

Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi

The New Frontier Meets the White Revolution: The Peace Corps in Iran, 1962-76

The Peace Corps brought an estimated 1,800 Americans to Iran from 1962 to 1976, coinciding with the unfolding of Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi's Enqelāb-e Sefid, or White Revolution. This article surveys Peace Corps Iran's fourteen-year history by dividing it into three distinct moments defined by changing social and political conditions in Iran and shifting US-Iranian relations. Initially, the Peace Corps Iran experiment built on earlier American foreign assistance programs, while coinciding with the roll-out of the White Revolution. Second, during its heyday in the mid-1960s, the Peace Corps inevitably became entangled with the White Revolution's unfolding, both experiencing a phase of expansion and apparent success. Finally, as Iranian social and political conditions moved toward instability by the 1970s, Peace Corps Iran also seemed to have lost its direction and purpose, which ultimately led to a vote by volunteers to terminate the program. Based on accounts by US Peace Corps volunteers and the Iranians with whom they worked, the Peace Corps Agency, and the US State Department, this article argues that, ultimately, the Peace Corps Iran experience left a more lasting legacy on individuals than institutions.

Keywords: Peace Corps; Peace Corps Iran; White Revolution; Pahlavi Iran; US-Iran relations; 1960s Iran

In 1966 Asadollāh 'Alam, then chancellor of Pahlavi University in Shiraz, published an article in the *Peace Corps Volunteer*, the official newsletter of the United States Peace Corps, about his 1962 meeting as Iran's prime minister with American Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson.¹ The two had met in Tehran to discuss Iran's participation in the Peace Corps, a new American foreign assistance initiative envisioned by President John F. Kennedy as a counterweight to both communism and old-fashioned imperialism. 'Alam had considered the Peace Corps project a "delicate task," yet "noble and philanthropic," agreeing to host American Peace Corps volunteers. However, he told Johnson that the program "should act in a way that its activities would not be misinterpreted" and "should be free from any political connotation," as a "mission

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for spreading goodwill.” Four years later, ‘Alam would announce that American volunteers had indeed helped meet Iranian needs, and he looked forward to the Peace Corps’ future successes in Iran.²

Mohammad-Reza Shah Pahlavi seemed to agree, too, when in 1966 he received Peace Corps director Robert Vaughn, who succeeded founding director and Kennedy’s brother-in-law, Sargeant Shriver. At that Tehran meeting, the shah reportedly acknowledged the Peace Corps’ contributions to Iran’s development through its volunteers acting as role models for Iranian youth.³ Likewise, Peace Corps publicity lauded its Iran program, emphasizing young Americans working hand in hand with Iranians to build a better future for each other. What both parties failed to mention was that the Peace Corps had landed in the midst of a great political and social upheaval in Iran. The following story of the Peace Corps in Iran is a chapter in the history of those turbulent years.

Scholars have examined the Peace Corps’ global record incorporating various critical perspectives. Thematic approaches include its cold war origins, institutional history, and the individuals—politicians, bureaucrats, and volunteers—who shaped its formative years, its impact on US domestic policies, and its operations abroad.⁴ According to historian Elizabeth Cobbs-Hoffman, the Peace Corps mingled US national interest and cold war militarism with idealism and humanitarian internationalism.⁵ While the Peace Corps was an agency of the US government, sharing its cold war vision, she argues, its young volunteers had their individual motivations for participating. These included the desire to travel the world, learn about other cultures, serve their country, help those in need, and, for some men during the Vietnam War, evade the military draft.⁶ Journalist and former Peace Corps staffer Stanley Meisler downplays the Peace Corps’ cold war origins and argues that the agency was not an “arm of the Cold War” but instead a “contribution to the world community.”⁷ In contrast, historian Michael Latham claims the Peace Corps was based on the hubristic premise that “a powerful benevolent America could intervene directly in the cultural life of other societies for mutual benefit of all.” Focusing on the Peace Corps’ much criticized community development programs in Latin America, Latham emphasizes the program’s projection of American power abroad based on assumptions of US cultural superiority and exceptionalism.⁸

While the Peace Corps’ most extensive activities were in Latin America,⁹ East Asia, and Africa,¹⁰ its Iran program was significant and arguably unique in the context of other Middle East Peace Corps operations. Though it remains virtually unstudied by American or Iranian scholars,¹¹ Iran was among the first countries of the world, and the first in the Middle East, to host Peace Corps volunteers and did so for fourteen years. In comparison, the Peace Corps’ other programs in the region—in Turkey, Bahrain, Afghanistan, and Oman¹²—operated for shorter periods in the 1960s and 1970s.¹³ Thus, Iran sponsored the most far-reaching Peace Corps program in the Middle East during this period with the largest number of volunteers—at an estimated 1,800 total—serving in all corners of the country, from remote villages to the capital, working in English instruction, vocational education, agriculture, community development, city planning, and other fields.

During the 1960s-1970s, Iran played a special role from the perspective of US foreign policy. Its distinction was its status as the “linchpin in the U.S. Cold War defense strategy in the Middle East” as a member of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), supplier of oil, and reliable ally to Israel.¹⁴ As a recipient of substantial US aid since World War II, the shah most likely viewed his hosting of American Peace Corps volunteers in the context of appeasing Kennedy in order to get what he wanted—political support and more military assistance. Thus, Peace Corps Iran’s seemingly auspicious beginnings can be attributed to a convergence between the shah’s objectives and American cold war policy. Such symbiosis was not a given, since during the 1960s and 1970s US-Iran relations experienced “intermittent tensions,”¹⁵ and US policy toward Iran could vary from one US administration to the next.¹⁶ Nevertheless, during the 1960s, the two governments had formed a fairly stable “strategic partnership” that enabled the Peace Corps to use Iran as its launching pad in the Middle East until the closure of the program in 1976.

Peace Corps Iran is largely remembered fondly by government officials, American volunteers, and Iranians who came in contact with it, a point highlighted in brief descriptions of the program in Iranian studies scholarship. Eminent historian of US-Iran relations, James Bill, notes that Peace Corps Iran made “a strong, positive impact” and US volunteers were “the antithesis of the ‘ugly American.’”¹⁷ Political scientist Mark Gasiorowski discusses the Peace Corps within the context of other Kennedy-era policies to promote “peaceful political and socio-economic change” in Iran, while historian Abbas Amanat argues that Iran’s “positive experience” with the Peace Corps may have inspired the creation of the shah’s Literacy Corps.¹⁸ Such arguments deserve elaboration and clarification, if not correction.

Despite the existence of considerable English-language primary sources, and presumably also in Persian, the Peace Corps Iran sojourn remains unstudied in both the US and Iran.¹⁹ Thus, this article surveys Peace Corps Iran’s fourteen-year history by dividing it into three distinct moments defined by changing social and political conditions in Iran and shifting US-Iranian relations. First, the Peace Corps Iran experiment built on earlier American foreign assistance programs, while coinciding with the roll-out of the shah’s reform and modernization project, the White Revolution. Second, during its heyday in the mid-1960s, the Peace Corps inevitably became entangled with the White Revolution’s unfolding, both experiencing an initial phase of expansion and apparent success. Third, as Iranian social and political conditions moved toward instability by the 1970s, Peace Corps Iran also seemed to have lost its direction and purpose. This study, therefore, notes that Peace Corps Iran and the White Revolution not only coincided in time, but partially overlapped in terms of objectives, also following a similar trajectory from auspicious early 1960s beginnings to eventual floundering by the mid-1970s. Structurally, the following narrative relies on two distinct, yet interconnected, threads: the dynamics of US-Iran foreign relations and the experiences of American volunteers and the Iranians with whom they interacted. For example, the Johnson administration’s strategy of aligning the Peace Corps with the White Revolution led to an expansion of the Iran program and a high

concentration of volunteers teaching English to meet the shah's prioritizing of American English as the language of development and progress.

In terms of this article's source material, it was already noted that scholarly inattention to its topic is not due to a shortage of available primary sources. Former American volunteers have published accounts of their Peace Corps service in Iran,²⁰ a significant literature this article relies on, supplementing it with oral history interviews the author has conducted with Americans as well as Iranians directly involved with the Corps. These personal testimonies, representing Americans and Iranians outside of government circles, capture varied and sometimes contradictory experiences representing all three phases of Peace Corps Iran's duration outlined above. A second important category of source material is found in Peace Corps Agency publications and reports and US State Department telegrams and memoranda, obviously reflecting the American government's perspective.²¹ Though the bulk of its evidence skews toward American sources, the article also tries to incorporate the story's "Iranian side," which is admittedly limited due to the difficulties of access to Pahlavi-era archival material and the dearth of published Iranian accounts of the Peace Corps.

The Formative Years: "Golden Boys and Girls ... Off to the Near East"

The Peace Corps was officially launched on 1 March 1961 with Executive Order 10924 issued by Kennedy as the first outpost of his administration's domestic and foreign policy reforms, known as the New Frontier. Introduced in 1957 legislation sponsored by Senator Hubert Humphrey, the idea of sending American youth abroad was resurrected by Kennedy during his 1960 presidential campaign. The new agency created soon after his inauguration was tasked with "the training and service abroad of men and women of the United States in new programs of assistance to nations and areas of the world."²² The legislation passed by Congress, known as the Peace Corps Act, set forth three main objectives: (1) to provide trained manpower, (2) to promote a better understanding of Americans in the world, and (3) to increase Americans' knowledge of the world.²³ In retrospect, the Peace Corps' program in Iran fulfilled all three objectives, though the last two were arguably the most successful.

When "Iran-I"—the pioneer Peace Corps group of forty-three Americans bound for Tehran—boarded a Pan Am jet in New York in September 1962, it was heading to a country in political turmoil.²⁴ Only one day before, a devastating earthquake had hit Iran, adding to the state of national instability. Meanwhile, during the early 1960s, the Iranian opposition had revived after about a decade of forced quiescence following the CIA-sponsored 1953 coup that had restored the shah to power. The opposition's most active and vocal participants were university and high school students representing a new political generation coming of age during the 1960s. In 1961, Iranian teachers had gone on nationwide strike for higher salaries, while student protests led to the fall of the prime minister and his replacement by the US-backed Ali Amini.²⁵ The Peace Corps' arrival in Iran thus coincided with a time when the country was moving toward a showdown between the opposition and the shah.

In January 1963, Iranians were called to a plebiscite on the shah's White Revolution.²⁶ The key points of the White Revolution—land reform, a national Literacy Corps, and women's suffrage—were advocated in the 1940s by Iran's leftist parties, in the late 1950s by politicians like 'Alam, and eventually by the Kennedy administration.²⁷ While the plebiscite received the requisite 99 percent approval, the opposition's reaction to the White Revolution was mixed and ambivalent. Secular liberals and the left-leaning student opposition did not contest the substance of the shah's reforms, which in fact they had proposed. However, a newly emerging conservative opposition, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, categorically rejected the White Revolution as an anti-Islamic American ploy.²⁸ Taking to the streets in June 1963, Khomeini's followers were suppressed violently, with reports of hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of casualties.²⁹ The 1963 showdown became a turning point after which no organized political opposition, whether secular, Islamic, reformist, or radical, was tolerated by a regime that was becoming a monarchist autocracy. This was the Iranian political setting into which the Peace Corps entered and operated until 1976—an increasingly authoritarian government pushing through an ambitious program of modernization financed by multiplying oil income.

The first Peace Corps group in Iran was predominantly male, white, and single, and included six women and two African Americans.³⁰ With an average age of twenty-two, the majority had Bachelor of Arts degrees in various disciplines, though one had just graduated from high school.³¹ While inspired by Kennedy's call for young Americans to serve their country, they had joined the Peace Corps also seeking adventure, learning, and world travel.³² They had spent two months of training at Utah State University in Logan, chosen because of its topographical similarity to Iran's central plateau and its location as the residence of Iranian professors and students hired by the Peace Corps to train volunteers.³³ During the summer of 1962, the trainees underwent six-days-a-week schooling, which included six hours daily of Persian language instruction.³⁴ The rigors of study were often punctuated with more relaxed social time spent with young Iranians, who informally introduced volunteers to their language and culture.³⁵ A feature of Peace Corps training remembered less fondly by volunteers was psychological surveillance whereby psychologists evaluated trainees to "deselect" those unqualified for service.³⁶ After a brief post-training break, those making the final cut departed for Iran where, upon arrival, they spent two weeks in temporary housing on the outskirts of Tehran awaiting their permanent assignments.³⁷

Sargent Shriver, US Peace Corps director, had chosen a Wellesley College anthropology professor named William Cousins to be the first Iran program director, joined later by Jack Frankel as deputy country representative.³⁸ As a fluent Persian speaker and a former advisor to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in Iran, Cousins was qualified for the job.³⁹ He in turn recruited an American-educated Iranian, Hossein Moftakhar, to be his assistant and liaison with Iranian officials. Together, Cousins and Moftakhar launched the program from a makeshift, but adequate, office in Tehran.⁴⁰

Peace Corps Iran, however, did not start entirely from scratch. It built on the administration and infrastructure of existing US assistance programs in Iran. Since 1946 econ-

omic aid to Iran had been dispensed through USAID and the Near East Foundation (NEF) in the areas of agricultural education, social welfare projects, public health, and vaccination campaigns.⁴¹ The NEF had intended for American-sponsored rural development efforts eventually to be taken over by the Iranian government, and it was preparing to close down operations in Iran by 1964.⁴² Led by former US Marine Sergeant William Fuller, the NEF helped place and supervise the first Iran volunteers.⁴³

During the transition period, tensions between the leadership and goals of the Peace Corps and the NEF were apparent. Cousins and Fuller could not have been more different personalities. While Fuller reportedly interacted with volunteers “the way you deal with Marine boots,”⁴⁴ Cousins was remembered as kind, gentle, and empathetic.⁴⁵ Peace Corps volunteers were classified not as foreign experts like US aid workers, but as employees hired by Iranian government agencies and ministries. As such, they were under the joint supervision of the Iranian and US governments. They were therefore expected to serve Iranian interests, as defined by the Tehran government, as well the mandates of the US State Department.⁴⁶ Six weeks of language and culture training would, officials hoped, prepare volunteers for a more immersive engagement with local Iranians than previous experiments in US foreign assistance. The Peace Corps was designed to be different kind of American project.⁴⁷

Iran-I volunteers were clustered in small groups or pairs and assigned to major cities and towns, such as Ahvaz, Isfahan, Kerman, Mashhad, Rasht, Sari, Shiraz, and Tabriz, as well as the villages of Māmāzan and Qal‘e-now near Tehran. Seven of the forty-three were sent to the southern city of Ahvaz to teach English and sciences.⁴⁸ Many were tasked to work with students in state-sponsored agricultural colleges established in the 1950s to help carry out earlier pilot projects of land redistribution. Others in Iran-I were sent to secondary schools. In addition to English, they taught physical education and vocational agriculture, which included farm mechanics and poultry and livestock raising.⁴⁹ Their living conditions were “on the scale of U.S. graduate students,” residing in small apartments, earning a modest stipend, and eating simple meals.⁵⁰

In practice, Iran-I faced numerous challenges. The group’s first outside evaluation report, prepared in March/April 1963, six months after its arrival, noted weaknesses in recruitment, training, assessment, and programming. Evaluator Thornton Reid voiced concerns about a small number of allegedly inexperienced, culturally insensitive, and poorly trained volunteers in the midst of a larger group of “bright young people whose interest in the Peace Corps is more than superficial.”⁵¹ According to Reid, unqualified volunteers were commandeering the director’s attention, while “the good Volunteers have not been getting the support they need to develop projects which can help Iran.”⁵² Reportedly, volunteers tended to socialize too much with each other, rather than Iranians, yet preferred to keep a distance from American USAID employees.⁵³ The Peace Corps office in Washington, DC was especially concerned about the program’s reception among Iranians, who might become disillusioned by its initial setbacks.⁵⁴ Therefore, it was recommended that Cousins change his exceptionally “humane” policy of rehabilitating “marginal” volunteers and instead assume a “tougher” approach.⁵⁵ Such was the level of concern that Shriver himself traveled to Iran in 1963 to intervene.⁵⁶

It appears that declining morale, related primarily to job dissatisfaction, was widespread in Iran-I. Some volunteers found that work sites were not prepared for their arrival, and Iranian counterparts were non-existent.⁵⁷ Iranian supervisors and school principals were sometimes indifferent or dubious of their skills and experience.⁵⁸ Students were reportedly uninterested in subjects taught by volunteers, who often lacked proper equipment and supplies.⁵⁹ One volunteer assigned to teach English in a rural hamlet, for example, found that it had never been taught before, and therefore villagers had little interest in it. As a result, she “scrounged around and found enough to do to keep her busy.”⁶⁰ Those teaching physical education, newly introduced in Iranian secondary curriculum, reported similar experiences.⁶¹ Volunteers teaching English in urban secondary schools, where it was already taught, “advised” Iranian instructors, who often resented the insinuation that their skills and methods needed improvement.⁶² In June 1964, at the end of Iran-I’s two-year service, the program evaluation argued that a “gap in understanding between top-level Ministry of Education people and bottom-level principals” led to mishaps at the programming level.⁶³

Such challenges were not unique to Peace Corps volunteers, since Iran’s educational system was highly inadequate at all levels throughout the 1960s. During this period, half of the country’s university students were studying abroad, while primary and secondary schools suffered from the lack of infrastructure and poorly trained and underpaid teachers. It was not a coincidence that the most widely read semi-documentary account of such conditions, Jalal Al-e Ahmad’s *The School Principal*, was translated into English by former Peace Corps Iran volunteer John Newton.⁶⁴ In the preface to his English translation, he noted that volunteers “will see many familiar faces moving about in these pages.”⁶⁵

Meanwhile, confusion about the ultimate goals of the program befuddled volunteers. Was their responsibility to reach Iran’s future leaders and influence the country’s course of development or more simply to “broaden” the thinking of ordinary Iranians? In either case, they wondered what “development” or the “broadening” of Iranian thinking meant. Volunteers were sometimes dismayed to find that what they learned in training did not correspond to the realities experienced in Iran. Officially, they were supposed to be “pioneers” embarking on a “world-saving mission.”⁶⁶ Yet, as a volunteer reported, “When we got here, we found out we were assistants—and in most cases, to Iranians who were good or better than most of us.”⁶⁷ Unrealistic goals were highlighted by another volunteer: “We got the impression [in training] we were golden boys and girls, clean-cut American youth, off to the Near East to wreak great changes among backward Iranians.”⁶⁸ At the same time, volunteers experienced culture shock adapting to “the different sense of time of Iranians, the widespread corruption, the suspiciousness of Iranians, and their tendency to say they will do things and then not do them.”⁶⁹ Clearly, living for a short time on a Native American reservation during their Utah training had not prepared them for the cultural idiosyncrasies of Iran.⁷⁰

For the thirty-eight Iran-I volunteers who completed their service, success stories were documented in the final evaluation report.⁷¹ John Huxtable, a teacher of farm

mechanics in Reza'iyeh, had initiated, organized, and completed the construction of “the first swimming pool in Western Azerbaijan” and was celebrated as “an example of resourcefulness and practical application of the skills he has been teaching.”⁷² The Kerman duo of Don Croll and Len Passwater, who had taught English and farm mechanics and worked well with an Iranian counterpart, could reportedly “move about the school ... as if they were born there ... [T]hey will be genuinely missed—not only for the innovations they have successfully sold, but for their easy-going, unassuming integration into the culture of their area.”⁷³ Renee Smith, heralded as “making one of the most significant contributions ... of all the English-teaching volunteers,” worked in Tehran-area schools with over a dozen Jewish Iranian teachers, while John Lorentz, who taught English at Karaj Agricultural Training School, “patiently and diplomatically surmounted jealousy and pride in his counterpart and achieved a real working relationship ... leaving behind something solid.”⁷⁴

How the formative years of the American Peace Corps was perceived in Iran is more difficult to determine. The vast majority of Iranians did not know anything about the US Peace Corps, known in Persian as the Sepāh-e Solh-e Āmrikā (American Peace Army). Those who did, however, viewed the program on a continuum ranging from suspicious curiosity to high favorability. Iranians seemed interested in, yet distrustful of, a “young American who comes to volunteer with little pay.”⁷⁵ Writing in 1964, program evaluator Charles Caldwell registered that a “considerable number of Volunteers told me that they were, indeed, thought to be spies—and that Iranians found it hard to believe that American youths would ‘give up good jobs and homes in America’ to come to Iran.”⁷⁶ Given US support for the shah, identification of volunteers with the American government may have stoked the distrust of Iranians critical of the monarch’s policies.⁷⁷ An Iran-I volunteer noted the contradictory perceptions of the Peace Corps among Iranians.

“The people I work with can see I have only one jacket and patch my pants ... and that I’m happy in this situation. But taxi drivers ... and university intellectuals ... have no understanding of the Peace Corps ... They think I’m an instrument of American foreign policy.”⁷⁸

Interestingly, this comment identified accurately two groups of Iranians—university students and taxi drivers—often considered politically sensitive and well informed.

Generally, the Iranians who worked with the early Peace Corps seemed to have shared the view that its volunteers were different from American technical advisors of USAID and similar programs. An Iran National Bank vice president in Shiraz, for instance, reportedly had higher regard for Peace Corps volunteers than other “British and Americans he had seen in the past who ‘were here to get—these people ... are here to give.’”⁷⁹ A dean at Ahwaz Agricultural College remarked about Iran-I, “[W]hen we know their motivation, and see their attitude and the way in which they live, we can say nothing against them.”⁸⁰ For Iranians familiar with the Peace Corps, the volunteer’s image conformed largely to the “innocent American abroad” who represented a potentially benevolent US program.⁸¹

Its people-to-people orientation distinguished it as a different kind of American foreign assistance program based on cooperative and interpersonal relationships. As Americans who lived, worked, and socialized with ordinary Iranians, Peace Corps volunteers were indeed unique. Six months after its launch, it appears that awareness of the Peace Corps was increasing in Iranian government ministries as more requests and inquiries for future projects streamed in.⁸²

*The Mid-1960s: The White Revolution Co-opts the New Frontier*⁸³

As the shah's reform and development plans were underway in the mid-1960s, the Peace Corps was in heady days of sending peak numbers of volunteers to Iran. The program's feverish pace was evident in its Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) training program at the University of Texas at Austin. The first Austin Peace Corps Iran trainees began on 18 June 1965. Following their departure three months later, another group arrived in November 1965 and stayed until February 1966. It was barely out of the door when the next one landed in February and finished training in May. The last group began on 22 June, with departure scheduled for 14 September 1966.⁸⁴ Thus, within this two-year period, almost 200 volunteers completed training in Austin and departed for Iran.

Meanwhile, the institutional frame of the program had changed from the early days of Iran-I's reliance on the moribund Near East Foundation. Peace Corps projects were still initiated by Iranian government ministries but now defined more carefully by development priorities of the Iran Plan and Budget Organization. The Plan Organization, often considered a "government within a government," was formed in 1949 to set Iran's economic and social development goals with its five-year plans for industrial and infrastructural investment financed by oil revenue.⁸⁵ The Third Development Plan (1963-67), devised by US-trained Iranian economists with the input of American advisors, included a "comprehensive" approach to directing Iran's development into the 1970s. It "marked the Pahlavi state's most concerted effort to date at central planning and was designed to be Iran's 'big push' into the 'developed' world."⁸⁶ In 1966 the Plan Organization had assumed sole authority to coordinate Peace Corps activities, thus integrating the Peace Corps to a greater degree into Iranian state projects. The Iranian government communicated to the Peace Corps its needs in rural and urban areas and, in some cases, employed Iranian counterparts to work with American volunteers. By this time, Peace Corps Iran had become a more established American assistance program on the scene, evolving into a "service" organization, responding to Iranian government goals rather than setting its own agenda as earlier American aid and assistance programs had done.⁸⁷

The peak of the Peace Corps Iran program was reached in 1966-67 when it sponsored almost 400 volunteers working in primary and secondary schools, universities, municipal governments, and villages in virtually every corner of the country from Kurdistan to Baluchistan and Mazandaran to Kish Island.⁸⁸ The program even recruited professional musician volunteers to join the Tehran Symphony Orchestra and Opera

Company.⁸⁹ What had started as a tentative first step teaching English and agricultural methods had expanded into a program tackling an assortment of jobs throughout the country. A new regional office was added in Shiraz to handle the volume.⁹⁰

These developments coincided with a new era of close cooperation between the Pahlavi monarchy and the Lyndon B. Johnson administration. The shah found a supportive ally in LBJ after his initially strained relations with Kennedy, who had pressured the shah to follow American directives and carry out political and other reforms. By the mid-1960s, Johnson's officials were convinced that the White Revolution could contain Iran's simmering tensions and the shah had the situation under control.⁹¹ The US was no longer dictating to the shah—the monarch was now in charge as the Johnson administration consented to support his centralization of power.⁹² Meanwhile, the shah was charting a “more independent course,” visiting Moscow in 1965 as a “symbolic assertion of independence from U.S. influence.” In a *New York Times* interview the same year, he appeared to distance himself from Washington, voicing frustration with American restrictions on arms sales to Iran.⁹³ Similar to Kennedy-era officials, policymakers in the Johnson administration had expressed private concerns about the shah's voracious appetite for military weaponry at the expense of meaningful economic and political reform.⁹⁴ In 1966 some of these private criticisms went public when a series of articles in the *Washington Post* brought to light points of contention between Iran and the US.⁹⁵

By 1967, however, tensions had eased while the US-Iranian “alliance matured from a patron-client relationship to a true partnership.” This new phase of relations was sealed when the Johnson administration ended USAID economic assistance and grant aid based on a new assessment of Iran being “no longer a less developed country.”⁹⁶ Iran's increased oil revenues and stronger economy funded its augmented arms purchases. Nevertheless, though empowered by a friendly Johnson administration, the shah was still dependent on American military support and eager to please US officials.⁹⁷ This may explain his continued willingness to host American volunteers in Iran's development projects even as his own government was putting into place programs, such as the Literacy Corps, which overlapped with Peace Corps activities.

Meanwhile, official Peace Corps publicity boasted about implementing the shah's reform agenda under the Iranian government's direction. A 1966 Peace Corps booklet claimed its Iran program played

a vital role in making the ideas behind the [shah's] development plan a reality ... Iranian officials have invited the Peace Corps to work side by side with members of [the shah's Literacy and Health Corps] in villages and small towns throughout the country.⁹⁸

The rhetorical emphasis on American volunteers working alongside Iranian youth in the shah's development programs also reflected the changing demographic picture of

Iran. In the 1960s, American officials charted Iran's growing student population, noting that more than half of Iranians were under the age of twenty.⁹⁹ A Peace Corps call for recruits more directly tied Americans to the White Revolution's educational initiatives by calling volunteers to work in Iran's Literacy Corps, "the country's most effective instrument in rural community development." Women were invited to teach rural and tribal girls in provincial schools, while men would train Literacy Corpsmen.¹⁰⁰ Indeed Jay Crook, serving as Peace Corps Iran field officer in 1964, referred to the Literacy Corps as "Iran's own 'Peace Corps.'"¹⁰¹ With increasing numbers of young Peace Corps volunteers serving in projects mirroring and overlapping with the goals of the White Revolution, it appeared that the shah had co-opted the New Frontier.

By the 1960s, American English was Iran's language of development and progress, and most Peace Corps Iran volunteers taught English in Iran's secondary schools. Previous generations of Iranian officials had learned French and German as the languages of commerce, the military, diplomacy, and culture. In 1952 the Iranian Ministry of Education had replaced French with English in most secondary schools.¹⁰² A 1967 Peace Corps evaluation report confirmed that indeed "the Shah has decided that the country's official second language shall be English."¹⁰³ The shah's desire to have a population of workers who read and spoke English drove the Peace Corps' recruitment of TEFL volunteers. Initially working as "advisors" to Iranian teachers, starting in 1966, volunteers taught their own classes, somewhat alleviating tensions with Iranian teachers and filling empty positions in provincial sites.¹⁰⁴ Many volunteers also taught English to adults in evening classes and in small, private gatherings.¹⁰⁵

Anticipating the top-down demand for English, in 1963 the Peace Corps hired Gertrude Nye Dorry as its TEFL advisor and consultant.¹⁰⁶ Known as "Mrs. TEFL," Dorry, a longtime American resident of Tehran married to an Iranian, was legendary among volunteers as well as Iranian officials and educators, eliciting respect and awe.¹⁰⁷ She was the author of a series of widely used English-language textbooks developed in the 1950s in cooperation with the Iran-America Society and the Iranian Ministry of Education. Dorry's firm stewardship of TEFL made it a mainstay in Peace Corps Iran in the 1960s.

Though TEFL volunteers had received some training in Persian and pedagogy state-side, they faced a host of challenges in the Iranian classroom. Most were first-time teachers in charge of multiple sections of fifty or more students and often teaching at more than one school. Students frequently took advantage of their young age and inexperience with Iranian-style disciplinary methods in order to misbehave. Frustration with students' unruliness and apathy was common.¹⁰⁸ Volunteers posted in towns where Persian was not the first language of their students faced additional pedagogical and communication mishaps.¹⁰⁹ While TEFL was establishing its hegemony over Peace Corps Iran programming, a brief experiment in rural community development took place in 1965-67.

Community development projects—popular elsewhere in the Peace Corps of the 1960s—were often the most politically fraught. The Corps defined community development rather awkwardly as "trying to help the people ... fashion themselves into an

organized civic body that will make it possible to do things for themselves ... to improve their life situation for themselves.”¹¹⁰ It may come as no surprise that the vague mandate to encourage self-help efforts in rural communities led to the most dissatisfied volunteers. Indeed, of the thirty community development volunteers sent to Iran in September 1965, only six remained one year later, which was more or less the trend elsewhere in the Peace Corps.¹¹¹ Chroniclers have discussed the troubled nature of community development assignments, with the most infamous cases belonging to Latin America. In Bolivia, for example, American volunteers were implicated in population control programs, which led the host country to end its Peace Corps association.¹¹²

The short-lived community development program in Peace Corps Iran generated widely varied results, ranging from unwitting participation in the White Revolution's corruption, to stories of legendary success. For example, a volunteer posted in the Caspian Sea region was tasked to supervise village elections carried out as part of the shah's municipal reforms. When he learned that elections were rigged with a pre-determined winner, yet begrudgingly carried out the wishes of his hosts to register them anyway, he began to see his work as too politically sensitive. He eventually left his post for a different assignment in Isfahan.¹¹³ Another volunteer discovered that his village in northeastern Iran already had its own well-designed and effective community development plan when he arrived. Struggling to be relevant, he focused instead on cultivating meaningful personal connections and became a beloved brother, son, uncle, and friend to village residents.¹¹⁴

By all accounts, the most celebrated volunteer was Barkley Moore, lauded in Peace Corps publicity and even the *New York Times* for his many accomplishments.¹¹⁵ In the Gorgan area, Moore helped build schools, sports clubs, libraries, and a science lab while housing and paying the educational fees of orphan boys and adjudicating intra-community conflicts.¹¹⁶ Even as volunteers in community development experienced frustrations and difficulties leading to reassignment, feelings of inadequacy, or termination, Moore appeared to thrive and was later awarded recognition and honors from local officials and the Iranian government for his seven-year service. The unpredictable outcomes of community development and the shah's move away from rural development priorities may have been why Peace Corps Iran never repeated this experiment.

By the late 1960s, the Iranian government had shifted reform from rural land redistribution to urban investment in infrastructure and industry.¹¹⁷ Peace Corps Iran, in turn, aligned itself accordingly, moving away from the volunteer model of the young, idealistic liberal arts major facilitating sometimes vaguely defined development projects toward reliance on older, more experienced, technically trained and skilled volunteers.¹¹⁸ Addressing this changing context, Peace Corps director Joseph Blatchford reassured concerned volunteers during his 1969 visit to Tehran that the original “idealism will not be lost, and that there is still enormous need for the generalists,” while he agreed to meet the Iranian government's request for more volunteers with technical skills.¹¹⁹ This program change, volunteers feared, would take the Peace Corps away from its people-to-people mission, a key reason for many to

enlist. Changing Iranian priorities did not single-handedly drive this shift. Domestic politics of the Richard Nixon era also led Blatchford to recruit older professionals to counterbalance a growing perception of the Peace Corps as a bastion of rebellious, anti-war youth.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, the Iranian and US governments continued the rhetoric of the Peace Corps and Iran marching toward progress in tandem. Official Peace Corps publicity created an image of its Iran program contributing to the country's ongoing state-sponsored modernization, while American volunteers were energetic pioneers forging new frontiers alongside Iranian counterparts. The Peace Corps director had consented to Prime Minister Amir-ʿAbbās Hoveydā's request for additional volunteers to work in English, agriculture, nursing, and municipal engineering. At a 1969 press conference in Tehran, Blatchford announced that Iranian officials shared his glowing assessment of the program as "excellent."¹²¹ Likewise, Effat Nāvi of the Iran Plan Organization delivered a speech in 1971 at the Peace Corps Washington headquarters noting that "mutual collaboration" characterized the Peace Corps' work in Iran. Iranians had gained much from Peace Corps technical assistance and development training. In turn, she asserted, American volunteers benefited from the valuable experience and knowledge of working with Iranians.¹²² Thus, it seemed that on the surface the three original objectives of the Peace Corps—to provide trained manpower, to promote a better understanding of Americans in the world, and to increase Americans' knowledge of the world—were still being achieved.

At the close of the 1960s, however, the Peace Corps' golden age was fading as Iranian economic, social, and political conditions transformed rapidly. Skyrocketing oil wealth propelled Iran's industrialization, changing its development priorities and forcing Peace Corps officials to reassess their host country's new needs. With the faltering of the shah's land reform, Iran's rural-to-urban migration was accelerating at a fast pace. Iranian government requests for volunteers in the fields of architecture, engineering, and city planning addressed such shifting infrastructural needs. Increasingly popular US critiques of modernization, the cold war, and especially the Vietnam War began to reshape volunteers' perceptions of US policy. In the late 1960s, a committee of returned Peace Corps volunteers, serving primarily in Latin America and Southeast Asia, lobbied the Nixon administration to shut down the agency, which, they argued, served US imperial interests.¹²³ As the new decade began, Peace Corps Iran, too, was undergoing a crisis of conscience, and some volunteers began to advocate for an end to their program.

Peace Corps Parts Ways with the White Revolution

In 1975 the Peace Corps office in Tehran was bombed. The force of the bomb blew up the gate, though no one was injured or killed.¹²⁴ Some have attributed this to growing anti-Americanism, and indeed Iranian Marxist guerrillas had assassinated two US military advisors and made a failed attempt on an American diplomat's life in the same year.¹²⁵ While State Department reports played down any

imminent threat to civilian Americans, they predicted that heightened Iranian sensitivities to foreigners would increase over time as more “ordinary” Americans came to Iran to service the shah’s military and industrial projects.¹²⁶ Peace Corps volunteers, especially those in Isfahan where a US enclave had formed, remembered a new Iranian unease toward Americans and recalled that living in Iran was becoming more difficult, though they had friendly and warm relations with individual Iranians.¹²⁷ The trends in Iran seemed to parallel those in Pakistan and Turkey where the Peace Corps was shut down in 1967 and 1971 respectively, in part due to rising anti-Americanism.¹²⁸ Though the Johnson era of the mid-1960s has been considered the “golden age” of the Peace Corps, as the Vietnam War set in, interest in the Peace Corps waned within host countries and the US government, as well as among volunteers.¹²⁹ The reasons for Peace Corps Iran’s closure in 1976 were thus complex.

If the Iranian and US governments agreed on the Peace Corps’ positive contribution, who terminated it, and why? Iran volunteers and the program director appear to have been instrumental in shutting down the program. They were eyewitnesses to the consequences of the oil boom, the influx of US corporations, the shah’s prioritization of US technical expertise, and the surge in military expenditures and political repression. The veneer of the White Revolution’s 1960s-era development and modernization was wearing thin, while the Iranian economy, society, and politics appeared to be spinning out of control. Many volunteers agreed that the Peace Corps’ original mission could no longer be sustained.

By the early 1970s, Iran was poised to be a member of the industrialized world. New roads and railroads under construction in the east and west better connected it to the outside world, as did cutting-edge telecommunications systems. Iran was manufacturing its own cars and tractors, while international agri-business was expanding rapidly across the country. Foreign clientele, especially Americans, were feted at Tehran’s finest hotels, such as the Hilton, the Sheraton, and the Intercontinental.¹³⁰ Iran’s petrochemical complexes on the Persian Gulf supported flows of oil, while more revenues came from new reserves of iron, copper, and steel. Iran’s status as the fourth largest oil producer and the world’s second oil exporter garnered profits to the tune of \$5 billion in 1973-74, which increased to \$20 billion three years later.¹³¹ Consequently, the Plan Organization’s 1973-78 budget jumped from \$20 billion to \$100 billion.¹³² Yet the 1975/76 economic boom contrasted dramatically with shortfalls in education where supply did not meet demand coupled with high levels of unemployment and lack of housing and food items in major cities.¹³³

The shortage of public schools in the early 1970s was contrasted with the proliferation of for-profit English-language schools in Tehran and other major cities. Native English speakers could command high salaries at private institutions teaching a language that more Iranians seemed to want or need, from the soldier whose job was to service American-made helicopters to professionals at every level.¹³⁴ It was not uncommon for former or current Peace Corps volunteers to get recruited into private industry or for volunteers to leave the program attracted by lucrative job offers.¹³⁵ As one 1970s volunteer testified:

I could have left the Peace Corps and gotten a job teaching English for 10 times what I was getting paid by the Peace Corps and still have the Peace Corps experience. I didn't because I was close to the end of my time anyway and because the American Embassy, apparently, was so upset about the types of jobs ... not so upset—they were trying to save the Peace Corps and had gotten the agreement of some of the companies not to hire Peace Corps volunteers who were still active Peace Corps volunteers.¹³⁶

Whereas American soldiers, military officials, aid workers, and Peace Corps volunteers had comprised the bulk of Americans in post-World War II Iran, in the early 1970s an influx of blue-collar Americans joined them.¹³⁷ American companies, such as Bell Helicopter and Grumman Aircraft, located on the outskirts of Isfahan, had attracted several thousand US citizens to the area.¹³⁸ Their employees and families were often insensitive to the local cultural context. A longtime American resident in Iran, TEFL Peace Corps staffer Gertrude Nye Dorry felt embarrassed by compatriots living in her adopted country. She reported that “American youths were ... helling around the city—calling the Isfahanis ‘niggers’ ... There were times when I tried, by speaking only in Persian, to hide the fact that I was an American.”¹³⁹ Volunteers, too, were troubled by prejudiced American attitudes toward Iranians.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, a lot had changed from the time of the Peace Corps' arrival in the fall of 1962. By the early 1970s, though the program still drew TEFL volunteers, more technically trained recruits eclipsed them over time. Among the 217 volunteers in Iran in 1970—down from the mid-1960s peak of 400—a quarter were involved in municipal development projects requiring engineering, urban planning, and architectural expertise. Other sought-after fields were nutrition, forestry, fish and game management, animal science, computer science, library science, and small industry.¹⁴¹ In its final year, the program sponsored eighty volunteers exclusively in urban planning-oriented and agriculture projects.¹⁴² Such highly specialized jobs did not always lead to volunteer satisfaction, prompting a number of 1970s volunteers to end their service early.¹⁴³ The program also gave volunteers more decision-making authority than in the past. Dorry recalled that in the 1970s,

The Peace Corps changed to self-selection, under which each trainee, after having finished training—including a trip to the host country at government expense—decided for himself whether he wanted to serve the remainder of his two years or not. Under that system, attrition in some of Iran's subsequent programs subtracted nearly half of a group.¹⁴⁴

Furthermore, since volunteers with post-graduate training tended to be older and married, they came to Iran with a spouse, who often faced unfulfilling work assignments, leading to early volunteer-initiated terminations.¹⁴⁵

Another complicating factor was the 1970s volunteers' awareness of growing political and social tensions across Iran. William Killgore, a US consular official who

spent 1972-74 in Tehran, remembered how volunteers taught him about an Iran he did not know.

The director of the Peace Corps in Iran asked me, as political counselor, if I would be willing to come down and talk to the Peace Corps volunteers. I said, "Sure." And I did. I learned more from them than they learned from me. They kept referring to a fellow named George. "George has built the greatest society on earth, health corps, literacy corps, villages are being rebuilt, fresh water, pure water." They were talking about George Bernard Shaw—Shah. They referred to the Shah as George. They told me that the so-called literacy corps and health corps that were much touted in the media and in the PR pronouncements by the government of Iran, were simply not happening at all; they were just words. There was nothing but poverty and misery out in the villages, that the government wasn't doing anything. Subsequently, I traveled to every corner of Iran by road. The truth of what the volunteers said was evident.¹⁴⁶

Similarly, US consular official Thomas R. Hutson (1968-71), recalled:

We associated with many Peace Corps volunteers who really had a good feel for what was going on outside of Tehran and could describe to us the huge gap between what was happening in the capital and what was happening in the rest of the country.¹⁴⁷

Volunteers' political consciousness was heightened, too, as critical views of foreign policy became more widespread in the US. In the 1960s, the Pahlavi model of development was aligned with prevalent American cold war ideas supporting modernizing leaders as a bulwark against the spread of communism. Furthermore, the American press had published little criticism of the shah or US policy in Iran.¹⁴⁸ The 1970s marked the apex of the shah's repression, coinciding with an emerging human rights discourse that painted the monarch as a despot supported by the US.¹⁴⁹ An Amnesty International report had rebuked the Pahlavi regime for its physical and psychological torture of dissidents, the lack of freedom of speech and movement, and other oppressive measures.¹⁵⁰ In addition, the political activism of thousands of Iranian students in the US also contributed to American awareness about the shah's repression, as did US congressional investigations into Iran's human rights violations.¹⁵¹ The changing US perception of the shah clashed with the volunteers' commitment to serving the people of Iran.

It is not surprising then that some volunteers saw the flaws in the US underwriting the shah's modernization program of uneven development and limited political freedoms. Many questioned, and some rejected, the received wisdom about Iran, particularly the shah's White Revolution as the Peace Corps' institutional partner. Sheldon Fleming, son of the last Peace Corps Iran director Quentin Fleming, remembered conversations with his father about aggrieved and unhappy volunteers. By 1975 such was

the level of concern that the director invited volunteers to cast their vote on the future of the Peace Corps in Iran. The results fell on the side of closing the program, which were soon conveyed to Peace Corps headquarters in Washington. Agency director John Dellenback gave the official go-ahead to terminate by 30 June 1976.¹⁵² Quentin Fleming packed up the Peace Corps Iran office sign from No. 65, Takht-e Jamshid Avenue in Tehran and took it with him into retirement in California.

Conclusion: The Legacy of Peace Corps Iran

Though the Iranian opposition vehemently denounced the shah's close ties to the US, there is little to no evidence of it maligning the Peace Corps. It is notable that the leading literary figure and quintessential public intellectual, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, known for his condemnation of cultural imperialism in his 1962 publication *Gharb-zadegi* (*Westoxication*), could be harshly critical of contemporary US-Iranian ties. However, he was apparently oblivious to the Peace Corps' presence in Iran until the mid-1960s. A passing comment on the subject appeared in Al-e Ahmad's report of his participation in a Harvard University summer program in 1965 where he noted that "200 Peace Corps [volunteers] in Iran ... get paid \$5-7 per day, being trained for jobs such as ... those in the US State Department."¹⁵³ Though somewhat dismissive of the Peace Corps' loftier goals, his assessment of it seems relatively benign. A more positive impression of the program may be found in the friendship between Iran's renowned opposition cultural critic Ali Shariati and Michael Hillman, a Peace Corps volunteer at the University of Mashhad in 1965-67. Shariati accepted Hillman as a colleague and friend and even acted as an intermediary facilitating Hillman's marriage to an Iranian woman.¹⁵⁴

Thus, more meaningful than the subject matter volunteers taught at Iranian schools and the structures they built were the intangible personal impressions they made on Iranians. This perception of Peace Corps Americans, as objects of curiosity but also affection and trust, appear in numerous accounts and anecdotes.¹⁵⁵ An Iranian immigrant in Chicago, 'Ezzat Gushehgir, launched a search for Peace Corps English teacher Paul Levering, whom she met in her hometown of Dezful, Khuzistan in the mid-1960s. Though Levering was her brother's teacher, she was impressed by this foreign man living far from home—and the first American she had ever met—who had sacrificed the comforts of the US to live with Iranians, which struck her as poignant.¹⁵⁶ An Iranian supervisor of Tehran-based Peace Corps volunteers admitted that more than anything else, Iranian students were drawn to their American teachers' dress, talk, and lifestyles,¹⁵⁷ while some volunteers complained that they suffered from lack of time to prepare for their classes and regroup mentally because they were "so lionized by the citizenry."¹⁵⁸ The politicized teenager in Semnan province, who hated all things associated with the shah, including the US government, became lifelong friends with the young Peace Corps Americans who rented his parent's house.¹⁵⁹ Thus, at a time when the war in Vietnam was turning the world against the US and unattractive images from American popular culture were exported abroad, Peace Corps volunteers humanized Americans for Iranians.

The story of Peace Corps Iran began with earlier US foreign assistance programs in Iran, where American technical advisors worked with Iranian counterparts to implement development plans.¹⁶⁰ Yet the Peace Corps was an innovation expanding beyond this original context. Its distinct and unique role was to place Americans—referred to as “volunteers” rather than “technical advisors”—in settings where they worked alongside ordinary Iranians and, to varying extents, integrated into local society. Unlike earlier American aid employees, Peace Corps volunteers had studied Persian—sometimes quite well to gain fluency—and learned about Iranian history and culture during a short, intensive training program. Evolving over time in content and form, Peace Corps training generally emphasized collaboration and cooperation, sometimes placing volunteers with Iranian “counterparts” in cities, towns, and villages and encouraging them to become part of the community.

During its “golden age” in the mid-1960s, the Peace Corps was steered to work in tandem with the shah’s White Revolution. Its volunteers taught English to feed the shah’s desire for a foreign-language literate workforce, while also sponsoring a rural community development project with mixed results. By the early 1970s, the contradictions of an American project supporting the shah as an agent of modernization and anti-communism while also promoting goodwill toward the US and serving the needs of ordinary Iranians were too evident. Though it is not clear how Peace Corps officials in Washington perceived affairs in Tehran, the program’s volunteers and director in Iran saw the writing on the wall. With rising Iranian oil wealth fueling state spending and private enterprise directing the American presence in Iran, increasingly negative images of the US began circulating. Things had changed from the days when the New Frontier had first met the White Revolution. Ultimately, it was the volunteers themselves who decided the fate of the program, perhaps influenced also by critical voices from within the Peace Corps calling for its termination across the world.

The demise of the Iran Peace Corps program, however, did not tarnish its legacy as a meaningful experiment in cultural exchange. Peace Corps volunteers helped construct parks, buildings, and roads, while introducing Iranians to new agricultural methods and social activities.¹⁶¹ In the village of Chashm in Semnān province, George Sakkal, Jim Bruce Prior, Douglas Schermer, and David Garrett built a school.¹⁶² In Shiraz, Susan Omohundro started an English club for teenage girls where they made handicrafts, sang songs, played games, and visited local orphanages.¹⁶³ Thousands of Iranians who migrated to the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia put to good use the English they were first exposed to via American volunteers. Perhaps the most significant achievement of the Peace Corps’ Iran program was to bring hundreds of Americans and thousands of Iranians together to foster cross-cultural understanding. The program’s success is most clear when we remember its original goals—promoting understanding of Americans in the world and increasing American knowledge of the world.

When it comes to assessing the Peace Corps’ third goal—promoting Americans’ knowledge of the world—volunteers acknowledge that their work made a greater impact on them than on Iranians. Living abroad, learning a new language and Iran’s many cultures, and befriending Iranians of all backgrounds transformed

them. They received an education in world politics, religion, and society, thus coming to learn much about themselves and what they were personally capable of outside of what was officially mandated. A salient outcome of the Peace Corps' program in Iran was its producing a generation of US academics fluent in Persian whose years of service led to careers studying and teaching Iranian literature, history, society, politics, and Islamic cultures, such as Richard Eaton, Mary Hegland, Michael Hillman, Eric Hoo-glund, John Limbert, John Lorentz, Thomas Ricks, and the late Jerome Clinton. Vol-unteers also went into diplomatic service, and, sadly, three of the fifty-two American embassy employees taken hostage in 1979 to 1981 were former Peace Corps Iran vol-unteers.¹⁶⁴ Whether or not they subsequently chose careers in education or diplomacy, their worldview was invariably influenced by the relationships formed and the knowl- edge acquired in Iran. Ironically, while some Peace Corps Americans were trained to see themselves as the sole "change agents," in the end it was the Iranians who made a deeper impact on them. Some fifty years after their service, former volunteers confess a deep emotional connection to Iran and express distress at the misrepresentation and maligning of Iranians in US popular and political discourse. Most recently, many have been moved to marshal their Iran experience for political and community advocacy and action, forming a non-profit organization, promoting Iranian culture and the arts, and lobbying their US representatives on policy toward Iran.¹⁶⁵

Notes

1. 'Alam, "Peace Corps in the Past."
2. Ibid.
3. "The Peace Corps and Iran," c. 1966, 3, <http://www.peacecorpsonline.org>
4. For a selection of scholarly works from a much longer bibliography on the Peace Corps, see, for example, Cobbs-Hoffman, *All You Need is Love*; Meisler, *When the World Calls*; Rice, *The Bold Experiment*; Coates, *Come As You Are*; Searles, *The Peace Corps Experience*; Viorst, *Making a Difference*; and Fischer, *Making Them Like Us*.
5. Cobbs-Hoffman, *All You Need is Love*, 7, 71-2.
6. Ibid., 7.
7. Meisler, *When the World Calls*, 20.
8. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 131.
9. For a study of the first group of Peace Corps Volunteers in Colombia, South America, see Stein, *Volunteers for Peace*. For the Peace Corps in Bolivia, see Geidel, *Peace Corps Fantasies*.
10. For a history on the Peace Corps in an African country, see Amin, *The Peace Corps in Cameroon*.
11. Ironically, the most comprehensive account of Peace Corps Iran's history was published in 1976, the year the program closed, by former Iran volunteer and field officer John Newton. See Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 390. More recently, Peace Corps Iran Association, a registered non-profit, has devoted much time and effort to documenting the history of the Peace Corps' work in Iran, primarily from the perspective of the American volunteers. See its website at <http://www.peacecorpsiran.org>
12. See, for example, Hopkins Irwin and Irwin, *The Early Years of the Peace Corps*; and Rigsbee, "The Peace Corps in Oman."
13. The Peace Corps program in Yemen, lasting almost twenty-one years with a brief hiatus (1973-94), is the exception.
14. Johns, "The Johnson Administration," 65. On the importance of Iran in Kennedy's foreign policy, see Summitt, "For a White Revolution"; and Warne, "Psychoanalyzing Iran."

15. Johns, "The Johnson Administration," 64.
16. See, for example, Collier, *Democracy and the Nature of American Influence*.
17. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 149.
18. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 98; and Amanat, *Iran*, 648.
19. For a Persian-language analysis of Peace Corps Iran's history, published in the Islamic Republic of Iran, see Hamraz, "Tahlili bar fa'aliyat-e sepah-e solh." It relies on English-language sources to depict Peace Corps Iran as primarily an instrument of US foreign policy. Nevertheless, it is somewhat ambivalent in its overall evaluation of the Peace Corps' actual performance in Iran.
20. See, for example, Devine, *Persian Mosaic*; Gray, *Letters from Iran*; Krauskopf, *Iran*; Klobe, *A Young American in Iran*; Marks, *Walled In Walled Out*; and Pitzer, *Hello Mister*.
21. See Peace Corps Agency records in the United States National Archives, College Park, MD and *The Peace Corps Volunteer*, the official Peace Corps monthly newsletter, available at <http://www.peacecorpsonline.org>. United States State Department records are available via the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) website at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocument>. These sources should ideally be supplemented by comparable official records of the Iranian government, which have been difficult to locate.
22. For the full text of Executive Order 10927 establishing the Peace Corps, see <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=92>
23. For the full text of the Peace Corps Act (September 22, 1961), see <http://research.archives.gov/description/299874>
24. Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 384.
25. Matin-asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition*.
26. The original six points of the White Revolution were land reform, nationalization of forests, privatization of government-owned businesses, profit sharing for industrial workers, women's suffrage, and formation of the Literacy Corps. For the shah's pronouncement detailing the content of the reform program, see His Imperial Majesty Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Aryāmehār Shāhānshāh of Iran, "The White Revolution," 1967 (in English); and *Enghelāb-e Sefid*.
27. On the Iranian left's contribution to what became key proposals of the White Revolution, see Nasser Pākdamān, *Nameh-e Parsi*, no. 1 (May 1959): 38. Pākdamān was a graduate student in Paris affiliated with the Socialist League who advocated the establishment of a Literacy Corps. On the role of Prime Minister Asadollāh 'Alam (1962-64), Prime Minister Ali Amini (1961-62), and Minister of Agriculture Hasan Arsanjāni (1961-63) in pushing forward the concept of the White Revolution, see Ansari, "The Myth of the White Revolution." On the role of the Kennedy administration in pressuring the shah to adopt reforms akin to what became the White Revolution, see, for example, Summit, "For a White Revolution."
28. Keddie, *Modern Iran*, 147-8.
29. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 152.
30. Though program evaluations of Iran-I did not mention the unique problems female volunteers faced, official reports from the mid-1960s detailed instances of physical and verbal harassment in public spaces, loneliness, and alienation single women in particular experienced. For a volunteer-authored article outlining specific complaints from female volunteers in the late 1960s, see Langley, "Iran as a Peace Corps Host Country."
31. Thorburn Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," March 20-April 12, 1963, 3 in United States National Archives (USNA), RG-490, MLR A120, Box 5, "Iran 1963" folder. Later Peace Corps Iran groups included larger numbers of women, while others were comprised of married couples exclusively.
32. Richard Eaton, interview with author, Tucson, AZ, January 10, 2015; John McKee, interview with author, Scottsdale, AZ, January 8, 2015; Lorentz, *Iran Group One Reflections*.
33. Richard Eaton, interview.
34. John McKee, interview.
35. Homa Mahmoodi, interview with author, Los Angeles, CA, May 30, 2016; Richard Eaton, interview.
36. Richard Eaton, interview; John McKee, interview. On how later Iran training groups experienced the stress of the psychological evaluation, see also Marks, *Walled In Walled Out*; and Krauskopf, *Iran*.

37. Richard Eaton, interview.
38. Charles Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," January 20-February 10, 1964, 2, in USNA RG 490, MLR A120, Box 10, 44-5; Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 387.
39. Hossein Moftakhar, interview with author, Sacramento, CA, December 27, 2015.
40. Caldwell, 44; Hossein Moftakhar, interview.
41. See Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*; and Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah*, on previous programs of American aid and assistance to Iran, such as Point Four and USAID. For discussion of the Near East Foundation's village development program in Iran, see Nemchenok, "That so Fair a Thing."
42. Roger Burkhardt, "Iran," *Peace Corps News*, May 1963; Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 45. Peace Corps Iran's contract with the NEF ended in 1964.
43. Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 125.
44. Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 45.
45. Hossein Moftakhar, interview. Program evaluators too commented on Cousins' "patient and personal concern" with volunteers and described him as "brilliant and extremely sensitive." See, for example, Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 22, 41.
46. The Peace Corps was formed as an agency of the US State Department.
47. On the differences between Peace Corps volunteers and Americans involved in military and USAID missions in Iran, see John McKee, interview; Hossein Moftakhar, interview; and Marks, *Walled In Walled Out*. The gap between these different groups of Americans in Iran widened considerably by the 1970s.
48. Patricia Walsh, "Variety Marks an Average Day," *Peace Corps News*, May 1963.
49. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 43. See also Richard Eaton, interview. On Pahlavi era land reform, see Hooglund, *Land and Revolution*; and Najmabadi, *Land Reform and Social Change*.
50. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 24.
51. *Ibid.*, 1-3, 16, 28.
52. *Ibid.*, 10.
53. *Ibid.*, 25.
54. *Ibid.*, 10.
55. *Ibid.*, 12, with hand-written margin comments by Sargent Shriver.
56. John Lorentz, interview with author, Vienna, Austria, August 5, 2016; Richard Eaton, interview. Eaton remembered playing piano and singing with Shriver at a party in Iran in the director's honor which volunteers attended.
57. The Iranian counterpart was intended to carry on the project after the volunteer left.
58. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 41, 53-4.
59. John McKee, interview; Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 47-8.
60. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 44.
61. *Ibid.*, 51.
62. *Ibid.*, 30; Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 134.
63. Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 4-5.
64. Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *The School Principal (Modir-e Madreseh)* was originally published in Persian in 1958. For Newton's English translation of several chapters of the novel, see "The School Principal," *Peace Corps Volunteer*, August 1969, 7-8; *Sholug Nameh (Busy Letter)* 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1968): 31-5; *Sholug Nameh* 1, no. 3 (Jan. 1969): 37-9; and *Sholug Nameh* 1, no. 4 (March 1969): 66-74. *Sholug Nameh* was a volunteer-produced Peace Corps Iran magazine earlier titled *Paigham (Message)*.
65. John Newton, *Sholug Nameh* 1, no. 1 (Sept. 1968): 31.
66. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 24.
67. Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 6.
68. *Ibid.*, 6.
69. *Ibid.*, 39.
70. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 36-7; Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 38.

71. Charles Peters, "Memorandum for Sargeant Shriver and Harris Wofford," March 27, 1964, USNA, RG 490, MLR A120, Box 10; and Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 2. The program had terminated three volunteers and transferred two. Two were sent home for their alleged soliciting of prostitutes during a respite in Tehran at the Peace Corps hostel and the third for a "personal psychological problem." See Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 42.
72. Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 15-16.
73. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
74. *Ibid.*, 11-12, 17-18.
75. *Ibid.*, 5.
76. *Ibid.*, 34. Though Iranian suspicion of Peace Corps collusion with the CIA existed, there is no evidence to date supporting it. US policy forbade the CIA to recruit among volunteers until two years after the completion of service. For a 1963 US State Department memo to all US embassies in Peace Corps host countries forbidding staff to use volunteers as intelligence sources, see RG 59, AID14, Peace Corps, Box 3290, Department of State Airgram, March 25, 1963. See also Meisler, *When the World Calls*, 71.
77. Close US-Iranian diplomatic relations did not shield Peace Corps volunteers from Sazman-e Amniyat va Ettela'at-e Keshvar (SAVAK) surveillance. Many volunteers suspected that Iranian intelligence agents followed them regularly. They were also required to acquire passes from SAVAK to travel outside of their work sites. See *Paigam: Peace Corps Iran Journal*, no. 9 (Jan. 21, 1965): 4.
78. Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 36.
79. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 58.
80. *Ibid.*, 77.
81. Amanat, *Iran*, 649.
82. Reid, "Overseas Evaluation: Iran," 58.
83. Adapted from James Goode's phrasing: "The White Revolution had coopted the New Frontier." See Goode, "Reforming Iran," 25.
84. Tragically, it was during this group's training session at Austin when a shooter opened fire from a university tower and killed 14 people, including Peace Corps Iran trainee Tom Ashton. Two other Peace Corps Iran trainees were injured. See Roland Elliott Brown, "Peace Corps Iran Memories: From Sioux Falls to Kurdistan," <https://iranwire.com/en/features/4274>; and Mary Hegland, interview with author, Vienna, Austria, August 5, 2016.
85. Shannon, "American-Iranian Alliances," 664. See also Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 131-2.
86. Shannon, "American-Iranian Alliances," 664.
87. On the NEF dictating Iranian development needs, see Nemchenok, "That so Fair a Thing."
88. Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 390; Russell Chappell, "Overseas Evaluation Report—Iran," January 30, 1967, 36, in US National Archives (hereafter USNA), "Iran 1967 c. 1" folder, Box 24, 250/8/24/00.
89. Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 389; Wangsness, "Historical Reflections," 7, 14-15.
90. Genna Stead Wangsness, interview with author, Austin, TX, May 30, 2015.
91. Collier, *Democracy and the Nature of American Influence*, 231-2.
92. *Ibid.*, 229-30.
93. Johns, "The Johnson Administration," 73, 76.
94. *Ibid.*, 70.
95. *Ibid.*, 80-81.
96. *Ibid.*, 88.
97. Collier, *Democracy and the Nature of American Influence*, 233-4.
98. "The Peace Corps and Iran," c. 1966, 4, www.peacecorpsiran.org
99. Shannon, "American-Iranian Alliances," 668.
100. "North Africa, Near East, South Asia: Iran, Rural Literacy and Community Development," *Peace Corps World*: 1966, 7.

101. Jay Crook, "Iran: 'We Are Glad You Have Come—We Need You,'" *Peace Corps News*, November 1964, 7. American and Iranian Peace Corps staff believed that the agency had inspired the Shah's Literacy Corps, known as the Sepāh-e Dānesh in Persian. See, for example, Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*; and Hossein Moftakhar, "How the Peace Corps was Started in Iran," unpublished ms, 2015.
102. Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 18.
103. Chappell, "Overseas Evaluation Report—Iran," 36.
104. Peter Teter and Richard Wandschneider, "Overseas Evaluation, Iran," April 30, 1968, RG 490, Box 4, USNA.
105. *Peace Corps Fact Book and Directory*, 1968, 39; Teter and Wandschneider, "Overseas Evaluation, Iran," 63; John Krauskopf, interview with author, San Francisco, CA., December 27, 2014; Stephen Kafoury, interview with author, Portland, OR, October 11, 2014.
106. Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 125-6, 130. Dorry arrived in Iran in 1952 as a University of Michigan graduate student. After completing her PhD, she returned to Iran and worked for the Ministry of Education, the Iran-America Society, the Peace Corps, and Damavand College, among other institutions.
107. Caldwell, "Iran Evaluation Report," 47.
108. See, for example, Gray, *Letters from Iran*; Mary Mitchell, interview with author, Scottsdale, AZ., January 10, 2015; Stephen Kafoury, interview.
109. Paul C. Pitzer, for example, taught English in an Azeri-speaking town, while Mary Hegland taught in a Kurdish-speaking region. See Pitzer, *Hello Mister*; and Mary Hegland, interview.
110. Stein, *Volunteers for Peace*, 78.
111. Chappell, "Overseas Evaluation Report—Iran," 13; Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 131.
112. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 109-49; Geidel, *Peace Corps Fantasies*, 204-15.
113. Tim Thomas, interview with author, Austin, TX, May 30, 2015.
114. See Klobe, *A Young American in Iran*.
115. "Peace Corps Volunteer Ends 6-Year Stay in Iran," *New York Times*, January 3, 1971.
116. For further discussion of three Iran Peace Corps community development cases, see Rostam-Kolayi, "Beautiful Americans."
117. Hooglund, *Land and Revolution*.
118. Roger Wangsness, interview with author, Austin, TX, May 30, 2015.
119. "Volunteers Size Up New Ideas, New Director," *Peace Corp Volunteer*, July 1969, 2-3.
120. Meisler, *When the World Calls*, 111-13.
121. "Volunteers Size Up New Ideas, New Director," *Peace Corps Volunteer*, July 1969, 2-3.
122. *Peace Corps Volunteer*, Summer 1971, 51.
123. Cobbs-Hoffman, *All You Need is Love*, 218.
124. Thomas Ricks, conference presentation, Peace Corps Iran Reunion/Conference, Austin, TX, May 2015. This event was not reported in available US State Department memoranda.
125. Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause*, 73.
126. Julius Helms, "Telegram from the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State," Tehran, June 5, 1973, Foreign Relations of the United States; "Report Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research," Washington, October 7, 1975, FRUS.
127. Gail Doughty, interview with author, Vienna, VA, November 24, 2015; Jackie Spurlock, interview with author, Portland, OR, October 10, 2014; George MacDonald, interview with author, Annapolis, MD, October 31, 2017.
128. Cobbs-Hoffman, *All You Need is Love*, 119.
129. Meisler, *When the World Calls*, 94.
130. Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 133; Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 173.
131. Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 123-4.
132. Dariush Homāyun, *Diruz va fardā* [Yesterday and tomorrow] (n.p., 1980), 28.
133. Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 141-2.
134. Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 181.
135. Fleming, 6; Jackie Spurlock, interview; Gail Doughty, interview.

136. Michael Metrinko, interview, 478.
137. "Memorandum from the Counselor for Public Affairs of the Embassy in Iran (Winkler) to the Ambassador to Iran (Helms)," Tehran, November 24, 1975, FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVIII, Iran; Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 182; Fleming, 5.
138. "Memorandum from the Counselor for Public Affairs of the Embassy in Iran (Winkler) to the Ambassador to Iran (Helms)," Tehran, November 24, 1975, FRUS, 1969-76, Vol. XXVIII, Iran. The US Embassy estimated 16,000 Americans lived in Iran in 1974.
139. Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 180, 182.
140. Jackie Spurlock, interview; George McDonald, interview.
141. *Peace Corps Volunteer*, Summer 1971, 51.
142. Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 390; *Peace Corps News*, September/October 1970, 12. See also "Index of Volunteer Groups," prepared by Genna Stead Wangsness.
143. Carolyn Yale, interview with author, Austin, TX, May 31, 2015; Gail Doughty, interview.
144. Dorry, *Forty-Five Years in Iran*, 154.
145. Gail Doughty, interview.
146. Andrew Killgore, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, June 15, 1988, 535-6. <http://www.adst.org/Readers/Iran.pdf>
147. Thomas R. Hutson, interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy, April 1999, 359.
148. Dorman and Farhang, *The U.S. Press and Iran*.
149. Shannon, "American-Iranian Alliances," 681.
150. For the Amnesty International Briefing on Iran, published in November 1976, see <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/204000/mde130011976en.pdf>
151. Iran had the largest and most politically active number of foreign students in the United States during the 1970s. See Matin-asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition*.
152. Fleming, 5-6.
153. Al-e Ahmad, *Kārnāmeḥ-ye Seh Sāleh* (Tehran, 1968).
154. Roland Elliot Brown, "Peace Corps Memories: Love and Learning in Mashhad," November 25, 2016, <https://iranwire.com>
155. For example, two former students of a Peace Corps volunteer in Kashan (1967-69) located him decades later independently and have maintained contact in the present.
156. 'Ezzat Gushehgir, "Meeting Mr. Paul Levering Again after 51 Years!," www.peacecorpsiran.org
157. Chappell, "Overseas Evaluation Report—Iran," 43.
158. *Ibid.*, 44.
159. Mostafā Rahbar, interview with author, Annapolis, MD, October 30, 2017.
160. Nemchenok, "That so Fair a Thing," 270-71.
161. Newton estimates that Peace Corps Iran's English instructors taught 70,000 students. See Newton, "The Story of the Peace Corps," 391.
162. Chashm slide show, www.peacecorpsiran.org
163. "Happiness Can Be a Beanbag," *Peace Corps Volunteer*, November 1964, 12.
164. They were Ambassador John Limbert, Michael Metrinko, and Barry Rosen. Limbert and Rosen recall rather different perspectives on how their Peace Corps experience shaped their relations with the hostage-takers. See Roland Elliot Brown, "Peace Corps Memories: John Limbert vs. the 'Ugly American,'" December 12, 2016; and "Peace Corps Memories: Barry Rosen Before the Hostage Crisis," December 19, 2016, <https://iranwire.com>
165. For more on the recent activities of these Peace Corps volunteers, see the Peace Corps Iran Association website at <https://peacecorpsiran.org>

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