

A Study of the Root Causes and Process of the Islamic Revolution in Iran

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Transliteration Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>	<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>
ء	'	ا	a
ب	b	ت	t
ث	th	ج	j
ح	h	خ	kh
د	d	ذ	dh
ر	r	ز	z
س	s	ش	sh
ص	ṣ	ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ	ظ	ẓ
ع	'	غ	gh
ف	f	ق	q
ك	k	ل	l
م	m	ن	n
هـ	h	و	w
ی	y	ة	ah
<u>Long Vowels</u>		<u>Short Vowels</u>	
آ	ā	ـَ	a
ای	ī	ـِ	i
او	ū	ـُ	u
Persian Letters			
<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>	<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>
پ	p	چ	ch
ژ	zh	گ	g

Preface



The Islamic Revolution in Iran is considered as one of the greatest revolutions in the 20th century, which brought about significant consequences for Iran, the region and the world. The revolution occurred in a country where the U.S. President Carter called the stability island in the Middle East. The CIA reported that any revolutionary upheaval was impossible to happen in Iran in those days hence nobody predicted a revolution at all.

On the other hand, the revolution destroyed a political regime that was regarded as one of the strongest one in the region, possessing huge military equipment and suitable political relations with the West and East blocs. Iran represented an important ally of the United States and its gendarme in the Persian Gulf region leading the United States to heavily invest in the regime's preservation and survival.

Furthermore, despite the secularization process under way in Iran, the Revolution became able to replace the regime ancient with a religious-based political system, thus enhancing the influence of religion in sociopolitical areas and revitalizing Islamic values.

This revolution can be viewed as paving the way for the emergence of many contemporary Islamic movements in the Muslim and Third World

countries. This set the ground for propensity to spirituality in the world and revival of Islamic values in the Muslim countries and generated a new wave of uprising and Islamic awakening in the region.

Given these parameters, certain questions remain for researchers of revolutions to be answered that why the revolution occurred in Iran? Why did it find Islamic character? And which factors did influence the advent of this great revolution?

This research seeks to answer the aforementioned questions and present a comprehensive and at the same time brief explanation of the advent of revolution in Iran. This aims at explaining this huge event while looking at the subject literature and considering the realities of Iranian society.

Principally during the three decades following the Islamic Revolution, explanation of factors causing the revolution has attracted the attention of analysts and theorists of revolution. They have investigated it using different approaches from various perspectives. A study of research works related to the explanation of the Islamic Revolution will demonstrate that in principle these studies have been conducted from several perspectives. Some of them are indeed memoirs lacking specific theoretical framework. A significant number of these works, however, have relied upon theoretical approaches in order to explain the revolution in Iran. In this relation, many writers have tried to explain the Islamic Revolution according to different theories which are found in various approaches to the phenomenon of revolution. These studies have sought to apply existing theories to the Islamic Revolution as a case for empirically testing them.

In general, such scientific explanations can be classified as single factor and mixed (multifactor) approaches, given their emphasis on the root cause of the basic influential factor, the single factor approach can be divided into political, security, economic, cultural, social and psychological approaches. Mentioning various factors, the mixed approaches try to prioritize them. The first chapter of the research deals with such approaches and their critiques so that the reader can become familiar with the current discussions in this field and acquire suitable account of the roots of the revolution.

In order to get a better understanding of the country's political conditions on the eve of the revolution, alignment of political forces opposing the second Pahlavī regime will be examined and their place and role in the occurrence of the revolution will be assessed. To this end, Marxist, liberal and Islamist political groups have been identified and

studied. Most of the two first groups lacked the ability to influence the process of revolution in late Pahlavī era, since a large number of their leaders and members had been detained, jailed and/or executed. Also some of them had left the country and exerted little influence in the country's political scene. Hence, only Islamist current possessed relative strength for exerting influence. Therefore, a deeper and more comprehensive study needs to be conducted for explaining the cause of the revolution that will dealt with in chapter three.

There are basically two overall theories about the phenomenon of revolution. A theory analyzes revolution as a game played by players present in the scene who make a revolution, thus views the role of free agents as substantial in bringing about revolution. The second theory considers revolution as separate from the will and choice of the free agents and actors present at the scene and holds that indeed grand structures and history give rise to the phenomenon of revolution. For this reason, these theorists believe that revolutions occur and are not made, meaning that the revolutionary leader leads the revolution with the knowledge of existing structures. In new outlooks in revolution studies, emphasis is mainly put on mixed approaches and a combination of structural and voluntarist outlooks in which revolution is viewed as a result of a set of structural and non-structural conditions. They have a multidimensional and multilevel outlook towards the revolution and believe that one-dimensional outlooks cannot answer the explanation of revolution at all. Indeed, a set of structural and voluntary conditions in the past years and decades before the revolution went hand in hand and paved the way for the advent of a revolution.

In fact, the causes of revolution should be looked at from a multidimensional and multilayered perspective. In this context, political, economic, cultural and social structures influencing the formation of the revolution. The study of the structures, however, is not enough, so attention must also be paid to the grounds for revolution, that is voluntary factors leading to the revolution like the role of leadership, ideology, and mass mobilization.

In this framework, it should be noted that long-term causes of the Islamic Revolution in Iran are manifested in political, economic, cultural and social problems in Iranian society. These structural problems that took shape in long time and became deep-rooted created grounds for a fundamental change (revolution). On this basis, to recognize the structural factors influencing the advent of the revolution, such factors as rigid political

structure in Iran, dependent economic structure and uneven cultural structure, are mentioned and structural problems in these areas gave rise to dissatisfaction with the existing conditions are scrutinized.

Nonetheless, voluntary factors, i.e. the role of agents' will have to be addressed along with the structural ones in causing the revolution. In fact, although structural problems at that time acted as the disease situation in the pre-revolutionary society paving the way for change, organization and mobilization of opposing forces and appearance of revolutionary leadership, and formation of necessary mindset for the rise of revolutionary ideology are among the voluntary factors that are reinforced by exploiting structural diseases, generating grounds for revolution in the fault lines created because of the structures. In fact, inattention to such voluntary factors and mere emphasis on structural factors lead to a kind of tautological statement that fails to present a suitable explanation of the revolution.

Therefore, the study continues to examine significant voluntary factors leading to the Iranian Revolution including Imām Khomeinī's role as the revolutionary leader, formation of revolutionary ideology and determinants of mass mobilization in the Iranian Islamic Revolution as well as the roles played by political groups and parties in the occurrence of the revolution.

Fundamentally, the Islamic Revolution owes to the personality of its great leader, namely Imām Khomeinī. That why and how such a totally revolutionary personality comes out of the inner conventional Shī'ī jurisprudence and clergy who overthrows the 2500-year monarchical system is a fascinating phenomenon that should be properly explained in theoretical terms.

In this relation, it can be argued that Imām Khomeinī's standpoints, positions and ideals involving his criticisms of the status quo and his alternative pattern for the ideal situation were among the factors gathering the masses around him. Hence, they expressed their acceptance of his leadership. These viewpoints and positions were proposed in a particular political, cultural and social situation of the society paved the way for the acceptance of Imām Khomeinī's discourse. Stressing on the existence of the closed despotic system, on the unjust nature of economic system and on existing cultural conflicts in the society that threatened national identity, Imām Khomeinī became successful at attracting the masses who were suffering from unsuitable social, political and cultural conditions and due to the identity crisis sought for a savior. On the other hand, while criticizing the

status quo, the explanation of the Islamic government on part of Imām Khomeinī as the ideal pattern also strengthened Imām's popularity as the revolutionary leader.

Along with Imām's leadership, revolutionary ideology should be also added to the other important voluntary factors. Based upon existing realities, Shī'ī Islam became able to implement properly routine and multiple functions of ideology in political mobilization in the process of Islamic Revolution. Shī'ism's success as revolutionary ideology must be evaluated by considering the process of the decline of other ideologies and thought currents which were potentially actually its rival.

Under circumstances where such ideologies as socialism and liberal nationalism as major ideological rivals of Shī'ī Islam in Iran, were faced with theoretical impasse and failures in implementation, the Shī'ī Islam in its new form, which claimed to have innovative and original solutions considering the time's social issues came out to compete with the imported thoughts and finally as the winner of the battle managed to lead the mass mobilization leading to the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

Revolutionary ideology represents those traits of Islam and Shī'ism that thought rooted in people's history and doctrinal tradition, has been revived in a particular way. The revival of such an outlook on Shī'ī teachings were largely manifested in Imām Khomeinī's guidelines, gathered social forces around him and started the engine of the revolution.

The Muslim intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s made attempts to present a rational and complement picture of Islam by criticizing the rival ideologies; an Islam that is able to manage the contemporary world. Negating the incompatibility between science and religion, they tried to take effective steps in portraying the Islamic ideology as the superior one by scientifically justifying religion and compatibility of reason and revelation as well as knowledge and faith. Emphasizing the proof of inadequacy of empirical, philosophical and materialist knowledge for responding to all human needs as well as philosophically defending religion and metaphysics, they attempted to portray Islam as rational and humanistic. They also defended religion against political and social doubt and charges like the theory of opium nature of religion as expounded by Marxists. Furthermore, they rejected determinist and fatalist theories on the one hand and critiqued traditional values as well as modernism on the other. Although such discussions attracted most of intelligentsia, what made them spread among

the masses has been inclination of the young generation of clergy and the presence of Imām Khomeinī as a religious leader. Indeed, Imām emerged as link complementing the revolutionary ideology attracting various forces. This reading of Islam that was accepted by the new generation of clergy and Muslim intellectuals as well as a large number of academic graduates was the same victorious ideology that appeared as the dominate public opinion among the masses because it conformed with the Muslim people's culture. It could create great epics among millions of people in 1978-79 and give rise to popular mobilization and demonstrations.

In the final chapter, a summary of the chronology of events occurring in 1978-79 will be presented for learning about the precipitating factors in the Islamic Revolution. In a nutshell, this work is a brief but comprehensive explanation of the root causes of the Islamic Revolution in Iran that is hoped to be useful. ✍