,310 troops and officers.

## General Overview

### The UK and USSR joint invasion of Iran

During WWII, Nazi Germany broke its alliance with the Soviets and invaded the USSR in June of 1941. In order to protect the oil-rich Iran from also being involved in this invasion, the UK and The Soviet Union jointly proposed the *Tripartite Treaty* with Iran, meaning their troops could remain there to defend the natural resources from Germany.

#### *A bridge to victory*

From 1942 onwards, The United Kingdom and The United States began using Iran as a supply line to provide resources to the Soviet front against Germany. 30,000 US troops were sent to the scene to move these resources, leaving the leaders of the temporarily occupying nations extremely grateful. The term “bridge to victory,” was used to describe Iran’s help, and the appropriate measures were taken at the Tehran Conference to ensure Iran would be requited.

#### *Oil Concessions*

In 1944, The UK and The USA furthermore asked for oil concessions from Iran, to fuel their military efforts. Due to the gradually building tension, the USSR also asked for oil concessions from Iran, which fueled a continuous conflict of interest between the 3 nations, all wanting leverage over each other. In 1945, when the war was coming to an end, the disputes over this oil triggered heightened suspicions in all the Big Three, all of which wanted more access to this resource.

### The new administration of Harry S. Truman

Following the death of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Truman was elected as the President of The United States. Being a democrat, he made numerous speeches expressing his belief in the infringements on freedom in Iran imposed by the communist Soviet Union, by not withdrawing their troops when the national government asked. For this reason, when the USSR did not withdraw its troops from Iranian soil by the agreed upon deadline, Truman began to change the public opinion of his citizens regarding the USSR.

In February 1946, The US diplomat George F. Kennan was stationed at the respective embassy in Moscow. Following the opposition of the USSR towards the creation of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, he wrote a report recommending “restraining and confining” Soviet communist influence. This shaped Truman’s opinion of the USSR’s interest in expansionism.

## The Soviet Union's withdrawal of troops

Avoiding a heated diplomatic confrontation from the US in the UNSC conference (30 January, 1946), Stalin announced on March 25, 1946 that he would withdraw Soviet troops within six weeks. Truman publicly claimed that this was a result of his military threats, though Stalin attributed it to negotiations made with Iran, promising them a 51% ownership of their oil trade, and *de facto* control.

### *Iran reneged USSR's oil concessions*

Almost immediately after the removal of Soviet troops, Iranian political leaders began to question the validity of the concessions provided to them under duress and reneged them with the support of the US. Furthermore, in mid-December of 1946, the US government supported Iran's military efforts to reoccupy Mahabad and Azerbaijan. Stalin's opinion of the US worsened vastly, but in hopes of not escalating the already present tension any further, they decided not to intervene with the Soviet military.

## Peshmerga-Iran Conflict

The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was established in December 1945. Their leader, Qazi Muhammad, was fully supported by the Soviets, with Stalin providing them with military enforcements. They joined forces with USSR's second self-governing unrecognized state, Azerbaijan People's Republic, on the 24th of April 1946. Five days later they bilaterally faced 600 Iranian soldiers. This resulted in the Peshmerga's first win against Iran, killing 21 soldiers, wounding 17, and capturing 40.

Small military engagements continued until The Peshmerga was left weakened by the Soviets removal of their own troops following the Soviet-Iran oil concessions. The two armies later both signed a ceasefire agreement on 3 May 1946, discouraging large attacks, encouraging withdrawals and allowing both sides to prepare their own forces within their claimed regions.

On 15 June 1946, the Battle of Mamashash erupted, with The Peshmerga being attacked by two Iranian battalions. Due to the prior termination of the Soviet's support of The Mahabad Republic, this battle became an easy victory for Iran, and it reoccupied Iranian Azerbaijan in December of 1946. Their fighting to remain as an autonomous state waned and their military conflicts against Iran transformed into peaceful negotiations.

## Major Parties Involved

### Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The USSR instigated this crisis following WWII, by not removing their troops in time for the deadline imposed at the Tehran conference. This was made possible by their position in WWII, in opposition to Germany.

### The United States of America (USA)

The USA's involvement in this crisis began in 1945 when they pressed Iran for access to its oil, and as a gateway to transport materials to the USSR towards the end of the war. Due to the rising tension with USSR and the crisis at hand, they called for a meeting in the United Nations Security Council, with hopes of both retaining Iran's sovereignty, but also easing the suspicions of their President.

### The Imperial State of Iran

The crisis in Iran began while it was still a neutral state in WWII. This stemmed from the UK's and Soviet's interest in keeping Nazi Germany away from their valuable natural resources, such as oil. Iran allowed the UK's and the Soviet Union to temporarily occupy and protect their territory, and later on became valuable to them in the transportation of resources to the USSR. In their efforts to reclaim the land taken by the two pro-Soviet states, the US Supreme Court Justice published a statement saying that the imperial Iranian army left behind death and destruction in these two pro-Soviet states; they burned beards of peasants, raped women and children, and looted their houses.



### The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad (KDP)

Acting as a self-governing unrecognized state, the KDP was based on a Kurdish manifesto, emphasizing the need for autonomy. They declared themselves in December of 1945 and had friendly relations with the Azerbaijani Democratic Party (ADP), as well as being fully endorsed by the USSR. Following the passing of UNSC resolutions 2, 3, 5 one year later, they were forced to avoid conflicts in Iran, and lost the support of their Soviet troops, hence ending their existence as an independent state.

### Azerbaijan People’s Republic / Azerbaijani Democratic Party (ADP)

Similarly to the KDP, the Azerbaijan People’s Republic was a self-governing unrecognized state, which operated with the support of Stalin. It formally announced its existence as an entity in November of 1945. However, its existence was short-lived due to the already increasing US support in retaining and disarming the areas of land which they had established within Iran. Their dissolution was 13 June 1946 when they agreed to give up on the ADP’s autonomy, and once more become part of Iran.

### The United Kingdom

The UK was involved very early on in the pre-conflict, when they invaded Iran, along with the USSR. This was justified by their need to deliver supplies from British India to the USSR. Unlike the USSR, they did remove their troops in time for the March 2 withdrawal deadline, indeed pushing for this date to be adhered to by both sides, therefore maintaining their stance on the importance of the sovereignty of Iran.

### Timeline of Key Events

June 1941	The United Kingdom and USSR invade Iran to protect their oil from Nazi Germany, following their invasion of the USSR.
January 1942	The UK and USSR have gotten permission to start using Iran as a supply line.
1944	The USA and the UK have asked the Imperial State of Iran for oil concessions, to fuel their military efforts. Stalin sees this and reciprocates the demand.
12 April 1945	Following the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman succeeded this position, after serving as his Vice President.

16 - 25 December 1945	The Moscow conference is held at this time.
30 January 1946	The UN resolution 2 promoting Iranian and Soviet negotiations is passed.
19 February - 5 March 1946	Iran visits the USSR to negotiate terms of the Soviet troops' withdrawal.
25 March 1946	Stalin declares his troops will be removed from Iran in 6 weeks.
4 April 1946	The UN resolution 3 is passed.
8 May 1946	The UN resolution 5 is passed.

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- United Nations Security Council Resolution 2: The Iranian Question, 30 January 1946. (S/RES/2)
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 3: The Iranian Question, 4 April 1946. (S/RES/3)
- United Nations Security Council Resolution 5: The Iranian Question, 8 May 1946. (S/RES/5)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

### Scheduling the end of Iran's occupation

Before the conflict in Iran was in full motion, the United Kingdom and the United States were persistent in their efforts to discuss the withdrawal deadlines of their troops from Iran. This was attempted at the Moscow Conference on the 16<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1945. However, USSR diplomat Molotov was very much against this, proposing to only put this

topic on the agenda under terms that the American diplomat strongly disagreed with, as transcribed in appendix II.

While the USA and UK were pushing for a definitive date by which the USSR would remove their troops, Molotov wanted to make the vague amendment of changing "facilitating the quickest withdrawal of Allied troops" into "withdrawal of the Allied troops in the least possible period of time." At the end of this conference, the USSR delegation concluded that "nothing is working out with Iran," and that decisions couldn't be made without an Iranian representative present, as they had not yet been voted in as a temporary member of the UN Security Council.

### **Diplomatic pressure in the United Nations**

Following the failure to come any closer to resolving the crisis at hand, the USA used the proceedings of the Moscow conference as leverage to bring up their occupation of Iran at the United Nations Security Council. This resulted in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2 being passed, which encompassed the Iranian delegation's wish to begin negotiations with USSR.

Following a meeting between these two nations, from February 19<sup>th</sup> to March 5<sup>th</sup>, an agreement was reached between the USSR and Iran, that would provide 51% of Iran's oil stock to the USSR, and 49% to Iran. In officially unrelated events, on 25 March 1946, Stalin announced that his troops would be withdrawn from Iran in 6 weeks' time. The condition of the oil negotiations "not being connected with the withdrawal of USSR troops," was explicitly mentioned in the UNSC resolution 3, to prevent attempts at coercion. However, once the troops were removed, Iranian officials decried that this had in fact occurred. The USA supported this claim, intensifying the relationship with the USSR even further.

### **Disarming and reoccupying Mahabad**

Following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran, the KDP was left in an extremely weak state. This allowed for Iran and the USA to reoccupy Mahabad and Iranian Azerbaijan, in order to regain their territory to the extent that it was before the crisis occurred. Though there was some push back, eventually both sides turned to negotiations. Unfortunately, the Peshmerga which escaped these regions managed to smuggle out a lot of weaponry, and currently pose a threat to Iran. Their existence still poses a threat to Iran, and could be addressed when investigating possible solutions.

## Possible Solutions

### Resolving the oil situation

Today, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1946, the oil situation is still unresolved in Iran, and the aversion around it is still a topic of concern. At present, Iran has abandoned the deal they made with the USSR providing them 51% of their oil shares and was supported by the USA in doing so. This has perpetuated the Anglo-American alliance against the Soviet Union and has left room for the conflict between these nations to spiral. For this reason, it is pertinent that all involved nations settle upon a solution which satisfies all.

This could include a renegotiation of the oil shares between Iran and the USSR in an environment that would encourage full transparency of the nature of the discussions, such as a Security Council meeting. The objective of this would be to once again make the relations between these two nations friendly, by both providing USSR with similar concessions to those given to the USA and UK, and also allowing Iran to profit without losing *de facto* control of their main export.

Due to the undiplomatic nature of the deal involving a 51% share, the Security Council could also decide to impose tariffs on the USSR, if they are unwilling to renegotiate in a more diplomatic light. This might encourage the issue to be discussed in a less hostile manner during the renegotiation.

### De-escalating tensions between the USA and USSR

If tensions between the United States and USSR, and their respective Presidents remain heightened following the renegotiations regarding oil situation in Iran, the de-escalation can be addressed more directly and publicly. Since this crisis has already been made public by both nations, there is the possibility that misinformation and disinformation has been shared. By preventing any form of propaganda being released, the opinions of the public eye will not be as intense and will therefore not support any radical actions that may be later enacted by their government.

Additionally, countries in the middle east could request for the transparency of the USSR and the USA in their affairs with countries in these regions. This would both lessen the distrust between them, as they could then diplomatically debate these ideas, but would also allow the Middle Eastern countries to have an opinion on whether or not they want to be involved, perhaps in the worst-case scenario to avoid proxy wars. Evidently, this would need to be incentivized by something, which could perhaps involve limiting or expanding the USA's and the USSR's access to Iran's natural resources.

## Compensating Iran following WWII

Having acted as a supply chain for the UK and USSR, previously neutral Iran became involved in WWII, now as the Big Three's ally. Additionally, because of the military losses from battles against the Peshmerga, and their supply of oil to its allies, they have asked for aid on re-strengthening their economy. Such aid could involve direct monetary compensation, from the UN or from the USA, UK, USSR or from other parties, which amounts to that which was lost. Other forms of compensation would also be required to fully recompense the social and economic damage done. The objective of this would be to ensure that this crisis does not have any long-term impacts on Iran's economy, as they enter this conflict unwillingly.

## Disarming the Peshmerga

As previously mentioned, though Mahabad was re-occupied by the Imperial Iranian Army, the Peshmerga managed to escape with large amounts of smuggled weaponry, which they had previously used in their battles against the imperial Iranian army. As this poses a threat to Iran and many other nearby nations, it is important that this weaponry is all found and reclaimed from the Peshmerga. This could be done through peaceful negotiations with the leaders, which could resemble those that took place after the reoccupation of Mahabad.

Lastly, since the threat of a new attack may be imminent, it could be proposed that either UN peacekeepers should be sent to the scene, or that Iran requests nations to train their military so that they can independently defend themselves from such an offence.

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## Appendix or Appendices

- I. [At the Dawn of The Cold War: The Soviet-American Crisis of Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946.](#)
  
- II. 

“1. To remove the question of the withdrawal of Allied troops from Iran from the agenda of the conference for the three Ministers, if Americans and the English do not accept our proposal about including on the agenda the question of the withdrawal of Anglo-American troops from China and Greece.

2 . In the event that the question of the withdrawal of Allied troops from Iran is discussed all the same, we could, depending on Bevin and Byrnes' position on the withdrawal of Anglo- American troops from China and Greece, either refuse to admit any new obligations as far as removal of the Soviet troops from Iran is concerned, or make definite " concessions" and agree to withdraw the Soviet troops from Iran within the shortest possible period of time.” (Iran Crisis of 1946)