



SHAH MOHAMMED REZA PAHLAVI AND AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI: IN LIGHT OF SHI'I HISTORY

Mubina Narjis

PhD Scholar

Department of History

Women University

Multan - Pakistan

mubinanarjis123@yahoo.com

Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid Khan

Ex- Chairman

Department of History

Bahauddin Zakariya University

Multan - Pakistan

Abstract

The Iranian Revolution talks about to happenings involving the rebellion of the Pahlavi dynasty under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was held up by the United States, and its subsequent removal with an Islamic Revolution of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who was helped by various leftist and Islamist organizations and Iranian student movements. The Iranian Revolution was a mainstream, nationalist and Shi'a Islamic revolution that ousted an autocratic kingdom with a theocracy built on "Guardianship of the Islamic Jurists" (or velayat-e faqih). This research goes to light the relationship between Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, in the context of Shi'i history.

This research paper hypothesizes three types of human relationships which are grounded on, the exchange system, the integrative system, and the threat system. Reza Khan (the father of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi) had established it through a military coup d'etat in 1921; the threat system looked to lead in Iran throughout the Pahlavi rule which was finished in December, 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini. Under threat system, detachment and legality occur as major variables. Actions, events, writings, and vocalizations of main community figures are engaged to establish the inequality between intent and outcome of the Shah's policies, and between world views and consequent activities of the Shah and Khomeini. This paper also argues the nature of the rule of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and into the role of Ayatollah Khomeini as voice of the opposition, charismatic leader, and as "prince" who legitimates his own threat system.



Key Words: Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran, Shi'i history

Introduction

The Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and Imam Ruhollah Khomeini played noteworthy parts in modeling the history of Iran in the 20th century. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was an extreme response to social atomization, a result of speedy transformation. Islam created a substitute philosophy to capture the estranged, the perplexed, and the angry. (Curtis, 1981). Katouzian describes that the revolution of Iran characterized coup over decades of "total repression" and over the "complete absence of rights" (Katouzian, 1981). This revolution was an effort to realm its distinct individuality and to recuperate security. As a result of revolution, a whole nation cannot emigrate, so it undertakes a migration in time rather than space" (Kapuscinski, 1985). Miller witnesses, "Societies create their most important adjustments to the connotation, rather than the rate of incoming information. He further writes that if the rate alone looks to threaten identity. It is a symbol that the system is breaking down. One exception, however, is monetary information-where changes in flows activate adjustment processes. So, profound social changes may follow sudden increase in wealth such as oil producing countries experienced in the 1970s" (Miller, 1978). Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi apparently offered his own kind of expectedness. For instance, he seemingly tried to smooth social solidity, and launches validity, through ceremonies, such as the formal coronation ceremony in 1967, and the splendid Persepolis ceremony celebrating his 30 year rule in 1971, among others. He also melodramatically strengthened the armed forces, founded a one-party system, in the name of democracy, and at least tolerated, if not encouraged, SAVAK to examine potential troubleshoots, such as Labor Unions, Peasant Organizations, Student Groups, Guilds, and even Mosques, inspiring universal fear of consequences for criticizing or disagreeing with the government. In performance with these tactics and approaches, the Shah followed quick innovation for Iran, modeled after the West. Due to supporting liberal modernization strategies, and keeping Western political and economic interests in the area of the Persian Gulf, the West, and particularly the United States, stayed with the Shah. Sullivan says that the support of the Shah was weakened under the Carter Administration and the US had started to demand for the protection of the human rights in Iran, and to limited accessibility of American military equipment for Iran (Sullivan 1981).

Preece describes that the majority of the Iranian people spoke the Shah as "marionette" of the United States. They observed the Shah and the United States as danger to their self-sufficiency, sovereignty, authority and even to their life. In reaction, the Iranians projected their wrath onto those two major enemies (Preece 1979). Superficially, they provided the shared focus formerly lacking. The Shi'ism provided the organizational force; a multifarious accretion of events provided the environment suitable for revolution. The rituals, beliefs, and practices of Shias, according to historical precedent, borrowed "the strength and pacing to the closing of the system, returning the Iranian people to illusionary safety of a lost paradise. Ayatollah Khomeini presided over the "closing" by using these rituals, beliefs, and practices on behalf of the revolution. He became the "charismatic leader," the Imam, of the faithful by his connection (perceived by them) with some



central feature of their existence. This centrality, coupled with intensity, constituted a powerful force.

Comparative Review

This comparative review aims to explore the contrasting perspectives on their leadership, ideologies, and the impact they had on the nation. Additionally, an overview of the current situation in Iran will provide insights into the country's present circumstances.

1. Leadership Style: The Shah of Iran, who ruled from 1941 to 1979, sought to modernize Iran through his ambitious "White Revolution" policies. He aimed to implement rapid industrialization, land reforms, and women's rights. While his leadership style brought economic development, it was criticized for its authoritarian nature, suppression of dissent, and dependence on foreign powers (Kinzer, 2003). Imam Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, opposed the Shah's regime and sought to establish an Islamic Republic in Iran. His leadership style was characterized by religious authority, grassroots support, and a rejection of Western influence. Khomeini's vision emphasized Islamic principles and the establishment of a theocratic government (Fischer, 2003).

2. Ideological Differences: The Shah of Iran promoted a secular and pro-Western ideology, aligning Iran with Western powers and advocating for modernization. He aimed to create a more liberal and progressive society by reducing the influence of religious institutions. However, this approach faced criticism from those who believed it led to cultural imperialism and the neglect of traditional values (Amanat, 2017). Imam Khomeini, on the other hand, advocated for the establishment of an Islamic state. He believed in the implementation of Sharia law, Islamic values, and the rejection of Western influence. Khomeini's ideology resonated with a significant portion of the Iranian population, leading to his rise to power and the subsequent establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Abrahamian, 1993).

3. Impact and Legacy: The Shah's rule brought economic development, infrastructure projects, and advancements in education and healthcare. However, widespread corruption, a growing gap between the rich and poor, and a lack of political freedom fueled dissatisfaction among Iranians. This eventually led to the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which overthrew the Shah and resulted in his exile (Ali, 2003). Imam Khomeini's leadership marked a fundamental shift in Iran's governance. The establishment of the Islamic Republic transformed Iran into a theocratic state with Supreme Leader as the highest authority. Khomeini's legacy is mixed, as his regime was characterized by strict religious laws, limited civil liberties, and political repression. However, he is revered by many Iranians for standing against foreign influence and championing the nation's independence (Kurzman, 2004).



Current Situation

As of the present-day, Iran looks at frequent challenges on both internal and international fronts (Perletta, 2022). The country deals with economic sanctions, which have stressed its economy and inadequate entree to global markets. Moreover, political tensions occur between reformist and traditional groups within the country, leading to periodic protests and demonstrations. Iran's foreign policy is a subject of ongoing debate and scrutiny. The nation's nuclear program has drawn international attention, resulting in negotiations and sanctions. Relations with regional powers, such as Saudi Arabia and UAE are now in some extent good. While Iran stays to exercise sway in the region through its engrossment in conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, supporting various militant groups and proxies. This has further strained its relationships with regional and global powers (Zorri, Sadri, & David, 2020). Internally, Iran experiences socio-political challenges. There is an ongoing fight between traditional forces, who pursue to keep the status quo and uphold strict Islamic principles, and reformist movements supporting for political and social change. These strains often are evident in protests and demonstrations demanding greater political freedoms, economic opportunities, and social reforms. Human rights concerns persist in Iran, with reports of limitations on freedom of expression, restrictions on the press, and persecution of political dissidents and minority groups. Women's rights and gender equality remain contentious issues, as women face legal and social obstacles in various spheres of life (United States Department of State, 2022). The economy is another noteworthy feature of Iran's present situation. Economic sanctions executed by the United States and other countries have sternly crushed Iran's oil exports, financial sectors, and overall economic stability. Inflation, high unemployment rates, and limited access to foreign investment continue to challenge the country's economic growth. Iran's energy sector, particularly its nuclear program, remains a focal point of international concern. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a multilateral agreement signed in 2015 between Iran and major world powers, aimed to limit Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief (Robinson, 2023). However, in 2018, the United States withdrew from the agreement and re-imposed sanctions on Iran, straining the JCPOA and its future prospects. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected Iran, as it has faced significant challenges in managing the spread of the virus and its impact on the healthcare system and the economy.

1. Economic Challenges: Iran's economy façades significant challenges, mainly due to economic sanctions levied by the United States and other US ally countries. These sanctions have restricted Iran's access to international markets, disadvantaged foreign investment, and exaggerated various sectors, including oil exports, banking, and trade. The depreciation of the national currency, high inflation rates, and rising unemployment are other economic alarms (Laub, 2015).

2. Political Landscape: Iran's political landscape is complex, featuring a theocratic system with a Supreme Leader as the highest authority. The country has periodic elections for the presidency and other positions, although the vetting process by the Guardian Council influences the candidates' eligibility. Different political factions exist, ranging from conservative and hardline to reformist



and moderate. These factions compete for influence and shape policies within the parameters set by the Supreme Leader.

3. Human Rights: Human rights issues persist in Iran, drawing international scrutiny. Concerns include limitations on freedom of expression, press freedom, and assembly. Political dissidents, journalists, and human rights activists face persecution and arbitrary arrests. The treatment of religious and ethnic minorities, women's rights, and the criminal justice system are areas of ongoing concern.

4. Regional Dynamics: Iran plays a significant role in regional dynamics, particularly in the Middle East. It has been involved in conflicts such as the Syrian civil war and has supported various non-state actors and proxies in the region. Iran's relationships with neighboring countries, including Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the Gulf states, are characterized by tensions and rivalries. Its involvement in regional power struggles and proxy conflicts has a considerable impact on regional stability.

5. Nuclear Program: Iran's nuclear program has been a subject of international concern and scrutiny. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was reached in 2015 between Iran and major world powers to curb Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. However, the withdrawal of the United States from the agreement in 2018 strained the JCPOA. Subsequent negotiations have sought to salvage the agreement, but challenges remain in restoring its full implementation.

6. Societal Dynamics: Iranian society is diverse, comprising various ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. While Persian is the predominant language and Shia Islam the official religion, there are significant minority communities, including Kurds, Azeris, Arabs, and Baluchis, among others. Cultural, social, and generational dynamics shape the fabric of Iranian society, with differing perspectives and aspirations among different groups.

7. COVID-19 Pandemic: Iran, like many other countries, has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The country faced challenges in managing the spread of the virus, with a high number of cases and fatalities. The pandemic strained Iran's healthcare system and highlighted existing vulnerabilities in public health infrastructure.

8. Social and Cultural Changes: Iranian society is undergoing gradual social and cultural changes, driven by factors such as urbanization, globalization, and increased access to information and technology. There is a growing youth population that seeks greater individual freedoms, including in areas such as fashion, music, and social interactions. These shifts often generate tensions with conservative elements within society and the establishment.

9. Environmental Concerns: Iran faces environmental challenges, including water scarcity,



desertification, and air pollution. The depletion of water resources, especially in regions like Khuzestan, has led to protests and unrest. The government is striving to address these issues through initiatives such as water management projects and renewable energy development.

10. International Relations: Iran's relations with the international community are complex and multifaceted. While it faces economic sanctions from several countries, it also maintains diplomatic and economic ties with other nations. Efforts to improve relations with neighboring countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, are ongoing. Furthermore, Iran engages in regional initiatives and organizations, such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

11. Technological Advancements: Iran has made strides in technological advancements, particularly in sectors such as aerospace, nuclear technology, and information technology. The country has demonstrated its capabilities through successful satellite launches and the development of indigenous defense systems. However, these advancements often draw international scrutiny, particularly in relation to Iran's nuclear program.

12. Youth and Education: Iran has a young population, with a significant portion of its citizens under the age of 30. Education is highly valued in Iranian society, and the country boasts a strong higher education system with renowned universities. However, there are challenges regarding employment opportunities for the youth, leading to concerns about brain drain and underemployment.

13. Economic Diversification: Iran has been striving to diversify its economy beyond its heavy reliance on oil revenues. Efforts have been made to promote sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, and technology. However, economic diversification has been hampered by various factors, including economic sanctions, limited access to international markets, and bureaucratic hurdles.

14 Gender Equality: Women's rights and gender equality remain significant issues in Iran. While progress has been made in areas such as education and healthcare, there are still legal and social barriers that restrict women's rights and participation in public life. Women's rights activists continue to push for greater gender equality and legal reforms.

15. Cyber security and Internet Freedom: Iran has faced challenges related to cyber security, including cyber-attacks on its infrastructure and attempts to control online content and restrict internet access. The government has implemented measures to monitor online activities and restrict access to certain websites and social media platforms. This has led to concerns about freedom of expression and privacy rights.

16. Drug Trafficking and Addiction: Iran faces challenges related to drug trafficking, particularly in its border regions. Its proximity to drug-producing countries in the region has resulted in



significant drug seizures and efforts to combat drug trafficking networks. The country also faces a growing problem of drug addiction, with significant efforts made to address prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation.

17. Cultural Heritage and Tourism: Iran is known for its rich cultural heritage and historical sites. The country has been focusing on promoting its tourism sector, attracting both domestic and international visitors. Efforts have been made to improve infrastructure, enhance tourist services, and streamline visa processes. However, geopolitical tensions and travel restrictions have impacted the tourism industry in recent years.

18. Healthcare System: Iran has made progress in its healthcare system, with improvements in infrastructure, medical research, and access to healthcare services. However, challenges remain in areas such as healthcare funding, availability of specialized care in rural areas, and addressing public health issues effectively.

19. Environmental Activism: Environmental activism and awareness have been on the rise in Iran. Citizens and civil society groups have been advocating for the protection of natural resources, wildlife conservation, and sustainable development. Activists raise concerns about issues such as deforestation, pollution, and the impact of climate change on vulnerable regions.

20. Diaspora Influence: Iran has a significant diaspora population, with Iranians residing in various countries around the world. The Iranian diaspora plays a role in cultural preservation, political activism, and economic contributions to both Iran and their host countries. Their influence and engagement with Iran have implications for domestic and international affairs.

21 Sanctions and Nuclear Negotiations: Iran's economy continues to face challenges due to ongoing economic sanctions imposed by the United States and other countries. These sanctions have limited Iran's access to international markets, financial services, and technology. Negotiations surrounding Iran's nuclear program have been ongoing, with efforts to revive the JCPOA and find a mutually acceptable solution to address concerns about Iran's nuclear activities.

22. Regional Influence and Proxy Conflicts: Iran maintains influence in the region through its support for various non-state actors and proxy groups. It has been involved in conflicts in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. Its regional activities and alliances have implications for regional stability and international relations.

23. Press Freedom and Freedom of Expression: Press freedom and freedom of expression are areas of concern in Iran. Journalists, bloggers, and activists face restrictions, censorship, and harassment for their work. Independent media outlets operate under tight regulations, limiting the diversity of perspectives and independent reporting.



24. Religious Minorities: Iran is predominantly Shia Muslim, but it is also home to religious minority groups, including Sunnis, Christians, Jews, and Baha'is. Some minority communities face restrictions and discrimination, including limitations on religious practices, cultural rights, and representation in key institutions.

25. Youth Activism and Civil Society: Iran has a vibrant civil society, and young Iranians have played a significant role in advocating for social, political, and environmental change. Youth-led movements and activism have emerged, focusing on issues such as women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, environmental protection, and political reform.

26. Geopolitical Challenges: Iran's geopolitical position presents both opportunities and challenges. Its relationships with global powers, regional dynamics, and competition for influence contribute to a complex geopolitical landscape. Iran's interactions with countries such as Russia, China, the United States, and European nations shape its foreign policy and strategic considerations.

27. Education and Research: Iran has a strong focus on education and invests in scientific research and technological advancements. Iranian universities and research institutions have made notable contributions in fields such as medicine, engineering, and nanotechnology. However, brain drain remains a concern as many highly educated Iranians seek opportunities abroad.

28. Socioeconomic Inequalities: Iran experiences socioeconomic inequalities, with disparities between urban and rural areas, income gaps, and unequal access to resources. Economic challenges, including inflation, unemployment, and limited job opportunities, contribute to these inequalities, prompting calls for economic reforms and social welfare programs.

29. Cyber Warfare and Online Activism: Iran has been increasingly involved in cyber warfare and has faced cyber-attacks attributed to foreign entities. The government also maintains tight control over internet access and online content, leading to the growth of online activism and the use of digital platforms to express dissent and mobilize public opinion.

30. International Humanitarian Efforts: Iran has been involved in international humanitarian efforts, providing aid and assistance to countries facing natural disasters, conflicts, and humanitarian crises. Iran's engagement in these efforts helps shape its regional and global image while also addressing humanitarian needs.

Conclusion

Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini both had reflected themselves to be protecting the core of their civilization against corruption and destruction (Keddie 1983). Both Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini had different the core of



civilization greatly. For Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, “the core of civilization was a Persia, ancient and great, rapidly adapting to modern ways, to become a leader of the world”. On the other hand, for Imam Ayatollah Rohullah Khomeini, “it was a nation rooted in the millennium-old vision of a Golden Age in Islam, prevented by a usurper who had to be destroyed”. Therefore, for the majority of the Iranians it whirled on an actual, fundamental and central feature of their existence. In getting an autocracy and tyranny from his father, and thus a threat system, the Shah had also inherited distance, unraveling him from the Iranian people. Detachment from people stops actual two-way communication. Due to the autocratic and dictatorship of the Shah during his regime, dialogue, mutual understanding, and nurturance had become impossible. Corrosion of support and alienation were followed by the Shah. Across the gulf, the Shah levied quick modernization on Iran, “insensitive to the needs, opinions and sentiments of many Iranians, and insensitive to the integrative and exchange systems, intertwined in a complex way”. To daunt consequent opposition, the Shah used his military establishment, and SAVAK, which concretized and strengthened the threat system. In the lack of nurturance and of any kind of free expression, overwhelming Shi’ism, “the integrative system, he substituted force in an effort to hold things together.” In adding, he tried to insert charm and charisma and expedite social structure through frequent marvelous affairs, and by trying to project a father image. The policies and strategies of the Shah gave an image in Iranian people that he insulted believers by injecting pre-Islamic, pagan roots. Another reason to oppose the Shah in Iran, because he kept away several intellectuals and others with his parade of wealth and conspicuous consumption in the face of poverty in many areas of Iran. As forebear to the nation, furthermore, he became alleged as dictatorial and tyrannical, rather than kind and caring. The question of genuine leadership as central theme of Shi’i Islam positioned the Shah on fragile ground from the beginning of his rule. In the context of unpredictability, consistent with any threat system, this concern took on eschatological dimensions. On other hand, Imam Khomein and his supporters, declared and professed not only Iran, but Islam itself to be in danger. Imam Khomeini turned out to be the charismatic leader, frontrunner and savior for the majority of Iranian people. He commanded the renaissance movement which shortened the stress level in the system, by streamlining the repertoire, and by serving as unifying, organizing, integrating principle in opposition to the regime. Imam Khomein became the “prince” who legitimated his own threat system in the name of Islam. Imam Khomein and his followers, therefore, had used Shi’ism, as the equilibrating force in an anomic environment, historically rooted in instability, and contemporarily subjected to rapid change, oppression and corruption. The Shi’ism was worked for as integrative system with the promise of safety and justice. In this sense, Shi’ism converted the seeming modern solution for many Iranians. It undertook to transmute Iranian society into a “just social system.” Iranians thought that the United States of America took a key role and central part in the demise of Iran, and the Shah was a dummy of the United States of America. The Iranians declared America “the great Satan” and the Shah the “Yazid of the Age” and America and the Shah became the focus for hostility. Khomeini became the Imam.



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