

# commentary and analysis

## The Tar Heel

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### A lesson from the shah

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi is dead, and the world waits wearily to find out just what effect his death will have on the fate of the hostages. While it waits, and it will be, no doubt, a lengthy wait, some thoughts on the shah and his life are in order. Perhaps his fall can teach us a lesson in reality.

As has been chronicled in the free press throughout the world, he ran a repressive regime. However, although there can be no excuses for his brutality, he used his power, and his wealth, to try to bring his people into closer touch with modernity and even with some of the values of Western democracies. He benefited from the manipulation of OPEC oil prices, but used much of his revenue on internal development programs.

The shah also spent a great deal of his wealth on arms; and used this power to become one of the United States' strongest allies in the Middle East. As Henry Kissinger said, the shah "was a good friend of the United States who stood by seven presidents of both parties for over 35 years of rule."

The shah understood, or thought he understood, that dissent in an emerging nation can be harmful to its forward progress. Many leaders of backward countries have operated on this principal in the past, and many will continue to do so in the future. The shah was attempting, at one blow, to transform Iran from the dusty back shelves of the nineteenth century into a twentieth-century superpower. He almost succeeded; but his pace was too fast for his country.

As a man, then, the shah was not the devil incarnate that various rabid Iranian factions, both in Iran and abroad, have branded him; he was simply wrong, as men often are.

As the shah's domestic problems compounded through the '70s, the major cause stressed abroad was the shah's repressiveness. And as the protests became louder, the Carter administration began, in its evangelistic attempt to police world morals, to chastise the shah, demanding that he loosen his grasp. And, as his end neared, U.S. officials suggested that he go quietly.

Much of this withdrawal of support came as a result of American idealism and naivete. However prevalent and cooed-over in the United States, idealism is a rare commodity in the nasty world. The shah knew, and most of the rest of the world knows, that when progress is made, someone must often be hurt.

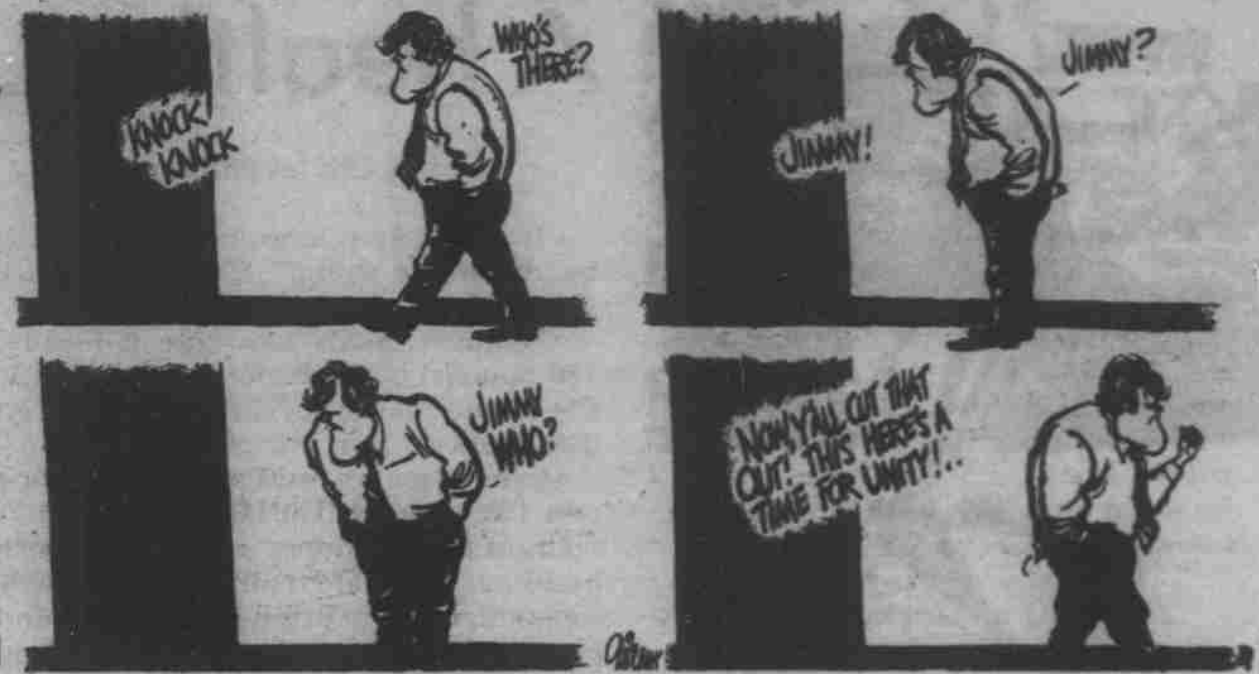
This is not to suggest that the shah's methods are correct. But American idealism is no excuse for the shabby treatment we afforded the shah.

The United States is not protected from the problems of the world by our distance from them. Some nations are vital to our economy or security, so the United States supports their dictators, however distasteful a task this is. Idealism often must be swallowed in place of realism.

The fate of the shah, and the concomitant blow to American security and prestige, is an example of what happens when idealism mixes with pragmatic politics. The sickening result is a regime equally as repressive, infinitely more reactionary and, if anything, further from a liberal democracy than the shah's rule ever was.

The elaborate attempt of the United States to dissociate itself from the shah's stigma has netted us, ironically, nothing. There is every sign that whoever is claiming control in the shambles that is Iran will refuse to let the shah's death change the hostage situation. This, in spite of the fact that his death is an opportunity for the Iranians to slither out of what is becoming, for them, an increasingly uncomfortable situation.

The lesson of the shah's demise should not go unnoticed. U. S. support for our less-developed allies must not continue to erode. Ambiguity, quibbling and lack of support, as occurred in Iran, will result in the United States emerging with diminished stature, looking both impotent and unreliable.



### Letters to the editor

## Draft registration is called into question

To the editor:

The editorial "Worth the trouble?" *The Tar Heel*, July 24 contains a statement which shows an ignorance of the ideology of this country and the principles on which it works so successfully: "But what people tend to forget in this day of spurious awareness is that we are here to complain only because someone else was drafted to fight for that right."

On the contrary, we are here to complain because we have a government based on the development and education of the individual, a belief in his inherent worth and the acknowledgement that through the use of law, both in the courts and in the constant attempt to make just laws, we will produce the best life for all.

It is using faulty logic to connect freedom and the draft. Many dictatorships have drafts and standing armies, but the citizens are not free to complain. Countries with ready armies tend to use them as a first and not a last resort, witness Idi Amin's Uganda, Franco's Spain and numerous Latin American countries.

In our own history, the use of the army has often been for disgraceful enterprises, from the crushing of the Indian population to the Vietnam War. The Central Intelligence Agency, a branch of government not subject to public scrutiny, in flagrant disrespect of government by law, used force to help overthrow a duly elected Chilean Government. Russia used its army to suppress Czechoslovakia, Hungary and now Afghanistan.

Posturing this late after the invasion of Afghanistan is not going

to scare the Russians; the only people scared are the 19-and 20-year olds.

The type of people dissenting this week are committed people who are heartsick at having to start all over in the fight against military solutions to problems, at the task of educating people to the fact that false patriotism can destroy all that had been accomplished in the past.

Eleanor Kinnaird  
Wilson Library

### A beer a day

To the editor:

We would like to respond to your recent article, "Beer drinking can be beneficial to your health," (*The Tar Heel*, July 10), in which the Center for Alcohol Studies was quoted.

The information was quoted accurately and represented recent studies that indicate one or two drinks a day can result in positive health outcomes.

However, the article went on to imply that more substantial quantities of alcohol (a six-pack) would result in similar positive outcomes.

There is a significant and potentially toxic difference between one or two drinks per day and six drinks per day. We would like to suggest that more responsible journalism about alcohol use and abuse could be achieved without communicating personal values that promote excessive consumption.

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## The Tar Heel

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