

Process Paper

We initially chose to focus on the Dulles brothers' leadership in and legacy through the Iranian coup because they set a precedent in American history of violent foreign regime change.

We initially thought our findings would support the assertion that the Dulles brothers' leadership led to a "secret war" against communism. We realized, however, that the issue was much more complex with no strong, clear, leaders. We were able to access recently released CIA documents, such as reports by Donald Wilber, which helped elucidate the CIA's positive perspective of the coup. Many of these primary source documents were only released very recently due to Freedom of Information Act requests delivered to the CIA, so we found many primary source documents from the FOIA website and other archives. The CIA documents we found and Kermit Roosevelt's memoir contrasted sharply with the critical assessment of academic Ervand Abrahamian, who, during our interview with him, stated that the coup was motivated by selfish and realpolitik reasons. After locating the no-longer-lost Bruce-Lovett report to the CIA, which details the failures of the CIA during the period of the coup, we were able to form a strong argument about the weak leadership of the Dulles brothers. We have coupled this information with several successful interviews with experts, including professor Mark Gasiorowski, Deputy Director of the National Security Archive Malcolm Byrne, and a direct descendent of Mossadeq's lawyer, who were able to fill in gaps in our understanding of the event and the leaders.

We chose a website as our presentation medium because it was the most efficient way for our large group to work collaboratively, and because we enjoyed the interactivity and aesthetic presentation offered by a website.

The rigid beliefs of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles, the leaders who masterminded the 1953 Iranian coup, led to a negative legacy which would reverberate into the modern day. The brothers ignored accurate information, did not communicate effectively with their subordinates or peers, and were not held accountable by proper checks and balances, preventing them from making prudent decisions. This set a precedent in American foreign policy where covert violent regime change became a tool of diplomacy, and created a model of willful blindness for American leaders. The Dulles brothers held the most concentrated power of any close relatives in American history, and in this way created an echo chamber for each other's ideas and policies. This led to the 1953 coup, the first time the United States perpetrated covert regime overthrow, and thus marking a new chapter in Cold War, and modern world history. (434)