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Why the Iranian Revolution was Nonviolent: Internationalized Social Change and the Iron Cage of Liberalism

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Why the Iranian Revolution was Nonviolent:
Internationalized Social Change and the Iron Cage of Liberalism

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Sonja and George, and in honor of my grandparents, Joel and Guta Orzolek and Holger and Trude Ritter.

Acknowledgements

I could not have completed, nor even embarked upon, the intellectual journey this doctoral dissertation represents without the support of mentors, family, and friends, and it is my pleasure to acknowledge those individuals in the next few pages.

First, I must recognize those who inspired me to choose the path I am currently on, namely those professors who encouraged me to pursue a graduate education. Dr. Barbara Yeager at the University of Charleston was my first academic role model. She saw something in me worth nurturing and my four years at UC would not have been the same without her. A similar role was played at Duquesne University by Sharon Erickson Nepstad. Although I had already set my sights on a Ph.D., it was Sharon who introduced me to sociology and encouraged me to apply to the Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. Her support of me has remained constant over the last seven years.

The reason Sharon suggested UT was the fact that Les Kurtz was at the time teaching there. I had read some of Les' work, and therefore knew that his academic interests coincided with mine, but otherwise I did not know much about him. Upon my arrival at UT he immediately welcomed me not only as a student, but as a friend and collaborator. Having instantly found a mentor who valued my presence in the Department was a luxury most of my fellow graduated students probably did not enjoy. Throughout my time at UT, Les always encouraged me to pursue my interests and provided me with both academic and moral support. I cannot thank him enough for the kindness and generosity he has always shown me.

As if having one mentor was not enough of a privilege, I acquired a second one after taking Maya Charrad's seminar on comparative history during my fourth semester

in the program. That course not only introduced me to the method employed in this dissertation, but also helped me develop what would eventually be my dissertation topic. I soon realized that Maya had to co-chair my dissertation committee, and Les welcomed the idea. Maya however was less convinced. In the end, she and I made a deal: I would not ask her to be on my comprehensive exam committee in exchange for her agreeing to co-chair my dissertation. This dissertation is the result of her nurturing and support, and it is safe to say that the final product would not have been anywhere close to what it is without her help. I consider Maya not only my intellectual mother, but also my very good friend.

This dissertation has also benefitted from conversations with the other members of my dissertation committee. Michael Young, Ari Adut, and Kamran Scot Aghaie, all professors at UT, were always willing to discuss my work with me, and their insights have significantly influenced my thinking about nonviolent revolutions and contributed to a better product. In particular Michael, with his humility and rare ability to integrate diverging theoretical points, has been very helpful. Jack Goldstone, the final member of the committee and one of the world's leading scholars of revolutions, has taught me much about revolutions, but perhaps even more about intellectual generosity. His support and encouragement throughout this process was greater than I can ever hope to repay, but I will try my best to "pay it forward" and show my future students the same kindness he showed me.

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Why the Iranian Revolution was Nonviolent:
Internationalized Social Change and the Iron Cage of Liberalism

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From angry torch-swinging Parisians attacking the Bastille and Russian workers rising up against the Tsar to outraged Chinese peasants exacting revenge on their landlords and Cuban guerrillas battling Batista's army, revolutions without violence have in the past been near inconceivable. But when unarmed Iranians after an extended popular struggle forced Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, the last king of Iran, to flee Tehran on January 16, 1979, they had gifted the world a new and seemingly paradoxical phenomenon: a nonviolent revolution. Far from a historical oddity, such revolutions have since occurred on almost every continent. Over the past thirty years the function of guerrilla tactics, military coups, and civil war has increasingly been replaced by demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes. How can social scientists account for this "evolution of revolution" that have so altered the appearance of the phenomenon that by Arendt's definition events in places like Iran, the Philippines, Chile, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine may not even qualify as

revolutions? Yet, the popular overthrows of authoritarian regimes in each and every one of those countries were nothing less than revolutionary.

The dissertation seeks to understand this recent development in the nature of revolutions by historically examining the phenomenon's signal case, the Iranian Revolution. The core question asked is: what are the structural and historical forces that caused the Iranian Revolution to be the world's first nonviolent revolution? The central argument is that both the emergence and success of the nonviolent Iranian Revolution can be explained by its internationalization. In other words, the Iranian Revolution turned out to be successfully nonviolent because, unlike previous revolutions, it was a global affair in which the revolutionaries intentionally and strategically sought to bring the world into their struggle against the state. Indirectly, the aim of this study is to generate the genesis of a theoretical framework that can explain more broadly the emergence and success of nonviolent revolutions in the late 1970s and beyond.

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1. THE EVOLUTION OF REVOLUTION

> "Only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government… can we speak of revolution" (Arendt 1963:28)

From angry torch-wielding Parisians attacking the Bastille and Russian workers rising up against the Tsar to outraged Chinese peasants exacting revenge on their landlords and Cuban guerrillas battling Batista's army, revolutions without violence have in the past been near inconceivable. But when unarmed Iranians after an extended popular struggle forced Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, the last king of Iran, to flee Tehran on January 16, 1979, they gifted the world a new and seemingly paradoxical phenomenon: a nonviolent revolution. Far from a historical oddity, such revolutions have since occurred on almost every continent. As one prominent scholar points out "beginning with the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79… a growing number of nonviolent or at least unarmed popular insurgencies have arisen against authoritarian states" (Goodwin 2001:294-5).[1]

Over the past thirty years the function of guerrilla tactics, military coups, and civil war has increasingly been replaced by demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes. How can social scientists account for this "evolution of revolution" that has so altered the appearance of the phenomenon that by Arendt's definition events in places like Iran, the Philippines, Chile, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine may not even qualify as revolutions? Yet, as popular movements managed to overthrow

[1] Goldstone (2003) and Foran (2005) also note this general trend towards nonviolent revolutionary strategies.

authoritarian regimes in each and every one of those countries their outcomes were nothing less than revolutionary.

The dissertation seeks to understand this recent development in the nature of revolutions by historically examining the phenomenon's signal case, the Iranian Revolution. The core question asked is: what are the structural and historical forces that caused the Iranian Revolution to be the world's first nonviolent revolution? The central argument is that both the emergence and success of the nonviolent Iranian Revolution can be explained by its internationalization. In other words, the Iranian Revolution turned out to be nonviolent *and* successful because, unlike previous revolutions, it was a global affair in which the revolutionaries *intentionally and strategically* sought to bring the world into their struggle against the state. Indirectly, the aim of this study is to generate a theoretical framework that can be applied more broadly to explain the emergence and success of nonviolent revolutions in the late 1970s and beyond.

But how recent is the surfacing of nonviolent revolutions? Did they really emerge only in the last three decades as Goodwin and others have suggested, or can we find them further back in history? Foran (2005) has pointed out that Guatemalan revolutionaries used nonviolent tactics as early as the 1950s, and Goldstone (2003) adroitly notes that most revolutions in history became violent only *after* they had already defeated the state. My contention is not that the use of nonviolent methods of struggle in revolutionary movements is new to the last three decades. Rather, I suggest that the novelty lies in the fact that contemporary revolutionaries have deliberately opted for nonviolent methods, and have calculatingly eschewed the use of violence. What explains this strategic choice

and under what structural conditions is it made? These are some of the questions I hope to answer in the pages to come.

Why do we need another theory of revolutions to explain what appears to be a slight shift in little more than the tactics employed by contemporary revolutionaries? After all, social scientist have at least since the 1920s found revolutions intriguing enough to study them systematically, and have in the process generated a substantial number of theories to help explain both their varying causes and outcomes.[2] Could these theories not also be helpful in explaining this transformation of revolutionary methods? I contend that the answer to the last question must necessarily be in the negative, and that a new analytical framework is required because nonviolent revolutions cannot be properly understood unless they are considered qualitatively different from past revolutions. The shift is neither slight nor marginal. Conceptually, it is not adequate to approach the two components – "nonviolent" and "revolution" – as mutually exclusive and coincidentally coupled.

Instead, the term "nonviolent revolution" represents *one* idea that cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts. By virtue of being one new notion rather than the combination of two old ones, a fresh theoretical approach is needed if the concept is to be correctly understood. Furthermore, the impact of nonviolent revolutions has been monumental: They have helped establish one of the world's few Islamic Republics, contributed to the end of a Cold War and the demise of socialism as a political system, and aided in the reform of the planet's only constitutionally racist nation. Yet, we

[2] In Chapter 2 I review some of the most influential contributions made to the study of revolutions.

understand very little about the causes and dynamics of nonviolent revolutions. The dissertation therefore seeks to remedy this shortcoming by filling a hole in the revolution literature.

What is a Nonviolent Revolution?

Despite a burgeoning body of literature surrounding what I refer to as nonviolent revolutions, few scholars have referred to the phenomenon by that name. Zunes (1994) and Schock (2005) speak of "unarmed insurrections," Goodwin (2001) of "unarmed popular insurgencies," and Foran opts for "non-violent and/or democratic routes to power." Goldstone (2003) has problematized the assumption that revolutions by definition are violent events, and Roberts and Garton Ash (2009) recently published an ambitious edited volume that covers nineteen different cases of "civil resistance."[3] Others have begun to analyze "color revolutions" and "electoral revolutions," specifically focusing on the post-communist revolutions in the former Soviet sphere of influence, such as the Bulldozer Revolution of Serbia, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine.[4] In fact, Nepstad (forthcoming) will become the first scholar to publish a book-length study of "nonviolent revolutions" explicitly. Unlike most of the existing research on color and electoral revolutions, this study examines a

[3] In his conclusion, Garton Ash (2009) addresses the term "non-violent revolution," (375), but the volume as a whole is not dedicated to the concept.

[4] See for example the special issue of Communist and Post-Communist Studies, especially Binnendijk and Marovic (2006), Bunce and Wolchik (2006), Goldstone (2009), Hale (2006), Kuzio (2006), and Marples (2006). Also see McFaul (2005), Van Inwegen (2006) and Auer (2009).

deliberately nonviolent challenge against an authoritarian state, and thus seeks to make a novel contribution to our understanding of revolutions and nonviolent social change.

The reluctance to identify these truly revolutionary events as revolutions has been noted by Garton Ash (2009). Because nonviolent revolutions tend to look quite different from their violent predecessors, he argues, "observers generally feel the need to qualify these new-style, non-violent transfers of power over states with an adjective: self-limiting, evolutionary, carnation, velvet, singing, rose, orange, negotiated, electoral, peaceful, or even non-revolutionary revolution" (Garton Ash 2009:376). Like Garton Ash, I can only speculate as to the sources of this avoidance to refer to nonviolent revolutions as revolutions. In an effort to clearly identify the phenomenon many of the aforementioned scholars have sought to explain, I propose the following definition of the concept.

For the purpose of this study, a nonviolent revolution is defined as a transformation of the political and/or social order of society, carried out through mass mobilization that relies overwhelmingly on the noninstitutionalized use of strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, and similar nonviolent methods, while deliberately eschewing violence. To increase the clarity of this definition it is necessary to examine it more closely. First, I do not distinguish between social and political nonviolent revolutions. Defining revolutions as one of the two types has been standard practice in most revolution research, but I do not consider this distinction analytically helpful, primarily because it is unclear how much social change is required for a revolution to be more than just a political revolution. For now, I have therefore chosen to ignore the social/political

dimension in my definition. Second, because I seek to understand why nonviolent revolutions not only occur, but also succeed, my definition dictates that only triumphant cases be considered revolutions. Third, for an overthrow to be considered a revolution it must have substantial support and be carried out through a popular mass movement.[5]

In addition to these criteria, the nonviolent aspect of the definition should be discussed. First, it is assumed that no revolution is completely nonviolent. Therefore, opposition violence could occur without that necessarily disqualifying a case from being considered a nonviolent revolution. The key is whether or not such violence can explain the movement's success and whether it is part of its revolutionary strategy. In the case of Iran, opposition violence did occur, but few scholars have given such expressions of frustration any meaningful role in explaining the success of the revolution.[6] More importantly, the available evidence strongly suggests that neither Khomeini nor any other revolutionary leader endorsed such violence. Second, my definition is only concerned with the opposition's strategies, that is, the revolutionaries' reliance on nonviolent methods. A state's resort to brute force is expected when its very existence is threatened, and the presence of government-sponsored violence is therefore irrelevant to the definition presented above.

[5] This is in part what disqualifies Portugal's Revolution of the Carnations from being a nonviolent revolution, in spite of its lack of violence. The Portuguese case, I suggest, is better understood as a nonviolent military coup. For a discussion of the Revolution of the Carnation, please see Maxwell (2009).
[6] See Chapter 6.

Theorizing Nonviolent Revolutions

The theory developed in this dissertation identifies two distinct but interconnected factors that made both the emergence and success of a nonviolent revolution against the shah possible.[7] While it may not be necessary to altogether reinvent the wheel of revolution theory, some significant and basic modifications of how we approach revolutions are needed. For example, and unlike most students of revolution, I do not aim to identify the proximate causes that led to state crisis in Iran. An important assumption of this study is that such causes are constantly present and boiling under the surface in any authoritarian society, and that a wide array of triggers can generate sufficient moral outrage for a suppressed people to rise up against its government *if the structural context permits such action*. What is therefore crucial is to identify those contextual conditions that made a nonviolent challenge against the Iranian state viable. To accomplish this I first place heavy emphasis on the international context in which the Iranian Revolution occurred. Second, and in contrast to most existing analytical frameworks, ample explanatory space will be afforded to the concept of revolutionary strategy in order to understand how the structural context was exploited by activists. The consideration of both structure and agency/strategy is crucial to a sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of nonviolent revolutions.

[7] *Shah* is the Farsi word for king.

The International Context

Are revolutions national or international events? Even though scholars have emphasized the role played by the international context in bringing about state breakdown, they have traditionally considered the actual struggle between the state and its challengers to be a domestic affair. Central to my argument is the idea that contemporary revolutions, and nonviolent ones in particular, are decidedly international processes. By this I do not simply mean that the international context helps bring about a revolutionary situation in a given country, although this is true, but also that the revolution itself is a global spectacle that assumes importance for audiences throughout the globe, even those with no direct connection to the nation undergoing a revolution. As I will show in the next section, this internationalization of revolutions is at least in part deliberately accomplished by many contemporary revolutionaries, but it is also the result of certain structural relationships between different types of nations and other, more general, globalization processes. Particularly important is the world community's growing concern with human rights.

The emergence of nonviolent revolutions in the late 20th century is no coincidence. Rather, I suggest there is a correlation between this development and the simultaneous advancement of a global human rights regime (Donnelly 1986; Ratner & Abrams 2001; Hunt 2007). The progress of human rights is essential to the emergence of nonviolent revolutions for a few reasons. First, the universal and basic nature of human rights makes them difficult to oppose in principle for any state or individual that claims to

be democratic or liberal-minded. Second, the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights formalized what were previously little more than abstract enlightenment ideals. Now states that have signed the UN declaration are expected to respect and protect human rights within their territories. Failure to do so frequently result in denouncements from other governments, and depending on the human rights offending regime's relationship with other nations such condemnations could potentially have detrimental consequences. Finally, human rights are important in a theory of nonviolent revolutions because of the inherent compatibility of the two ideas. Since a nonviolent revolution can be conceptualized as a human right – "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression" and "everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association" (United Nations 1948: Sections 19 & 20) – we can expect that governments bound by the UN declaration will have a difficult time dealing with these types of challenges. One could even go a step further and argue that in the era of globalization, governments are considerably more vulnerable to internal nonviolent attacks than to violent ones. Because the repression of the former is significantly more difficult to justify to the world community it constitutes a more serious challenge for a state to handle.

I argue that amicable international relations contributed to the creation of a nonviolent revolutionary movement in Iran that subsequently broke down the state. This "soft" view of the international context is drastically different from how theorists of revolutions have traditionally approached the topic. Following Skocpol's (1979) lead most researchers have accepted the idea that military and economic competition between nations contribute to state breakdown which in turn may allow a revolution to occur

(Calvert 1996; Halliday 1999; 2001; Snyder 2001; Walt 2001). Turning the equation on its head, I posit that revolutionary movements cause state breakdown to occur, and not the other way around. I thus side with Goldstone (2003) who suggests that the "Skocpolian" perspective on the role of foreign states and actors may be overly simplistic:

> International pressures, for example, are not sufficiently described in terms of international military or economic competition. Increasingly, direct foreign intervention and support – *or withdrawal of that support* – are common [emphasis added]. In Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines, the pattern of initial U.S. support for dictators, followed by reduction or withdrawal of that support, contributed to the outbreak of revolutionary conflicts. (Goldstone 2003:74)

In line with Goldstone's point, I contend that amicable, high-profile relations between a democratic nation and an autocratic regime based on mutual economic and political-strategic interests place a "burden of friendship" on both nations that eventually traps them in a Weberian-style "iron cage of liberalism" (ICL).

The concept of the ICL, the central explanatory factor offered in this dissertation, is meant to capture the inherent contradiction that governments, whether democratic or autocratic, find themselves in when rhetorically embracing liberal values while simultaneously either repressing the expression of such values, or, in the case of a democratic nation, support a regime that violates liberal rights. The presence of an ICL, when combined with efficient news reporting, presents nonviolent revolutionaries with a structural context highly favorable to a nonviolent challenge as it makes it difficult for an autocratic government to repress the movement with the world's attention focused on the conflict.

Weber (1978; 1992; 1999) famously proposed that bureaucratic structures, which are intended to simplify interactions, over time develop into restrictive "iron cages." Inevitably the bureaucracy assumes a life of its own at which point its rules limit the range of possible actions. In other words, after initially having a positive effect, the bureaucratic structure becomes so complex that it traps us all in its internal logic. Similarly, I argue that the relationship between the U.S. and Iran, which initially benefited both countries, eventually became an iron cage when it forced both governments to play by the liberal rules on which the relationship was supposedly based. This was especially problematic for the shah, who due to the ICL was compelled to exercise restraint in the face of nonviolent protests, a difficult balancing act for any leader whose rule is based on repression and sanctions.

One key argument is thus that friendly relations between certain types of states can be detrimental to a repressive regime's ability to withstand a nonviolent challenge. When a dictatorship finds itself in a high-profile relationship with a self-identified democracy, and either explicitly or implicitly embraces its ally's liberal values, the autocratic regime is eventually forced to choose between revealing its undemocratic character to the world, and thus risk losing the support of its allies, or to practice restraint when dealing with nonviolent protestors. It is this dilemma, I argue, that constitutes an iron cage of liberalism. Whatever the dictatorial regime opts to do, it is severely weakened by the choice. However, not all dictatorships end up trapped in an ICL. What factors explain why the shah's government was when other autocratic regimes have

avoided a similar destiny? In the following chapters I seek to find the answer to that puzzle.

The idea that international third parties can have a significant effect on domestic power struggles is not new. For example, scholars of nonviolent action have since long recognized this important element of social change and have given third parties a central place in their analyses (Helvey 2004; Roberts & Garton Ash 2009; Schock 2005; Sharp 1973; 2005; Stephan & Chenoweth 2008). From a related perspective, social movement researchers have begun to speak of transnational activism, but this theoretical approach is different from what I propose in the sense that it examines movements whose concerns are global in nature, such as the environmental movement or the World Social Forum (Barrett & Kurzman 2004; Chabot & Willemduyvendak 2002; Foran 2008; Halliday 2008; Tarrow 2005). An internationalized movement, on the other hand, is concerned with national issues but tries to drag the world community into its struggle in order to put pressure on the opponent.

When it comes to the study of revolution, few scholars have seriously considered the potential import of amicable international relations. The most flexible perspectives on the role of the international context are perhaps provided by Foran (2005), who speak of "world-systemic openings," and DeFronzo's (2007) notion of a "permissive world context." Unfortunately, the broadness of these conceptualizations of the international context's impact on revolutionary struggles also make them less than optimally helpful. The notion of an ICL, on the other hand, identifies a specific dimension of friendly international relations between nations that may have revolutionary consequences in an

autocratic country by increasing the effectiveness of nonviolent methods of struggle. This dissertation constitutes, as far as I know, the first analysis of revolutionary social change that places amicable international relations at the very center of the explanatory framework.

Revolutionary Strategy

Although social structures like the ICL are important, simply having structural conditions in place does not guarantee the outbreak or success of a revolution, a realization that has caused recent contributors to think of revolutions as "revolutionary social movements," and to consequently apply social movement theory to their analyses.[8] I concur with this theoretical shift and therefore amend my structural theory with considerations of movement strategy. In short, the ICL is not in itself a sufficient source of revolutionary success as shrewd revolutionaries must exploit the structural openings it provides by employing effective strategies to further internationalize their struggle. I will argue that ICLs are particularly exploitable through nonviolent methods.

The role of strategy has generally been overlooked in the scholarship on revolutions, and I hope this study will constitute a significant contribution to this conceptual gap in our thinking about contentious politics. Only by combining structure and strategy, I believe, can we make sense of the emergence and success of nonviolent revolutions. For the purposes of this dissertation, strategy is defined as "structurally

[8] See Goldstone (1998b), Goodwin (2001) and Foran (2005).

situated agency,"[9] and shares the center stage of the theoretical model with the notion of the ICL. As I will show, Iran's nonviolent revolutionaries not only exploited the ICL by carefully selecting strategies that resonated with liberal values and human rights concerns, but also helped bring the ICL about through their pre-revolutionary tactics of international propaganda.

The idea that structures, such as the ICL, provide actors with strategic choices is hardly groundbreaking. However, I propose that the relationship between structure and strategy is iterative, so that strategic decisions made by revolutionaries contribute to the creation of structural openings such as the ICL. This line of reasoning, although rarely explored, has at least been invoked by previous scholarship. As one scholar explains without further elaboration, "skilful strategy by the proponents of change can over time create new structures of opportunity" (Garton Ash 2009:388). In the case of Iran, students and exiles living abroad spent at least the 15-20 years leading up to the revolution engaged in an on-going propaganda campaign designed to inform the world about the human rights conditions in their home country. As Chapter 5 will show, their hard work was eventually rewarded when the international mass media and human rights organizations began to examine critically what had by then become one of the United States' most important allies. Their findings, that the shah's government was one of the world's most terrifying violators of human rights, in combination with the election of Jimmy Carter, "the human rights president," created a structural opening in the shape of an ICL that made a nonviolent challenge highly effective. Thus, while seemingly a

[9] Compare to Karl and Schmitter's (1991) notion of "structured contingency."

structural opening, the ICL was in fact partly "created" by the propaganda efforts of the abroad-based opposition, thus suggesting an iterative relationship between structure and strategy.

I intend to broaden the way we normally think of strategy by making the Iranian use of religious symbols and ceremonies a part of this structural-strategic theory of revolutions (Moaddel 1992; 1993; Burns 1996). The role of ideology in revolutions has been a historical point of contention.[10] By approaching the Islamic dimension of the Iranian Revolution as most relevant from a strategic perspective, I seek to expand the way ideology is thought of in revolution theory. Religion played an essential revolutionary role by making nonviolent tactics attractive to the Iranian public. Yet, religion and ideology must be understood as manipulable constructs at the disposal of innovative leaders. Khomeini's revolutionary Islam, as Chapter 4 will show, was a rather radical interpretation of an old ideology. Consequently, Abrahamian (2009) has suggested that Khomeini had to frame Imam Hussein's willing martyrdom at Karbala in 680 A.D. as a nonviolent act of sacrifice for the greater good, even though Hussein is traditionally depicted as having died fighting to his last breath, albeit against overwhelming odds. In short, the religious frames presented by Khomeini were not necessarily consistent with traditional Shi'ism, but were rather altered for strategic reasons. By combining this emphasis on strategy with an appropriate focus of international structures, and by highlighting the iterative relationship between the two, I hope to craft a plausible theory of Iran's nonviolent revolution.

[10] See for example the debate between Skocpol (1979) and Sewell (1985).

Method and Case Selection

Although the dissertation examines only one case, Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1977-79, the method employed is that of comparative history. While this might seem paradoxical, my intention is for the findings of this project eventually to be part of a larger comparative study in which the Iranian case is the first. With that in mind, I ask the reader to remember that my aim is not to explain the causes of the Iranian Revolution per se, but simply to understand why the Iranian Revolution turned out to be nonviolent.[11] As Skocpol (1979) once put it, some studies "present fresh evidence; others make arguments that urge the reader to see old problems in a new light. This work is decidedly of the latter sort" (xi). Thus I do not purport to be an Iran specialist as my aim is not to explain the historical specificities of the Iranian Revolution. Such a task is better suited for historians with much deeper knowledge of Iran than I allege to possess, and for those with the relevant language skills. Instead, my purpose is to identify those factors that caused the Iranian Revolution to assume a nonviolent character. As a comparativist my objective is to identify causal factors that may potentially be generalizable so as to apply to a wider array of cases.

Comparative history has a solid track record within the study of revolutions and political sociology in general, and is highly suitable for macro-level studies such as this one (see Brubaker 1992; Charrad 2001; Foran 1993a; Goldstone 1982; 1991; 1998a; 2003; Goodwin 2001; Mahoney & Reuschemeyer 2003; Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979;

[11] For theoretical explanations of the causes of the Iranian Revolution, see for example Abrahamian (1982), Arjomand (1988), Foran (1993a), Keddie (1983b; 2003), Kurzman (2004), Milani (1988), Moaddel (1993), Parsa (1988; 1989; 2000), and Skocpol (1982).

1994; Tilly 1984; 1986). As Skocpol (1979:36) explains, comparative historical analysis (CHA) is particularly helpful when one strives to develop "explanations of macro-historical phenomena of which there are inherently only a few cases." Although nonviolent revolutions are not as rare, or "most unusual," as some will have us believe (Guilmartin 1998), they are still rare enough to warrant the use of comparative history.

Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003) have pointed out that comparative-historical methods of inquiry used to be the dominant, and for quite some time the only, available strategy available to social scientist. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, they note that CHA focuses specifically on causes. Unlike some other methods now at the disposal of social scientists, comparative-historical work explicitly attempts to explain, not interpret, phenomena. With the heavy emphasis on causes, CHA seems an appropriate method for a study that examines the causes and dynamics of nonviolent revolutions, as the method's "overriding intent is to develop, test, and refine causal, explanatory hypotheses about events or structures integral to macro-units such as nation-states" (Skocpol 1979:36). Similarly, CHA has been described as "doubly engaged social science," that is, the type of scholarship that not only examines empirical evidence, but simultaneously engages in theory-building (Skocpol 2003:409). It is my hope that this study will constitute an example of such doubly engaged research.

The data for this project consists mainly of secondary sources, although a few primary ones were also examined. The sources were selected with the help of an original master bibliography that I developed in the proposal stage of this project and include contributions from historians, sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists,

psychologists, journalists, politicians, and other area specialists. Once relevant sources had been identified and collected, a process made relatively easy by the sophistication of the University of Texas library system, they were systematically read. While immersing myself in the Iranian Revolution and Iranian history more broadly, I took copious notes with the help of Dragon Naturally Speaking, a voice recognition program. Throughout the research stage of the process the bibliography was amended when sources initially not included were identified in the course of my reading. This addition of sources is perhaps best likened to the type of snowball sampling sometimes utilized by researchers employing ethnographic and survey methods.

When further reading was found to only marginally add to the data already encountered, the research process moved into the analysis stage. Here I used Atlas, a qualitative software, to apply approximately 200 different codes code my notes. Once the coding is completed, Atlas allows the researcher to sort his or her notes on the basis of the codes attached to each quote and makes cross referencing possible. Put succinctly, with the help of Atlas I was able to generate lists of all quotes in which relevant individual codes appeared together, such as "nonviolent action" and "armed forces." This function in Atlas proved immensely helpful in the writing stage as I was able simply to request the software to provide me with all notes relevant to a given concept. Rather than being forced to go back to the books, chapters, and articles used as secondary sources, I could work almost exclusively with my own notes, a fact that significantly contributed to a more systematic writing process than would otherwise have been possible.

A few words should be said about the case selection and periodization of the project. Iran was chosen as an appropriate case by virtue of having been identified in the literature as the world's first nonviolent revolution.[12] As a signal case, the Iranian Revolution is particularly suitable since the revolutionaries did not have the benefit of having witnessed similar revolutions elsewhere. This fact makes "method diffusion" a non-factor and contributes to the "purity" of the Iranian case. Although selecting on the dependent variable is demonized in many other methodological traditions, comparative and historical sociology not only consider the practice permissible, but at many times unavoidable and even desirable. Working by definition with only a limited number of cases, random selection is not beneficial for theory-construction in comparative history. Instead, careful case selection may allow the researcher to more directly identify key causal factors. Furthermore, much has been written on the Iranian Revolution in English, which somewhat reduces the problem of language skill limitation.

Finally, on the issue of periodization, my dissertation limits the time period under investigation to approximately the 90 years leading up to the Iranian Revolution and considers the Tobacco Movement of 1891 to be the earliest theoretically relevant event. I have opted to use this periodization for two reasons. First, the Tobacco Movement has been identified in the literature as the advent of large-scale popular opposition to the Iranian state. Second, the event was explicitly targeting not only the Iranian government, but also the plight of foreign influence (Abrahamian 1982; 2009; Foran 1993a). As the

[12] Goodwin (2001), Goldstone (2003), and Schock (2005) have all identified the Iranian Revolution as the world's first nonviolent revolution.

aim of the study is to understand a particular instance of popular opposition to the state, and because my theoretical framework emphasizes the international context and movement strategy as the main causal factors of nonviolent revolutions, the Tobacco movement seems like a natural starting point. Of course, as with all comparative-historical projects, other scholars might have opted for a different periodization, but I feel, based on the aim and proposed framework of this dissertation, that the starting point selected is appropriate.

Looking ahead

Following this brief introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the relevant academic literatures on revolutions, social movements, and nonviolent action in order to ground the project firmly in the existing scholarship. As the phenomenon under examination – nonviolent revolutions – can be conceived of as a hybrid of revolutions and nonviolent social movements, the three literatures identified are all likely to contain insights crucial to the study at hand. Furthermore, engagement with the existing scholarship is particularly important in studies that seek to contribute theoretically to ongoing academic debates.

Chapter 3 begins to analyze the effects of the U.S.-Iranian relationship by examining its impact on various opposition groups. The chapter seeks to understand why the types of revolutionaries that had been dominant players in previous revolutions throughout the world were unable to secure leadership positions in the Iranian

Revolution. I argue that the closeness of U.S.-Iranian relations made it unnecessary for the shah to seek domestic allies, which transformed all other political actors into little more than competitors. Furthermore, by labeling many of them "collectivist organizations," i.e. communists, the shah was able to repress such groups successfully and ruthlessly in the structural context of the Cold War. Interestingly however, some groups benefited from the shah's friendship with Washington, as Iranian students gained ready access to American universities as a result of the close ties between the Iranian and American governments. As we shall see, once in the U.S. the students combined their academic ventures with lobbying activities aimed at turning the world against the shah and his government.

In Chapter 4, I examine Khomeini's strategic use of religious symbols and narratives to frame the opposition and its tactics. I argue that by drawing on Iranian and Shi'i traditions, Khomeini was able to motivate his followers to embrace nonviolent methods in the face of armed repression. The chapter also examines the process through which the Shi'i clergy and the traditional merchant class became revolutionarily inclined as a result of the shah's Westernization program and eventually assumed leadership of the movement. Finally, I analyze the organizational capacities provided by Iran's mosque network, a pre-existing structure that provided the revolutionary movement with infrastructural strength.

Chapter 5 continues the exploration of the international context initiated in Chapter 3 by tracing the development of the U.S.-Iranian relationship over the near 40 years leading up to the revolution. The chapter shows that as the shah's status was

transformed from client to ally, liberal-democratic expectations on him increased and eventually trapped him in what I am calling an iron cage of liberalism. The chapter also examines the role the abroad-based opposition, especially students, played in problematizing the shah's close relationship with Washington. By reaching out to human rights groups and the international mass media the students managed to drag the world, and the United States in particular, into the conflict.

Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on the actual revolution and how the opposition exploited the ICL by utilizing nonviolent tactics that were difficult for the shah to counter. I posit that the opposition intentionally made their revolution an international event in order to prevent both U.S. and Iranian military interventions. The chapter thus emphasizes the role revolutionary strategy played in the Iranian Revolution. Against the backdrop of the ICL, nonviolent tactics became nearly impossible for the shah to repress and made it problematic for Carter to extend the type of support the king had gotten used to in his dealing with previous presidents.

From a bird's-eye perspective, Chapters 3 and 5 deal mainly with the international context while chapters 4 and 6 emphasize the role of revolutionary strategy. Nonetheless, each chapter contains elements of both structural and strategic explanations. This must necessarily be the case as one of the basic assumptions of this study is that structure and strategy are not mutually independent, but rather engage one another in an iterative relationship.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: REVOLUTIONS, MOVEMENTS, AND NONVIOLENT ACTION

As discussed in the previous chapter, the theoretical framework advocated by this dissertation mainly emphasizes the effect amicable international relations can have on authoritarian governments and the manner in which shrewd revolutionaries exploit the resulting opportunities for mobilization. This study constitutes one of the first attempts to analyze the causes and dynamics of nonviolent revolutions, and consequently there is not a substantial literature on the topic to benefit from. However, scholars have studied revolutions, social movements, and nonviolent action, and by drawing from relevant contributions in each of these fields it is possible for me to ground my study in previous research.

These three literatures are appropriate since my dissertation can be defined as a study of a particular *nonviolent revolutionary movement*. As such, contributions by scholars in the three fields should be able to inform my own theoretical thinking. This chapter therefore examines the three literatures in search of helpful conceptualizations and with the intent of identifying significant gaps that my study may be able to fill. I begin with a survey of four generations of revolution research (Goldstone 2001)[13]. Next, I examine three of the most influential approaches to social movement research. Finally, the more limited literature on nonviolent action will be discussed.

[13] For a book-length review of the revolution literature, see Kimmel (1990).

Revolutions

At least ever since Karl Marx asserted that the communist revolution was a historical inevitability, social scientist have been fascinated by the topic of revolutions. As with any other academic venture, the study has evolved and progressed through various phases. While it is not possible for me to review all of the scholarship that has been produced under the heading of revolutions, this section will provide a relatively brief overview of where that scholarship stands today.

Of particular significance is that nonviolent revolutions have received virtually no attention from revolution researchers. Although much progress has been made in the field as a whole, most scholars have failed to recognize the emergence of nonviolent revolutions. Nonetheless, from their general theories of revolutions one can often extract helpful insights, and when that is the case I will highlight those insights throughout the chapter.

At the few occasions when revolution scholars note the fact that some recent revolutions have been surprisingly nonviolent (Goldstone 2001; 2003; Foran 2005, Goodwin 2001; Goodwin & Green 2008), they make little effort to explain this variation in the nature of revolutions. The problem, I suspect, is that a limited familiarity with the scholarly literature on nonviolent action has made it difficult for scholars to even speak in the language of nonviolent social change. Often the best theoretical insights emerge from the cross-fertilization of relatively independent research strands. This is the contribution I hope my dissertation will make. By amending the revolution literature with insights from

nonviolent action researchers, I expect to generate a theoretical framework that can begin to explain the emergence of nonviolent revolutions.

In organizing this section, I follow Goldstone's (1982; 2001) division of the literature into four distinct generations of revolution theory.[14] The first generation of scholars focused mainly on the different stages through which they believed all revolutions were required to progress. Second generation scholarship emphasized systemic and social psychological explanations, while third generation studies are characterized by a focus on structural causes and the importance of the state as an autonomous actor. Finally, fourth generation scholars have sought to include factors such as culture, ideology, gender, and agency into their causal frameworks.

First Generation Scholarship

The earliest systematic studies of revolution have been categorized as the work of "natural historians" (Skocpol 1979:33; Goldstone 1982:189). These scholars, represented mainly by Lyford Edwards (1927), George Pettee (1938), and Crane Brinton (1938), attempted to outline the distinct steps of the revolutionary processes in a few selected cases. Brinton's (1938) treatise of four revolutions identifies twelve stages through which revolutions occur. While many of the insights offered by the natural historians have turned out to be descriptively accurate and have inspired later scholars, the theories

[14] Other scholars have offered similar "timelines" of revolution research. See, for example, Kimmel (1990) and Foran (1993b).

themseves tell us little about the *causes* of revolutions. The concern for causes has since become the dominant preoccupation of revolution researchers, beginning with those of the second generation.

Second Generation Scholarship

Although sociologists such as Herbert Blumer (1939) and Neil Smelser (1962) discussed revolutions in their respective treatments of collective action, Moshiri (1991) identifies the mid-1960s and the early 1970 as the beginning of systematic sociological examinations of revolutions (11-12). Goldstone (1982) has correspondingly identified scholars of this era as second generation theorists. The theme uniting this generation of scholars is their advocacy of generally mono-causal explanations that focus on such broad concepts as development, modernization, or frustration.

An excellent example of second generation scholarship is Chalmer Johnson's (1964; 1966) value/systems approach. Johnson, strongly influenced by the structural functional school of sociology pioneered by Talcott Parsons in the 1950s, focused on social systems. For Johnson, revolutions were the result of a systemic disequilibrium. "Revolutions," he therefore claims, are

> Antisocial, testifying to the existence of extraordinary dissatisfaction among people with a particular form of society. They do not occur randomly, and they need not occur at all. Revolution can be rationally contemplated only in a society that is undergoing radical structural change and that is in need of still further change. (Johnson 1966:59-60)

The "extraordinary dissatisfaction" Johnson mentions is caused by the introduction of new values into the social system. These novel values, which can be

either endogenously or exogenously inspired, may upset the balance between social institutions and can in rare circumstance lead to revolutions. Since the social system can only be maintained as long as its members adhere to the salient values of that system, the presence of new values may cause systemic disequilibrium and in extreme cases, revolution might follow. However, the disequilibrated social system that is the consequence of abandoned or questioned values is merely the first step on the path to revolution.

"Power deflation," the second component of Johnson's theory, occurs when elites in an attempt to salvage the system resort to violence. Power deflation in turn leads to "loss of authority," which ensues if elites continue to rely on brute force. The last step on the path to revolution is an "accelerator." This term appears to be an emergency solution in Johnson's system as it can be constituted by almost anything that would bring about the revolution. In general the accelerator can be thought of as either a sudden insight in the collective mind of the members of the system, or a major political event that weakens the people's perception of the system's strength (Johnson 1966).

Another second generation theory of revolution was offered by Huntington (1968). According to Huntington, revolutions are most likely to occur in societies that have experienced economic progress, but where political development lags economic development. This type of political underdevelopment becomes a social strain when individuals become frustrated that their economic progress is not matched by a

corresponding political advancement.[15] Pointing to modernization processes as the most useful explanation of revolutionary causes, Huntington thus suggests that revolutions can be traced to political and institutional roots.

In Gurr's (1970) theory of "relative deprivation," the psychological and institutional/political causes of revolution identified by Johnson and Huntington respectively are combined in a powerful explanation.[16] "Relative deprivation," Gurr (1970) explains,

> is defined as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them. (13).

In other words, relative deprivation theory focuses on individuals' *perceptions* of their own material existence. The dissonance between the value expectations and value capabilities leads individuals to experience discontent. The development of discontent "is the primary causal sequence in political violence," and can lead to "the politicization of that discontent, and finally its actualization in violent action against political objects and actors," for example the outbreak of a revolution (Gurr 1970:12-13).

Gurr's theory of political violence relies on psychological explanations of collective action. If enough people become frustrated and discontent due to relative deprivation, a revolution is likely to occur. Gurr's approach to revolutions is informative, but has been found insufficient to fully explain political violence. Furthermore, for the

[15] Momayezi (1986) has sought to explain the Iranian Revolution in these terms.
[16] Gurr appears to be intellectually indebted to Davies (1962) and his notion of a "reversed J-curve." Both Davies and Gurr, in turn, borrowed heavily from the insights of Tocqueville (1955).

purposes of this essay, his framework focuses specifically on political violence, which is problematic for a study of nonviolent revolutions.

While second generation theories of revolutions have been found insufficient to explain revolutionary outbreaks, several useful insights can be benefitted from. For example, Johnson's focus on values is relevant to the Iranian Revolution as much of Khomeini's revolutionary rhetoric emphasized the fact that the shah had abandoned the tradition value system on which Iranian society was based. In a sense then this is a reversal of Johnson's prediction as Iranian's were not motivated by new values, but rather by the reintroduction of old one.

From Huntington we can adapt the emphasis on modernization. As I will show in Chapter 4, the main source of discontent among the Shi'i clergy and the merchant class was the shah's twin policies of industrialization and secularization, a development that can be described simply as modernization. However, the process of modernization did not have revolutionary effects in Iran for the reasons Huntington predicts, but rather because it challenged the existing status quo and alienated the only two autonomous social classes in Iranian society. Nonetheless, it would be foolish to assert that the shah's modernization program was not a partial cause of discontent in Iran.

Finally, Gurr's frustration-aggression scheme can also be applied to the Iranian Revolution, but not quite in the manner Gurr would recommend. Iranians were frustrated by the shah's regime, but probably not for relative deprivation reasons. Nonetheless, the social psychological scheme proposed by Gurr might explain why Iranian's took to the

streets in such large numbers. Still, Gurr's theory is probably the least helpful of the three reviewed in this section, partly because of its heavy emphasis on violence.

Taken together, second generation scholarship is helpful because it emphasizes the individual's motivation for participating in revolutions – human beings, these scholars seem to suggest, respond to discontent by challenging the state. As we shall see, third generation scholars tried to keep human agency out of their theories by emphasizing structure over agency. While the international structural context is central to my own analytical framework, it seems prudent to follow the lead of second generation theorists and leave enough room for human action in a theory of revolutions. Still, as Skocpol (1979) points out, discontent, while important, can never be the sufficient and necessary condition for revolution to occur.

Third Generation Scholarship

Third generation revolution scholarship is characterized by its Marxist tendencies, such as the emphasis on social structures and class relations. In *From Mobilization to Revolution,* Tilly (1978) contends that revolutions cannot occur regardless of how frustrated the population is unless the ability to organize is present.[17] The link between movements and revolutions here occurs for the first time, and it is a link that has been revived by more contemporary scholars of revolutions (Goldstone, 2001; Goodwin 2001; Foran 2005). In order to explain the causes of revolutions Tilly utilizes two models, the

[17] See the discussion of resource mobilization theory below.

polity model and the mobilization model. The polity model describes the relationships between groups vying for power. The components of this model include the government ("an organization which controls the principal concentrated means of coercion within the population"), contenders (actors interested in gaining access to the government, divided into members and challengers), polity (the arena in which the government and the contenders compete for power), and coalition ("a tendency of a set of contenders and/or governments to coordinate their collective action"). Members (insiders) and challengers (outsiders) do what they can to influence the government, sometimes by forming coalitions with other contenders (Tilly 1978:52-53).

The mobilization model on the other hand describes the way in which "interest" is turned into "collective action" (Tilly 1978:54-55). Groups of members and contenders mobilize according to their interests, which sometimes lead to a "revolutionary situation" in which the polity is occupied by "multiple sovereignties," a situation in which no single group can make an uncontested claim on the government (Tilly 1978:190-3). Tilly then proceeds to establish three "proximate causes of revolutionary situations:"

> 1. The appearance of contenders, or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusive alternative claims to the control over the government which is currently exerted by the members of the polity;
> 2. Commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the subject population;
> 3. Incapacity or unwillingness of the agents of the government to suppress the alternative coalition and/or the commitment to its claims. (Tilly 1978:200)

Revolutions, then, are the results of mass mobilization and an ensuing power struggle.

Skocpol (1979) wrote what must be the most cited scholarly work on revolutions. Her treatment of the "great revolutions" of France, Russia, and China attempts to widen

our understanding of revolutions by shifting the focus of attention towards global processes, and by "bringing the state back in." To Skocpol, the state is not an arena as perceived by Tilly in his polity model, but instead an autonomous actor with its own motivations. Furthermore, states do not exist in a vacuum, but are rather engaged in a competitive relationship with other states.

Skocpol (1979) identifies her own view of revolution as "a structural perspective" (14-15). It is not frustrated individuals, she argues, who bring about revolutions, but rather structural relationships between and within states. By omitting agency from her model, Skocpol hopes to provide a more robust theory of revolution.[18] She identifies three necessary conditions that must be present for social revolutions to occur, namely international pressure, tension between elites and the state (usually the monarchy), and peasant rebellions. Together these three components create a state crisis that is likely to bring about revolution.

Skocpol's work is arguably the most influential contribution to the study of revolution that has emerged onto the scene since Marx's writings on the topic. However, her theory has been heavily criticized for various reasons.[19] For example, by omitting such factors as agency and ideology from the narrative, critics have argued, her theory becomes overly deterministic. Other dissenters may complain that her theory only applies to the three cases covered in the study (France, Russia, and China) and has little relevance for studies of later revolutions. This line of criticism is however rather futile as

[18] To further emphasize the irrelevance of agency, Skocpol cites Wendell Phillips's declaration that "revolutions are not made; they come" (Skocpol 1979:17).
[19] See especially Sewell (1985) and Selbin (1997).

Skocpol makes that very argument in the conclusion of her book. Being a careful comparative-historical sociologist she points out that her theory cannot be generalized beyond the cases addressed in the book. While most contemporary scholars disagree with Skocpol in one way or another, almost all of them have found her structural approach to offer at least partial answers and useful starting points. Recent studies have attempted to combine structural explanations of revolutionary causes by adding consideration for agency, culture, and ideology to the theoretical mix.

I have here focused on the two most famous and, arguably, most influential revolution theorists of the third generations. Nonetheless, several other important contributions based on structural arguments have been made, including those of Moore (1966), Eisenstadt (1978), and Wickham-Crowley (1992). One of the most impressive third generation contributions was made by Goldstone (1991), whose "demographic/structural model of state breakdown" provided revolution scholars with a novel and highly useful perspective (27). Goldstone brings our attention to the role played by demographic changes in the revolution process by pointing to the mobilization-mitigating effects waves of population increase may have on a society.

Third generation scholarship has been very influential in my own thinking about revolutions. Skocpol was among the first to emphasize the role of the international context, and although I disagree with her focus on hostile international relations, her impact on me can hardly be overstated. At the same time, Skocpol's strict adherence to a "nonvoluntarist" view of revolutions is problematic. True, popular discontent is not a sufficient cause of revolution, but is there really no place for human agency in

revolutionary theory? Does ideology not matter the least bit? On these points it seems useful to be more nuanced, and perhaps incorporate some of the insights from other third generation scholars, such as Tilly. By combining Skocpol's notion of an autonomous state with Tilly's idea that revolutions are in fact power struggles between different social groups, we may get closer to an accurate description of what a revolution is.

Fourth Generation Scholarship

In recent years, scholars such as Colburn (1994), Emirbayer (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1996) Foran (1993a; 1996; 1999; 2005), Goodwin (1994; 2001; 2003), Katz (1997), Keddie (1995), Moghadam (1997), and Selbin (1997, 1999, 2009) have taken the study of revolutions a step further. In what Goldstone (2001) refers to as the burgeoning fourth generation, scholars have paid closer attention to "revolutionary leadership, ideology, and identification, along with structural factors such as international pressure and elite conflicts" (139). Heeding Tilly's (1978) call to view revolutions as intimately connected with social movements, Goldstone (2001) has suggested that we also examine the revolutionary effects of such dimensions as networks, ideology, leadership, and gender (152-160).

Goodwin's (2001) examination of twelve revolutionary movements on three continents is one the most important recent contributions to the study of revolution. Goodwin incorporates considerations of ideology and movement mobilizing into what is a highly structural theory. It is the nature of the state, Goodwin asserts, that causes

revolutionary movements to emerge. Specifically, he argues that regimes characterized as repressive and infrastructurally weak are likely to incubate revolutionary movements. Goodwin calls his model "state-centered" since a government contributes to the "creation" of its enemies by virtue of its characteristics. Goodwin's work has been hailed as an essential contribution to the field, and, rather uniquely, he dedicates a significant portion of his study on the nonviolent revolutions of Eastern Europe in 1989.

Among other things, Goodwin's model has been praised for its parsimony. In contrast, Foran's (2005) broad study of third world revolutions offers a more multi-faceted hypothesis. Foran identifies five factors that, when occurring simultaneously, result in *social* revolutions. However, Foran also suggests that when one or several of the five components – dependent development, specific characteristics of the state, political cultures of opposition, economic downturn, world-systemic openings – are missing from the equation, a different outcome is observed, such as a political revolution or an attempted one. Using Boolean algebra and fuzzy set logic, Foran offers the student of revolution an interesting and potentially useful perspective. However, like most revolution scholars Foran pays little attention to the nonviolent nature of several of his cases.

Another interesting and important contribution of the fourth generation has been offered by Eric Selbin (1997), who has encouraged others to bring agency back in. Exciting shifts like these suggests that the study of revolution is still a lively enterprise. However, as Goldstone (2001) has explained, only by combining structural explanations with analyses of culture, ideology, and agency can we hope to advance the study of

revolutions, and I consider my own theoretical model of the sources of nonviolent revolution to be an example of fourth generation scholarship. I have benefited significantly from the insights of especially Goodwin and Foran. My notion of the iron cage of liberalism was influenced by Goodwin's state centered approach, although my emphasis on the state has more to do with its relation to other states. Similarly, Foran's conceptualization of "political cultures of opposition" has helped me understand the link between Khomeini's revolutionary version of Shi'i Islam and the commitment to nonviolent tactics.

In summary, my theoretical model of nonviolent revolutions is inspired by insights from scholars of the second, third, and fourth generations. By combining elements of social psychology, modernization, structural conditions, as well as culture and agency, we may be able to understand the sudden emergence of nonviolent revolutions in the late 20th century. However, for a more accurate understanding of nonviolent revolutionary movements it is necessary to also incorporate insights from the social movement literature.

Social Movements

The social movement literature does of course have much in common with the literature on revolution. Indicative of this statement is the fact that many of the same scholars appear as significant contributors in both fields. However, while both phenomena are social processes that can be classified as collective behavior/action, relatively little has been said about the link between the two. I contend that especially in

the case of nonviolent revolutions, this link between movement and revolution is crucial. In this section I survey some of the most important contributions made to the study of social movements. The review examines in chronological order three approaches to social movement scholarship: resource mobilization theory, the political process model, and frame alignment processes. I also briefly discuss more recent developments in social movement research.

Although Blumer (1939) and Smelser (1962) offered theories about social movements, their explanations were more general in nature as they attempted to explain collective behavior as a whole. Blumer and Smelser viewed social movements as irrational phenomena that could be explained psychologically by identifying the social strain that caused popular unrest.[20] Later scholars have (perhaps prematurely) largely dismissed this claim by noting that strains in society are always present, and since we do not always observe social movements as a result of such strains, social psychology cannot be the sufficient cause why movements emerge.

Resource Mobilization Theory

John McCarthy and Meyer Zald (1973; 1977) argue that it is not moral outrage or any other emotional response to frustration that is responsible for the emergence of a social movement, but rather intentional and rational efforts to build a movement. A movement, they assert can only sustain itself if it is able to generate enough resources,

[20] Compare to second generation revolution scholars.

both human and material, to survive the external pressures it most likely will face. McCarthy and Zald's approach to social movements is perhaps most clearly distinguished from earlier work by their emphasis on the rational character of social movements. They suggest that actors make deliberate choices in the development of a movement and do not rely on the emotional responses of movement participants.

The resource mobilization perspective takes a very pragmatic and entrepreneurial approach to social movements. A social movement is defined as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (McCarthy & Zald 1977:1217-8). Unlike some more structurally inclined sociologists, McCarthy and Zald view agency as essential to a movement's success. Only by generating enough support and resources can the movement hope to make its "opinions and beliefs" salient to the larger population. Ingenuity and vision thus becomes important qualities for movement organizers to possess.

While McCarthy and Zald's focus on the importance of resource mobilization is helpful for the study at hand, their theory does not explain why and how movements originate. In an attempt to address that question, Doug McAdam formulated his political process explanation of social movements, an explanation that appears to be heavily influenced by Tilly's polity model. It is to McAdam and the political process model we now turn our attention.

The Political Process Model

McAdam (1982) proposes a view of social movements that seeks to tear down the wall that he argues has wrongly distinguished social movements from other political processes.[21] This inaccurate distinction, McAdam claims, is based on a pluralist understanding of power in democratic societies, which assumes that all members of society has, at least potentially, equal access to power. Social movements, which oftentimes operate outside the bounds of traditional politics, are thus seen as deviant displays of political action. However, if the pluralist model of power is abandoned we can clearly see that a social movement is simply another actor on the political scene of any given society. Once this realization has been reached, McAdam seems to suggest, movements are no longer seen as irrational outpourings of emotions in response to social strain. Rather, and this resonates well with McCarthy and Zald, social movements are rational, political processes with well articulated goals and plans of operation.

As later collaborations have shown (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988), McAdam does not disagree with the resource mobilization model advanced by McCarthy and Zald. Nevertheless, he notes that the mobilization of resources (he refers to it as "indigenous organizational strength") is not sufficient for a social movement to emerge. While the mobilization of people and their material resources is an important component of movement emergence, McAdam (1982) shows that "expanding political opportunities," as well as "cognitive liberation" must occur. The term "expanding

[21] See also Tilly (1995).

political opportunities" refers to structural changes within the state and the elites, which allows for movements to gain ground. An example of this might be the friction between ruling groups over certain policies or political decisions. Cognitive liberation, on the other hand, is the component of movement emergence that addresses the fact that there must be a psychological shift in the potential movement members' perception of reality. A sudden epiphany needs to occur at which time the individual realizes that the desired change is achievable.

Interestingly, McAdam's model includes economic (indigenous organizational strength), structural (expanding political opportunities), and psychological (cognitive liberation) elements. What is missing, according to scholars like David Snow, is the cultural component of social movements.[22] To address this inefficiency we therefore first turn to Snow's concept of ideological frames, after which I will offer a very brief summary of some of the more contemporary research on social movements.

Frame Alignment Processes

Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford (1986) have showed that a social movement organization relies on its ability to frame issues when attempting to attract new members. Snow's objective is to link social psychological factors and structural elements together in order to construct a more coherent theory of social movement mobilization, and they do so by introducing the concept of *frame alignment*. "By frame

[22] For a critique of political opportunity structures, see Goldstone (2004).

alignment, we refer to the linkage of individual and SMO interpretative orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals and ideology are congruent and complimentary" (Snow et al. 1986:464). In other words, Snow is concerned with the perceptual relationship between the movement organization and the individual member, and considers overlapping understandings of the goals and ideologies of the organization and its members crucial to the expansion of the movement organization, as well as to its basic survival.

In developing their argument, Snow and colleagues (1986) introduce four different frame alignment processes. "Frame bridging," the most common and important of the four processes of frame alignment, refers to "the linkage of two or more congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (467). Here individuals (or organizations) are made aware of an organization that shares the concerns of the individual or the outside organization. The other three processes, "frame amplification," "frame extension," and "frame transformation," reflect similar processes in which the ideologies and goals of an SMO are aligned in ways that allows the organization to attract new constituents. Theories of framing become important in explaining nonviolent revolutions as the might help shed light on why nonviolence was chosen over violence. Mansoor Moaddel's (1992) notion of "ideology as episodic discourse" in the Iranian Revolution seems to be very closely related to the idea of frame alignment processes.

Recent Developments

More recently, scholars of social movements have paid closer attention to such issues as culture, ideology, emotion, identity, and gender (Jasper, 1997; Melucci, 1996; Erickson-Nepstad, 2004; Taylor, 1996; Young, 2002). Michael Young's (2007) emphasis on the role of individual's moral and religious motivations in social movements is especially pertinent to the study of nonviolent revolutions. While this recent diversification brings many new and interesting topics and explanations to the scene, it might be too early to accurately assess the lasting relevance of some of these contributions. Nonetheless, many of these dimensions will be taken into consideration in the study at hand.

The social movement literature proves helpful to my study for a few reasons. First, since the Iranian Revolution assumed the appearance of massive social movement it is important to understand how it was possible for leaders to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people, and in some instances millions. While revolution scholars are largely silent on the question of mobilization, the social movement literature is highly useful. Resource mobilization theory can help explain how the existing mosque network and other structures mitigated some of the problems normally faced by movement organizers. For example, mosques and other religious meeting places provided activists with places in which they could gather relatively safely. Also, a resource mobilization perspective on the Iranian Revolution might shed light on how bazaar merchants helped sustain the movement by providing striking workers with money.

Similarly, the iron cage of liberalism is a specific type of political opportunity and thus draws significantly from McAdam's writings. No matter how well organized the opposition may have been, it was the structural opening in the shape of an ICL that made the nonviolent revolution possible Finally, frame analysis helps us understand how Khomeini was able to portray nonviolent resistance to the shah as a religious duty.

In short, the movement literature is essential to this study as it compliments revolution theory. My entire framework is based on the idea that nonviolent revolutions, including the Iranian one, are in fact nonviolent revolutionary movements. By grounding myself in both the relevant revolution and movement literatures the theoretical framework presented in this dissertation should be significantly improved.

Nonviolent Action

While there is no shortage of scholarly literature on the topics of social movements and revolutions, the same cannot be said of nonviolent action. Although a number of studies have attempted to explain the mechanisms of nonviolent social change, virtually no researcher has examined the factors causing nonviolent action. The most common preoccupation of scholars of nonviolent action have until now been to explain success and failure of nonviolent campaigns by closely evaluating the tactics and strategies employed by nonviolent movements.[23] In this study I would therefore like to go one step further by discovering why some revolutions not only succeed nonviolently, but

[23] This is particularly true of studies generated by scholars with strategic and pragmatic views of nonviolent action.

why they turned to be nonviolent in the first place. We already know a substantial amount of what is required for nonviolent action to be successful, but we know almost nothing about why such action emerges in the first place.

The existing nonviolent action literature can be meaningfully divided into two different bodies of literature, practical nonviolence and nonviolent action theory. The first consists of mostly non-academic sources. Here one would place writings by nonviolent activists, philosophers, and movement leaders. The second body contains the research on nonviolent action conducted by scholars, mainly represented by empirical case studies. In this section I will briefly review the two bodies, beginning with the practical, non-academic literature.

Practical Nonviolence

The obvious starting point here is the writings by and about Mohandas Gandhi (L. Fischer 1950; Gandhi 1957; 2002; Iyer 1993; Jack 1956; Kurtz 2006; Payne 1969; Prabhu & Rao 1967). The great Mahatma of India began his nonviolent activist career in South Africa as a young, very shy, lawyer. Few would have guessed that the timid youngster would eventually lead India, and in some sense the rest of the colonized world, to national freedom. It would however be a mistake to assume that nonviolence was born with Gandhi. In his writings, Gandhi (1957; 2002) repeatedly emphasizes the influence of other sources on his conception of nonviolence, citing the Sermon on the Mount, Thoreau (2002/1849), Tolstoy (1984/1894), and Ruskin (1912). Gandhi's writings provide us with

some theoretical knowledge about nonviolent action, but Gandhi was primarily a political and spiritual leader. His writings about nonviolence are therefore mainly practical pieces of advice, but can also be viewed as theoretically informative from a scholarly perspective. As we will see in the next section, other writers have taken it upon themselves to organize Gandhi's writings into theoretical frameworks.[24]

While Gandhi was the first and perhaps most important nonviolent activist to write on the topic of nonviolent action, his path has been treaded by such proponents of nonviolence as Martin Luther King, Jr., the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Vaclav Havel, Oscar Romero, Aung San Suu Kyi, Desmond Tutu, and many others. These individual tend to boast a moral commitment to nonviolence, and their type of nonviolence is referred to in the literature as "principled nonviolence." The idea here is that nonviolence is practiced because of its inherent moral worth, and that the outcome of the struggle, while important, is of secondary concern. Together these activists and their chroniclers have produced a significant body of literature on the practical aspects of nonviolent action (Beer, 1999; Dennis, Golden, & Wright, 2000; Hanh, 1987; Havel, 1990; King, 1968; 1991; Tutu, 1999). The contributions of these leaders and writers should not be taken lightly as the literature on practical nonviolence provides us with many insights that would easily be overlooked by more scholarly examinations of nonviolent action. Yet, from a nonviolent movement perspective its academic counterpart is still more significant.

[24] Among the most important contributors here are Bondurant (1965) and Sharp (1973; 2005).

Nonviolent Action Theory

While certainly not the most well-examined of social phenomena, nonviolent action has received some attention from researchers. Sharp (1973; 2005) is the earliest and best known contributor to nonviolent action theory. Taking a pragmatic stance, Sharp argues that nonviolent action is effective not because it is morally superior to violence, but because it is compatible with the way power works in the late 20th century and beyond. Power, he suggests, should not be thought of as something a dictator can "take" from his subjects, but rather as a gift that must be "given" by the people. If a population collectively decides to withhold cooperation with its government and manages to so successfully, there may be little a regime can do to reassert itself and regain power.[25]

According to Sharp, any given society consists of pillars of support upon which the regime depends. If mass action can convince members of those pillars to withdraw their cooperation with the regime, that regime will experience significant difficulties. The way to accomplish this rupture is through carefully devised strategic plans. By planning a nonviolent campaign that weakens several pillars of support (civil society, labor unions, churches) a repressive regime can be brought down. Large numbers of movement participants is a necessary component, but the most important factor is the carefully devised plan. Ideally such a plan should contain many different methods of nonviolent resistance from all three categories of tactics in Sharp's typology of 198 different nonviolent tactics.

[25] Sharp's theory of power borrows heavily from Gandhi (2002), Simmel (1971) and Arendt (1969).

The project begun by Sharp has been carried on by Ackerman (Ackerman & Kruegler 1994; Ackerman & Duvall 2000). Taking an extremely policy oriented and much less scholarly approach to strategic nonviolent conflict, Ackerman and his co-authors places a heavy, and perhaps unhealthy, emphasis on strategic considerations. According to this perspective, nonviolent action can work under virtually any conditions, as long as a carefully devised strategy has been formulated. Ackerman and Kruegler's (1994) identification of 12 principles of nonviolent conflicts that are present in all of the cases they investigate serve as a good illustration of the mindset behind many strategy-oriented studies of nonviolent action.

While strategic conceptions and analyses of nonviolent action are very helpful and an important contribution to the study of nonviolence as a political and social phenomenon, it is apparent to sociologists that something is lacking from this point of view. What is missing from the strategic conceptions of Sharp, Ackerman and Kruegler, and many others, is therefore a greater focus on social structures. It is hardly the case that nonviolent action works equally well everywhere, as examples in China and Burma, to mention a few, clearly suggest. To argue that strategic shortcomings are the most important reason why these campaigns failed is naïve at best.

Some scholars of strategic nonviolent conflict have however noted that social structures play an important role for the outcome of nonviolent movements. As the most sophisticated of such scholars, Zunes and Kurtz (1999) state in their introduction that nonviolent action is indeed a strategic choice made by activists, but the decision to opt for nonviolence is a result of the social context in which the activists find themselves.

Similarly, but less acutely, Schock (2005) notes that while the development of a nonviolent strategy is essential to the successful outcome of a movement, such a movement will only come about under certain favorable conditions. However, those conditions are fairly broad, and it is clear that Schock considers strategy and agency more crucial to the success of nonviolent movement than favorable social structures.

To sum up, most scholars of nonviolent actions advocate a strategic approach to conducting nonviolent movements. Nonviolent action is a game that is governed by the same principle as wars and more violent types of movements. To achieve the desired goals, minute preparations are necessary. Much of the literature has focused on what strategies various movements used to achieve success, with much less focus on the actions of their opponents, and, more importantly, the role played by the international community. While the importance of social structures is under-theorized, the assumption appears to be that good strategy will shape the social structures in way favorable to the movement.

Many researchers of nonviolent action rely on the use of case studies for their theory building. This is true both for Sharp and his disciples, as well as for scholars who are more sympathetic to the principled aspect of nonviolent action. Joan Bondurant (1965) and Johan Galtung (1965) may constitute rare exceptions to this rule as their work in more structural and theoretical in nature. Scholars that have made significant contributions to the study of nonviolent action include Helvey (2004) Kurtz (1994), Martin (2003), Oppenheimer (1965), Ritter (2008), Ritter and Pieper (2008), Schell

(2003), Weber (2001), and Zunes (1997; 1999a; 1999b; Zunes, Kurtz, & Asher 1999), most of whom rely on comparative case studies.

By combining the nonviolent action literature with the analytical frameworks developed by revolution and movement scholars, I hope to be able to construct a plausible theory of nonviolent revolutions that may explain why the Iranian Revolution turned out to be nonviolent. The most important contribution of the nonviolent action literature is indeed its focus on strategy. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will deal extensively with the issue of revolutionary strategy, although the concept remains important throughout the entire dissertation.

As the literature above is meant to indicate, ample writings have been produced on the topics of revolution, social movements, and nonviolent action. However, the three sets of literature have been kept relatively separated from one another. In this dissertation I seek to combine them in order to begin the construction a well-informed and empirically grounded theory of nonviolent revolutions.

Perhaps the most sophisticated attempt at a systematic examination of nonviolent revolution has been offered by Zunes (1994). In a timely and well formulated article, Zunes points out that revolutions in the late 1980s and early 1990s tend to be significantly more nonviolent in nature than their predecessors. Seeking to explain this shift, Zunes identifies three causes behind this development:

1. The dramatically-increased costs from counter-insurgency warfare
2. An increased recognition that unarmed methods are more effective
3. A growing concern over the impact of militarism on post-revolutionary society which harms efforts at unity, democracy, independence, and development. (Zunes 1994:406-420)

While I do not believe that this list is neither sufficient nor exhaustive, it does provide students of nonviolent revolutions with an excellent starting point. One aim of the following chapters is to expand on Zunes' early work.

3. A UNIQUE REVOLUTION: EXPLAINING THE ABSENCE OF THE "EXPECTED" REVOLUTIONARIES

Although its reliance on nonviolent methods was arguably the Iranian Revolution's most important legacy passed on to future revolutionaries, it was by no means what made the revolution unique in the minds of its contemporary commentators. The Iranian Revolution was the world's first, and so far only, revolution in which religion played a dominant role both in the process and the outcome of the revolutionary process. In all other cases of revolutions, the victors have been categorized on the basis of their political, not religious, convictions. Furthermore, previous and subsequent revolutions have almost exclusively been spearheaded by politicians, guerrilla fighters, and students. Although these groups participated in the revolutionary process in Iran, none of them were able to lead the revolution, nor did they have the ability to assume meaningful roles in the post-revolutionary reconstruction of Iranian society. The focus of this chapter is therefore theoretically different from that of the other three chapters. Instead of framing the chapter's puzzle in terms of explaining the *presence* of a certain outcome, this chapter seeks to understand the *absence* of an expected outcome, namely why those groups who in other revolutions had emerged as leaders and victors of their movements failed to do so in Iran. In short, why wasn't the Iranian Revolution a secular revolution like all other in history?

The chapter will examine the fate of the three potentially revolutionary groups – the political opposition, the guerrillas, and the abroad-based student movement – that

issued their own challenges against the shah's regime but eventually had to cede leadership to the *ulama*, the Shi´i clergy, under Khomeini's stewardship. One of these groups, the guerrillas, advocated violent tactics against the regimes, while the other two preferred institutionalized channels. For each of the unsuccessful groups analyzed I will ask two central and interrelated questions: 1) what prevented the group from seizing leadership of the revolutionary movement, and 2) why did the group refrain from using violence against the state?[26]

In line with the theme of this dissertation, I argue that examining the international context is essential to discovering the answers to both questions. Of course, an emphasis on the international context surrounding revolutions is not a novel contribution of this essay. At least ever since Skocpol (1979) advised her peers of the importance of military rivalry and economic competition between powerful states, scholars of revolutions have been sensitive to the role played by the global environment.[27] But while the international context has gained plentiful attention following Skocpol's call to action, most scholars have not ventured far from her emphasis on international hostility. Breaking with this tradition, I contend that the crucial international element of the Iranian Revolutions was the nation's amicable relations with a superpower, the United States of America. Hence, I argue that the reason violence never became a viable option in Iran, as opposed to in many other parts of the Third World, can be found in the dynamics of its relationships with the U.S. Similarly, the fact that none of the groups listed above were able to assume

[26] This question is not asked of those groups that did resort to violence, i.e. the guerrillas.
[27] See for example the theoretical contributions of Goldstone (1991), Goodwin (2001) Foran (2005), and DeFronzo (2007)

leadership of the movement can also, at least in part, be explained by American involvement in Iranian politics.

Here it is important to point out that the emphasis on American engagement should not be confused with a U.S.-centric theory of revolutions. Rather, it is the particular role played by the U.S., a role that has since been played by others, that is central to this theoretical perspective. In other words, the American actions that contributed to the dynamics of the revolutionary processes are not American per se, but are rather associated with the role of powerful patron ally.[28] This patron-client relationship between the U.S. and Iran will be analyzed in depth in Chapter 5. Here the focus will be on the consequences that relationship had on the three types of opposition groups, beginning with Iran's political opposition.

The Political Opposition

Although it is difficult to establish exactly when a political opposition came into existence in Iranian politics, for our purposes the genesis of such a movement will be coupled with the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. That movement, which sought to introduce into the Iranian polity a constitution of the kind that at the time was associated with the more developed nations of the West, has received significant and detailed attention.[29] In short, the movement, which was a continuation of the 1891 Tobacco

[28] Relatedly, Goldstone (1986) has examined the role played by superpowers in revolutions.
[29] For accounts of the Constitutional Revolution, see Abrahamian (1982; 1985a), Afary (1994), Amjad (1989), Amuzegar (1991), Arjomand (1988), Bakhash (1991) Foran (1993; 1994a), Keddie (1983b; 2003) Milani (1988) Moaddel (1994), Poulson (2005), and Stempel (1981).

Rebellion,[30] sought to limit the executive powers of the Qajar shahs and curb the pseudo-imperialist policies of the British and the Russians.

The Constitutional Revolution was the second challenge to the Iranian monarchy in less than twenty years. The Tobacco Rebellion a decade and a half earlier had fought a concession given by the monarchy to a British merchant which would have given him and his company a monopoly on the production and trade of Iranian tobacco both on the Iranian and international markets. Members of the *ulama* (the Shi´i clergy) and the *bazaaris* (the traditional Iranian merchants and shopkeepers) joined together to successfully fight the concession. The coalition's victory further fueled its imagination and fifteen years later Iranians once again stood up to uncurbed monarchical power and foreign intrusions. This time, however, the battle was more ideological and less in response to any particular royal policy.

"The Constitutional Revolution," one of the foremost historians of Iran writes, "was a movement of the bazaar. Its rank-and-file came from the guilds, its financial backing from the merchants, its moral support from the religious authorities, and its theorising from a few westernized intellectuals" (Abrahamian 1985a:128). These "westernized intellectuals" had been educated at European schools and had returned to Iran inspired by the perceived political freedoms of the West. The epicenter of this fascination for Western politics was the constitution. Nikkie Keddie, perhaps the only Western historian of Iran whose reputation equals that of Abrahamian explains the rationale of the movement:

[30] The religious opposition and the Tobacco Rebellion will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.

> The intent of the constitution was to set up a true constitutional monarchy in which Majles[31] approval was required on all important matters, including foreign loans and treaties, and in which ministers would be responsible to the Majles. Equality before the law and personal rights and freedoms, subject to a few limits, were also guaranteed, despite the protests of some ulama that members of minority religions should not have equal status with those of the state religion, Islam. (Keddie 2003:68)

While "personal rights and freedoms" were an important part of the constitutional effort, few commentators doubt that the true intention of the movement was indeed to limit the power of the monarchy and to restrict foreign access to Iranian markets. The Constitutional Revolution was a movement of the clergy-backed merchants, who were growing increasingly antagonized by the monarchy's preferential treatment of foreign investors. As one scholar succinctly puts it, "the Constitutional Revolution… was preoccupied with two interrelated goals: the destruction of internal dictatorship and the establishment of a truly sovereign country" (Siavoshi 1994:110).

Although the constitution strove to fill a real and practical purpose, its introduction into Iranian politics was also based on less tangible factors. Among Iranian intellectuals constitutions had come to be seen as the common denominator of successful Western states, an observation which led these intellectuals to exaggerate the role of constitutions. This heightened reverence for constitutions was reinforced when Japan, the only Asian country with a constitution, defeated Russia, the only Western power without one, in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 with the result that in Iran "treatises explaining constitutions and their virtues began to circulate, and news of Japanese victories was happily and rapidly spread" (Keddie 1983:586).

[31] The Majles is the Iranian parliament, "assembly" being the literal translation of the term.

Initially an apparent success, the Constitutional Revolution ultimately failed to accomplish most of its stated objectives. Nonviolent tactics, such as demonstrations, religious processions, and general strikes, had forced the monarchy to concede to the opposition certain concessions, but with the assistance of its British and Russian supporters, the Qajars, following a brief civil war, finally defeated the constitutionalists and shut down the recently created parliament in 1911 (Abrahamian 1982; Afary 1994; Foran 1994). These outcomes have caused Amuzegar (1991) to note that the movement "was not a revolution in the true sense, because the prevailing monarchic system and the incumbent dynasty remained intact. Political change was limited to power sharing between the shah and a new national consultative assembly" (17). Reiterating the same point other scholars have explained that "even during the so-called Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1911 reformers never spoke of revolution. It was years later that Iranian historians, influenced by Western, Turkish, and Russian scholarship, began referring to that movement as a revolution" (Milani 1988:19).

Revolutionary or not, Iran's Constitutional Revolution served an important function in Iran's political development as it helped normalize the notion of political opposition. The constitution itself remained largely symbolic for the next 70 years and was only sporadically used by opposition politicians to advocate that constitutional monarchy replace the current order, but the concrete creation of the Majles, however, gave the political opposition a life of its own. In other words, the establishment of a parliament transformed the concept of opposition politics from dream to reality. Despite the fact that the actual potency of the Majles was quite limited, with real power still

residing with the king, the establishment of a parliamentary system served to legitimize political activity.

While the Constitutional Revolution proved unable to bring about constitutional rule, it did indeed have lasting effects on the Iranian state. The Qajar dynasty never recovered from the blows the movement had dealt it, and ten years after the monarchy's defeat of the opposition it was overthrown in a 1921 military coup led by a young military officer by the name of Reza Khan. Khan began his climb to power by simply removing the institution of the monarchy, allowing opposition politicians to rule in its place, while Khan himself served as commander of the military. In 1925 Reza Khan, replacing his surname with the more noble-sounding Pahlavi, convinced political leaders to crown him king of Iran, thus establishing the Pahlavi dynasty with himself, Reza Shah, as its first and penultimate ruler (Abrahamian 1982; Keddie 1983).[32]

Opposition politicians, along with other influential social groups, initially greeted the nationalist Reza Shah as a liberator shattering the nation's historic bonds to Russia/the Soviet Union and Great Britain. However, "Reza Shah gradually lost his initial civilian support, and, failing to secure social foundations for his institutions, ruled without the assistance of an organized political party" (Abrahamian 1982:149). Instead of relying on the support of a political party, Reza Shah based his rule on three pillars of support: the army, a vast and modern bureaucracy, and "extensive court patronage" (Abrahamian 1982:149). Forfeiting the support of the politicians, and, perhaps in an even greater political blunder, that of the *ulama*, Reza Shah's rule became tenuous and only

[32] On the demise of the Iranian monarchy, please see Barthel (1983).

lasted for sixteen years. In 1941, in the midst of World War II, the Allies, concerned with the king's affinity for Hitler and Nazi Germany, forced him to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. During his short stint in power however, Reza Shah was able to continue the suppression of the secular opposition initiated by the Qajars. For example, Matin-asgari (2002) reports, "the Communist Party was crushed with the passing of a 1931 law that declared membership in 'collectivist' organizations punishable by three to ten years imprisonment" (22-3), and although the law was certainly written with the communists in mind, other inconvenient social elements could also be branded as "collectivist." Not surprisingly then, as Reza Shah exited the stage the communists returned to the same with more vigor than any other political group.

Political Opposition in the Era of Mohammad Reza Shah

During his time in power Reza Shah had managed to successfully suppress the opposition's activities. The more moderate political climate that had been fought for during the days of the Constitutional Revolution, and which to a limited degree had been achieved, vanished in the 1930s. Laws prohibiting Iranians from gathering politically had been effectively enforced but "the crowd returned with a vengeance after August 1941, when the Allied invasion crushed Reza Shah's army, forced him to abdicate in favour of his son, and freed the public of his absolutism" (Abrahamian 1985a:125). One of the political groups that most successfully reemerged from its forced political hiatus was the

communists, who in Iran formally organized as the Tudeh (masses) Party.[33] Milani (1988) describes the genesis of the Tudeh:

> In 1941, some friends and supporters of the deceased Taqi Arani, a German-educated Iranian Marxist who with fifty-two colleagues had been jailed by Reza Shah in the thirties, were freed from jail. With the encouragement and logistical support by the Russians, they subsequently formed the Tudeh party. Partly through the assistance of the Soviet Union and its troops which were still in Iran, the Tudeh quickly expanded its sphere of influence, especially in the areas close to Russian borders, and became the most organized and disciplined party of the period. (71)

With Soviet support the Tudeh soon established itself as a "Communist Party with an effective machinery for mass mobilization" (Arjomand, 1988: 71-72), its constituency mainly being made up of workers, students, and members of the intelligentsia.[34]

The strength of the Tudeh party was an important factor in making the first twelve years of Mohammad Reza Shah's rule a contentious time for the young king. As Abrahamian (1985a) has noted, the dozen years leading up the CIA-sponsored coup in 1953 was characterized by street politics.[35] Although the Tudeh did cause the shah some early headaches, its ascendance into Iranian politics eventually benefited the shah as Tudeh support of nationalist leader Mossadeq raised American concerns of an Iranian communist threat. As in many other parts of the world, Iran's dictatorial leader would benefit from the perceived menace of communist influence. In the 1940s the crowd

[33] Behrooz (2000) has described the Tudeh Party as "Iran's version of a pro-Soviet fraternal communist party" (249)

[34] The political reach and immensity of the Tudeh Party has been documented by many scholars. In the 1943 Majles elections, it managed to place eight of its candidates in parliament and in 1946 three of its members served in conservative Prime Minister Ahmad Ghavam's cabinet, albeit for a limited time (Abrahamian 1982; Milani 1988), and by 1949 "the Tudeh party numbered approximately twenty-five thousand members, of whom 23 percent were intellectuals, 75 percent were workers, and 2 percent were peasants" (Parsa 1989:40). In addition to its large membership, the Tudeh also enjoyed the support of "some 300,000 sympathizers" (Bill 1988a:68).

[35] On the Iranian tradition of street politics, see also Assef Bayat (1997).

became an instrument of power in Iranian politics "and although many tried to mobilise the masses and use the streets as a weapon, only two organizations had notable success" (Abrahamian 1985a:126). The Tudeh was one of those organizations, the other being the National Front to which we will soon turn our attention.

Contrary to many other communist parties at the time, the Tudeh did not advocate the use of violence. Rather, as Siavoshi (1994) points out, they emphasized the use of demonstrations and strikes, and continued to do so up until and through the revolution of 1977-79. Besides upholding the Iranian tradition of nonviolent challenges to the state it will become clear below that this choice of tactics significantly affected how the opposition transformed itself in the 1960s, when government repression and opposition frustration with nonviolent tactics resulted in the establishment of guerrilla groups. The state's relatively liberal stance towards the Tudeh came to an abrupt end in 1949. Following an assassination attempt the year prior, the government outlawed the party which was thus forced into temporary clandestinity, from where it continued its activities. No longer able to freely operate in the open, the Tudeh made common cause with the other major opposition group of the time, the National Front.

The National Front, somewhat ironically established in 1949, the same year that the Tudeh was forced underground, was not a political party, but rather an umbrella organization consisting of several nationalist-liberal political parties, "including the Iran Party, the Iranian People's Party, the Party of the Nation of Iran, and the Toiler's Party" (Moaddel 1994:53), and together with the Tudeh were "the principal challengers" to the monarchy (Stempel 1981:39). The coalition's leader was Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq, a

Majles veteran who was elected prime minister by parliament in 1951.[36] Once in power, Mossadeq entered into negotiations with the British government over the role of the AIOC (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) in the production of Iranian oil. By virtue of an old agreement, the AIOC (which soon after its Iranian crisis became BP) had enjoyed a long-standing monopoly on Iranian oil under very favorable conditions. The Iranian state's share in the oil profits had overwhelmingly been usurped by the royal family and other members of the elite with virtually none of it benefiting the Iranian people. When the British refused to renegotiate the agreement Mossadeq decided, to the dismay of the monarchy and some Iranian aristocrats, to nationalize the oil industry (Siavoshi 1994).

Mossadeq's firm stance outraged the British. In an attempt to impose their will on the hostile prime minister they instigated an "international boycott and military blockade, which was widely observed by the world's oil economies" (Foran 1993a:228). While these actions were successful in the sense that they kept Iranian oil in the ground and prevented Iran from profiting from its own resources, the boycott was unable to force Mossadeq's hand for one simple reason: Iranian oil, while lining the pockets of the ruling elite, had not been a crucial contributor to the Iranian economy due to corruption and patrimonialism. Faced with this reality the British sought American support. As an ally of the British one might expect U.S. officials to be supportive of the British request. However, in addition to being a U.S. ally on the global stage, Great Britain was a rival on the Iranian one. The British monopoly on Iranian oil was an obstacle to U.S. expansion on the petro-market which explains why "during the initial stages of negotiations with the

[36] For information about Mossadeq and the movement he led, see Zabih (1982) and Irfani (1983).

British, Iranian demands had been backed by the American ambassador, Henry Grady, and by other American officials" (Moaddel 1994:43). Initial American support was nonetheless soon eradicated when the same officials realized that "a genuine nationalization of [Iranian] oil would set an example for other oil-rich countries such as Saudi Arabia to challenge American oil companies" (Siavoshi 1994:128) in those countries. Once American policymakers had enjoyed this epiphany, U.S. and British interests became firmly aligned.

The shah had at several occasions attempted to remove the constitutionally elected Mossadeq from his position as head of the government. In both 1952 and 1953 the shah fired Mossadeq, only to be forced under humiliating circumstance to retract his initial decision and reappoint his nemesis. What could possibly have forced the shah to completely reverse his own decision, not just once but twice, with both the U.S. and Great Britain in his corner? Just as in 1891 and 1906 it was the outrage of the Iranian masses, this time in the shape of enormous pro-Mossadeq demonstrations, that forced the monarch to capitulate (Keddie 2003:126-8).[37] The irony of these predominantly nonviolent protests that ultimately signified opposition to foreign claims in Iran (it was indeed the struggle against imperialism that Mossadeq had come to symbolize) was that the political climate that allowed for such expressions of disapproval had been established under pressure from the very nations against which expressions of discontent were now being applied. In the aftermath of World War II, the United States had rather aggressively imposed an agenda of liberalization and democratization on the young shah,

[37] For more on the popular demonstrations against the shah, see Siavoshi (1994).

and to a significant extent it was the imposition of that agenda that had permitted the return of previously banned opposition groups to the political stage (Moaddel 1994:141-2).[38] This scenario of Western-imposed liberalization would repeat itself both under Kennedy and Carter, but only became detrimental to the shah's regime during the latter's stint in the White House, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The massive protests that protected Mossadeq did however come at a price. The one organization that could mobilize demonstrations of the requisite size was the most polarizing organization in all of Iran, namely the Tudeh.[39] Notwithstanding the reality of being an illegal organization, the "Tudeh resumed relatively open activity especially during Mosaddegh's tenure as prime minister" and by 1953 it was the most influential political party in Iran (Parsa 1989:40). While initially helpful to Mossadeq's ambitions, the Tudeh eventually became a political burden for the prime minister. By relying on communist support Mossadeq in due course became associated with Marxism, despite the fact that he never embraced such ideas. "In fact," Keddie (2003) explains, Mossadeq "was an anti-imperialist nationalist who intended to keep Iran from being controlled by any foreign country or company" (125) and he "remained committed to the ideology of national-liberalism" throughout his political career (Moaddel 1994:49). In reality,

[38] This argument is supported by Keddie (2003) who has asserted that "during World War II the Allies had pressured the shah to adopt more liberal and democratic reforms than had his father" (133).
[39] "Ervand Abrahamian argues that through demonstrations and strikes the pro-Tudeh forces played a significant role in bringing victory to the National Front" (Siavoshi 1994:124).

however, that did not matter. Mossadeq's close political proximity to the communist Tudeh left a political stain he was unable to remove. [40]

Mossadeq's Tudeh support turned out to be the straw that broke the camel's back as far as American officials were concerned. Access to Iranian natural resources was indeed important motivation for action, as was the example nationalized Iranian oil would set for the rest of the region. However, "more important than oil in determining the U.S. foreign policy agenda was the perceived communist threat" (Siavoshi 1994:128) that had followed as a logical consequence of the end of World War II and the prospect of a Cold War with the Soviet Union. Due to his Tudeh support "Mossadeq was pictured increasingly but inaccurately as a dangerous fanatic, likely to deliver Iran to the Soviets" (Keddie 2003:125) in British and American political discourse. Because of its oil reserves and strategic location such a development was unacceptable to the U.S. and its British ally. As Siavoshi eloquently puts it, "the apparent rapprochement between the Tudeh Party and the nationalist government, from the point of view of the Cold Warriors, was enough proof for the soundness of their analysis" (Siavoshi 1994:129).

The Americans were not the only ones viewing Mossadeq's communist ties with a disapproving gaze. Even within his own National Front coalition the prime minister's modus operandi attracted suspicion. Certainly, there were those in the Iranian political elite who were unimpressed with Marxist ideas, but to a significant extent the fractions within the Front were caused by jealousy and unfulfilled personal aspirations. Some of

[40] As will become clear in Chapter 5 some of the same dynamics of "guilt by association" plagued the shah's close relationship with the U.S. in the 1970s.

the higher-ranking officials of the parties constituting the National Front "had leadership ambitions far greater than the opportunities afforded them" and "they demanded more expansive roles in appointing officials and formulating policies" (Siavoshi 1994:126). These leaders disapproved of the fact that Mossadeq had achieved significant political capital by transforming himself into a populist leader that relied more on the support of Tudeh-organized masses than he did on his political collaborators.[41]

To make matters worse for Mossadeq, his support among the Tudeh was fading fast in mid-1953. Bill (1988a) explains the fragile nature of the Mossadeq-Tudeh alliance:

> Although the Tudeh party for a time supported Musaddiq in an effective alliance of convenience, its leaders broke sharply with him, and its press consistently portrayed him as a feudal landlord and a stooge of the United States. Throughout his premiership, Musaddiq was under Tudeh pressure. (68)

Resembling the shah's relationship with the United States in the late 1970s, Mossadeq's reliance on the Tudeh-organized masses came to represent a severe political vulnerability. By putting his political destiny in the hands of one specific group, Mossadeq, like the shah 25 years later, forfeited the support of other potential allies. Furthermore, he was caught between a rock and a hard place as the American and British complained about his communist connections while those connections accused him of serving the imperialist cause. In the event that the Tudeh and its supporters would be unwilling to protect him

[41] When finding himself in political trouble, Mossadeq would threaten to resign and call on the masses to take to the streets and express their dissatisfaction with his political opponents. While such tactics might have been useful in the short term it was not a sustainable solution, a fact proven by the coup that ultimately removed him from power (Baktiari 1996:38-43)

against his enemies, Mossadeq would find himself desperately isolated. Such an event occurred in August of 1953.

By October 1952 the British had fully incorporated the U.S. into its conflict with Iran's nationalist government. "Consequently, U.S. policy toward Iran became hostile and it cooperated with Britain in imposing a worldwide boycott of the Iranian oil" (Amjad, 1989: 60). While the idea of a coup must have been on the minds of American and British officials for some time, August 10, 1953 marks the beginning of the concrete efforts to firmly reinstate the shah on the Iranian throne. That day, "CIA Director Allen Dulles, American ambassador to Iran Loy Henderson and the shah's twin sister Ashraf met at a Swiss resort, while Brigadier General Norman Schwarzkopf conferred with the shah at his summer palace on the Caspian" (Foran 1993a:296). The shah had recently left Iran "on vacation" as the political climate had begun to worsen, and he considered his own political future uncertain. With solid U.S. support his concerns decreased dramatically.

The coup itself was engineered in part by Kermit Roosevelt, a high ranking CIA officer who later was rewarded for his service with the vice presidency of Gulf Oil. After a first, failed coup on August 15 and 16, Mossadeq

> was removed from office through the joint efforts of high-ranking Iranian officers and a fraction of the clergy, along with well-paid thugs, all of whom were financed, equipped, and supported by the United States government. The initiative of the United States was crucial because the Shah's departure and the arrest of some of the officers involved in the first, abortive coup d'état had weakened and demoralized his supporters. (Parsa 1989:45)

Three hundred lives were lost in the coup that secured the shah's return. The next few days were characterized by "passive resistance in the bazaar and provinces," which resulted in hundreds of arrests under the existing conditions of martial law (Foran 1993a:298). While this obviously amounts to substantial resistance to the government's course of action we might wonder where the masses that in the past had protected Mossadeq from the shah were on this fateful day. Some scholars have suggested that the timing of the coup might account for a significant portion of its success. Siavoshi, for example, states that "although a major part of the [nationalist] movement's social base willingly made certain economic sacrifices, the prolongation of the economic crisis and uncertainty dampened their enthusiasm and decreased active support for [Mossadeq's] government" (Siavoshi 1994:129). Furthermore, the masses had been forewarned that the military and U.S.-sponsored mobs would resort to violence during the coup. This may explain why many of them experienced "uncertainty" about once again expressing solidarity with the prime minister "when the army and the mob, which was mobilized by Tehran toughs and paid by the CIA, stormed the streets of the capital" (Siavoshi 1994:130).[42]

If the masses were absent from the streets during the coup by choice, they remained absent from them in the era following the coup due to increased restrictions and repression. In the wake of being "rescued" by his American and British allies, the shah felt obliged to show his saviors that he would never again allow the opposition to take

[39]For detailed accounts of the 1953 coup, please consult Amjad (1989), Foran (1993a), Keddie (2003), Moaddel (1994), Parsa (1989) and Siavoshi (1994).

advantage of his liberal disposition. Consequently Mossadeq was arrested and sentenced to a term in prison which was to be followed by house arrest in his home town. Naturally this marked the end of the former prime minister's political career. Unfortunately, the elimination of Mossadeq's person was only a marginal representation of the state repression that followed the 1953 coup. Beginning with the National Front, the years following the coup saw the parties of the coalition "disbanded and their publications discontinued. Members of the Front were either [*sic*] killed, imprisoned, exiled, or co-opted" (Moaddel 1994:53-4). Furthermore, the suppression of these parties was so severe that leaders were unable to communicate both with party members and each other.[43]

Despite attempts to resurrect the coalition, perhaps most notably at a May 1961 rally in Tehran that attracted 80,000 people, the National Front was unable to recover from the blows it had been dealt in 1953 and at the time of the revolution of 1977-9, the organization's importance was negligible. By that time the National Front had become an organization of the capitalist class and its interests, and therefore lacked the mass popular support it had enjoyed in the early 1950s. Consequently it was unable to mobilize sufficient support to establish itself as a revolutionary force. Instead it was obliged to fall in line with Khomeini's forces (Moaddel 1994; Parsa 1989).

Notwithstanding the dire consequences the 1953 coup had for the National Front, the Tudeh was dealt with even more ruthlessly. Following the coup the shah realized that the most efficient way to secure the U.S. support he would remain dependent upon for the

[43] For the coup's effects on Iranian political life see for example Amjad (1989), Behrooz (2000), Foran (1993a) Herrman (1990), Keddie (2003), Stempel (1981), Moaddel (1994), and Parsa (1989).

rest of his reign would be to solidify his anti-communist credentials. Furthermore, the shah was determined to never again allow his liberal leanings get the best of him and thus provide opposition groups with political opportunities from which to attack him. As a result of these realizations, the immediate post-coup period became decidedly anti-Tudeh as more than 3,000 rank-and-file members of the party were arrested. Many of them were murdered in prison and about 200 received life in prison sentences. Abrahamian has suggested that in the four years following the coup Tudeh leaders were "systematically eliminated," forty of its party officials executed, and another 14 tortured to death (Abrahamian 1982:280; Bill 1988a; Moaddel 1994). In addition to this brutal treatment, the Tudeh suffered another blow in 1954 when a massive conspiracy within the armed forces involving 600 Tudeh members was uncovered. "The government brought over 450 of these individuals to trial, and the leaders were sentenced either to death or to life imprisonment" (Bill 1988a:100).

Under circumstances such as these it is hardly surprising that the Tudeh was unable to survive, especially after 1957 when the shah with significant CIA assistance created his own secret police. This new security force, SAVAK,[44] had anti-communism listed as one of its main objectives. Faced with this reality the Tudeh survived almost exclusively as a political formation in exile, setting up camps in the Soviet Union, East Germany, and other Soviet satellites sympathetic to its cause (Abrahamian 1985a; Amjad 1989; Behrooz 2000; Foran 1994). Somewhat surprisingly the Russians did not come to

[44] SAVAK is the acronym for the organization's Farsi name *Sazeman-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, which translates to "National intelligence and security organization."

the Tudeh's aid in its hour of crisis. While officially criticizing U.S. involvement in the coup, Moscow eventually established an economically profitable relationship with the shah's regime and allowed such considerations to overshadow those of ideological expansionism (Herrmann 1990). Accordingly, "as Soviet policy toward Iran became conciliatory, the pro-Soviet Tudeh party lost much of its appeal to Iranian leftist oppositionists" (Keddie 2003:219). Abandoned by its principal supporter and ally, the Tudeh was not a decisive force in Iranian politics in the late 1970s. Although mildly influential among the workers, its main constituents, the Tudeh was unable to compete with the growing appeal of Khomeini's populist Islamic rhetoric. Thus, its importance in the movement that overthrew the shah was marginal.

This section has analyzed the rise and fall of the political opposition against the shah. While political opposition groups emerged around the time of the Constitutional Revolution they did not gather momentum until after Reza Shah's abdication. This development is perhaps best explained by resorting to the notion of political opportunities as formulated by McAdam and others (McAdam 1982; Tilly 1995). In the era immediately following the Constitutional Revolution the Qajar monarchy was able to contain the opposition parties only with British and Russian help. Reza Shah, on the other hand, managed to accomplish such efforts by himself, thanks mainly to his massive expansion of the armed forces.[45] Thus, up until 1941 few political openings presented

[45] Afshar (1985a) notes that "under Reza Shah the army grew from five divisions in 1926 to eighteen divisions in 1941 as well as five aviation regiments and three marine units. During this period military personnel increased eightfold from 23 000 to 185 000 men, and the army expenditure accounted for 33 per cent of the government's official income, excluding additional sums from the oil revenue also channelled to the armed forces" (177).

themselves in the political system that would have allowed opposition parties to obtain significant roles in Iranian politics. However, when Mohammad Reza Shah ascended to the throne following his father's forced abdication, he did so with the blessing and goodwill of the allied nations. The Allies imposed on the young shah the "virtues" of Western politics and expected him to liberalize the political climate in Iran. Consequently opposition groups seized the opportunity to, for the first time in Iranian history, become a force to be reckoned with.[46]

The oil nationalization movement ultimately represented the golden opportunity for the opposition to turn Iran into a democratic country. Many scholars have noted that it is unlikely that the shah would have been able to regain power without foreign support, and that the nation's history would have looked very different had American and British officials not intervened (Siavoshi 1994; Sick 1985; Stempel 1981). Although historical "what-ifs" are seldom helpful, this particular one suggests that political opportunity windows in Iran have historically been both opened and closed by foreign agents. In the 1940s and 1950s it was American/British influences and activities that allowed for an opposition movement to emerge by imposing liberalization on the shah. Likewise it was those same nations that combined to suppress the movement when oil nationalization threatened their economic and political interests. This scenario repeated itself in the late 1970s, albeit with a very different outcome.

[46] Behrooz (1999:136) makes a similar argument for the correlation between opposition activities and levels of government repression.

The question of why the political opposition was unable to assume control of the revolutionary movement can thus best be explained in reference to international involvement in Iranian politics. The close relationship between Iran and the U.S. made Iranian opposition groups highly vulnerable to allegations of communist tendencies. As noted above, Mossadeq only came to represent a significant threat to American interests when his close collaboration with the Tudeh attracted Western attention. U.S. support for the shah, in part guaranteed by the regime's successful efforts to portray its political enemies as leftists, allowed the shah to ruthlessly suppress opposition parties in the 1950s and early 1960s. By 1963, those parties had suffered such tremendous losses that they proved unable to recuperate in any meaningful way. Individual politicians, such as Medhi Bazargan and Shapour Bakhtiar, did maintain sufficient political capital to play key roles in the revolutionary period, but their parties did not share in that destiny. The key point here is that the amicable relationship between the U.S. and Iran from 1953 on spelled disaster for the political opposition, as that relationship served to contract the political space. The U.S. had opened up that space for the opposition in the early 1940s, but then closed it again in 1953. President Kennedy once again cracked a small opening in the early 1960s, but the door was soon closed shut, only to be opened one final time by President Carter in 1976-77.

Evidence of the important role played by U.S. policy can be found in the fact that Iranians only managed to challenge the shah's rule in the early 1950s, 1963, and then finally in 1977-79, with all episodes of meaningful opposition corresponding with periods of U.S. political pressure on the shah. In short then, the political opposition was unable to

appropriate revolutionary leadership because U.S. support of the shah had guaranteed their demise by the time of the revolution. Interestingly enough, as we shall see in the next chapter, it can be argued that the revolution only became Islamic because these more moderate challengers to the crown had been repressed. If the Tudeh and the National Front had still been political forces to be reckoned with in 1978, it seems less likely that Khomeini would have been able to turn Iran into his Islamic Republic.

The second question asked at the beginning of the chapter, why violent tactics were rejected, is in the case of the political opposition less complicated to answer. Throughout the 20th centuries, political parties in Iran, whether they be liberal nationlist or communist in orientation, sought to reform the system through institutionalized measures. Having achieved a constition in the century's first decade, politicians remained faithful to the idea that the shah's autocratic rule could be transformed into a constitional monarchy. Few opposition politicians ever advocated revolution until the last few months of 1978, and they remained hopeful that reform, not revolution, would be the outcome of their resistance. Working from within a nominally democratic system, opposition politicians continued to work for institutionalized political change. Thus it is hardly surprising that groups such as the liberal National Front did not advocate violent tactics, something that would have been both counterintuitive and counterproductive given its aims. More surprisingly though, scholars have asserted that the Tudeh too preferred nonviolent methods of struggle, which is somewhat of a historical oddity as far as communist parties are concerned (Abrahamian 1982; 1984; Foran 1994). Although the historical record seems to suggest that the Tudeh, like most other Iranians parties,

continued to believe that change could be achieved through legal reform, it is noteworthy that nonviolent tactics has been considered Iran's "traditional methods of resistance" (Abrahamian 1985b:151-2).[47] In short, the political opposition opted for nonviolent methods of struggle because they believed Iran's pseudo-democratic political system could be changed from within through political reform, an estimation that ultimately proved naïve, but might have been a possibility had it not been for the near unconditional U.S. support enjoyed by the shah's government.

The Guerrilla Movement[48]

With the political opposition in shambles, the decade between the conclusion of the oil nationalization movement in 1953 and the brutal suppression of the 1963 Muharram uprising represents a time of relative, albeit dictatorial, order in Iranian history. The 1963 Muharram uprising was a response to the shah's pro-American policies and his "White Revolution,"[49] which significantly weakened the power of the ulama. Ayatollah Khomeini was instrumental in anti-regime activities and in many ways this

[47] For more on Iranians' historical preference for nonviolent methods, see for example Amuzegar (1991:296), Bakhash (1990:22), and Foran (1994:230-1).
[48] The Iranian guerrilla movement has attracted significant scholarly attention. The purpose of this section is not to give a complete account of the guerrillas' activities, but simply to explain how they failed to violently defeat the state. Therefore, I do not distinguish between the various Marxist and Islamist factions of the guerrilla movement and instead treat it as a homogenous entity. For detailed accounts of the guerrilla movement and its much finer points, please see for example Abrahamian (1985b; 1989), Behrooz (1999; 2000), Foran (1993a), Halliday (1979:235-49), Milani (1988), Moghadam (1987), and Moaddel (1993:180-5, 199-201).
[49] Sometimes referred to as the "Revolution of the Shah and the Iranian People."

tumultuous period was his political coming out party.[50] I will return to a more detailed discussion of the White Revolution and the resulting 1963 uprising in Chapter 4.

The massacres of 1963 had an enormous impact on the nature of the Iranian opposition. From the early 1940s the opposition had been dominated by secular constitutionalists who believed that the shah could be reasoned with and that nonviolent and political methods of struggle constituted the most appropriate paths to social change. The events of June 1963 would drastically change the opposition's attitude toward the shah (Matin-asgari 2002). As Abrahamian 1985b) has noted,

> The Shah's determination to use massive force, the army's willingness to shoot down thousands of unarmed demonstrators, and SAVAK's eagerness to root out the underground networks of the Tudeh party and the National Front, all combined to compel the opposition, especially its younger members, to question the traditional methods of resistance - election boycotts, general strikes, and street demonstrations. (151-2)

The death toll inflicted on the opposition caused some of the leading young members of the Liberation Movement, one of the newer parties of the National Front coalition, to abruptly break with its leadership.[51] Following the June 5 massacre, several of those young members formed a discussion group with the objective of discovering new ways of fighting the shah's regime. The product of this intellectual effort was the creation of the Mojahedin guerrillas. Thus, as the old opposition was forced to face its destruction with many of its leaders receiving long prison terms, a new opposition came into existence. Unlike their predecessors, the new opposition groups had little affinity for nonviolent methods of struggle (Daneshvar 1996).

[50] For a biographical sketch of Khomeini, see for example Moin (2000).
[51] For more detail about the Liberation Movement, see Chehabi (1990).

In fact, one of the main complaints of the students who broke with the traditional opposition concerned the latter's unwillingness to challenge the state with physical force. Inspired as they were by events in places like Algeria and Cuba, the students assumed that the same tactics that had been used in other parts of the world could also be applied in Iran (Abrahamian 1989; Bakhash 1990). It can thus be argued that the guerrillas emerged as a direct consequence of the shah's brutal attempts to prevent opposition to his rule: as nonviolent opposition was banned, violence, in the minds of the younger oppositionists, appeared to be the last resort. With the nonviolent impotency of the established opposition made painfully apparent to its younger, more radical members, the idea of violent challenges in the form of a guerrilla movement emerged as the logical next step of the opposition's development.[52]

Although committed to their creed of "armed struggle, more armed struggle, and yet more armed struggle" (Abrahamian 1989:98), the guerrillas were never able to mount a significant challenge to the regime. Exact numbers are impossible to present due to the fact that the guerrilla fighters operated in small and autonomous cells in order to remain undetected by the security forces. Commentators agree however, that the guerrilla movement was indeed very small. Foran (1993a) has estimated their numbers at "a few hundred" (337) while Stempel (1981) suggests that "at least 400 to 600 individuals" participated in guerrilla activities between 1966 and the time of the revolution (52). Another indicator of the guerrilla movement's inability to attract members can be

[52] Goodwin (2001) has discussed this phenomenon, and even named his major work after it, arguing that revolutionaries only resort to violence when they feel all other paths have been exhausted and that there is indeed *No other way out*.

deduced from its death tolls. When Abrahamian contends that the Muslim Mojahedin's (one of four main guerrilla groups) losses of 83 guerrillas in eight years constitute a "heavy toll" on the organization it suggest that the group did not have a very large membership and was therefore vulnerable to relatively small losses (Abrahamian 1989:142).

Despite its limited numbers the guerrillas managed to become a nuisance for the government.[53] They carried out political assassinations,[54] attacks on military and police posts (such as the 1971 raid on a gendarmerie outpost near the village of Siakhal), as well as more general acts of sabotage.[55] For example, in 1972 the guerrillas attempted to disrupt the shah's 2,500th anniversary of the Iranian monarchy in the town of Persepolis by placing explosive at the power plant providing the festivities with electricity (Abrahamian 1989; Keddie 2003). While failing to execute that particular act of sabotage, elsewhere the guerrillas managed to keep the state somewhat occupied. Nonetheless, by the mid 1970s the movement had suffered such extensive losses that its leaders decided to suspend most of its activities (Abrahamian 1982; Milani 1988). By late 1976 the guerrilla leaders were forced to abandon their violent struggle, not only because "losses from such tactics outweighed gains, given the heavy toll in lives," but also due to "the lack of mass struggles triggered by their acts" (Keddie 2003:220). Although the various guerrilla organizations survived, their importance, which from their inceptions had already been

[53] For more details about specific guerrilla actions, see Abrahamian (1989:141)
[54] Some of these assassinations targeted American citizens, including military officers, living in Iran. See Stempel (1981:76).
[55] Abrahamian (1989) has written that the guerrillas "tended to set off their bombs late at night and after telephone warnings in order to limit civilian casualties," suggesting that they were more interested in making political propaganda points than perpetrating terrorist activities (140).

limited, decreased significantly and the part they played in the revolution was marginal and unexpected.

Why did the Iranian guerrillas fail to seriously challenge the state and make violence the creed of the revolution? Why were they unable to mobilize a movement similar to those in Algeria and Cuba, the "role models" of Iranian guerrilla fighters? I argue that the movement's failure can be explained by its lack of support from expected allies, such as the rural population, the communist party, and the Soviet Union, and by the ferocity of government repression.

Guerrilla groups around the world have traditionally relied on support from rural populations in their struggle against repressive governments (Wickham-Crowley 1992). Not only can villagers and peasants supply guerrilla fighters with food and other necessities, but they also serve as the main pipeline for new recruits.[56] Unfortunately for the guerrillas, the Iranian countryside provided them with very little of either. The guerrillas themselves came to this realization in a report written by one of the organizations' working committees. Despite "heavy documentation of rural poverty, the group concluded that the so-called land reform had diminished the 'revolutionary potential' of the Iranian peasantry, and therefore the future revolution was more likely to start in the cities than in the countryside" (Abrahamian, 1989:126). As a direct consequence of this report, the central leadership of the organization "dissolved the Rural Team on the grounds that the armed struggle in Iran would begin in the cities rather than in the countryside" (Abrahamian, 1989:127).

[56] For a concise treatment of guerrilla dynamic, please see Guevara (2006).

It is doubtful whether the shah's land reforms explains the lack of "revolutionary potential" in the countryside, as researchers have argued that such measures hardly improved the lot of the average Iranian peasant (Amjad 1989; Foran 1993a). For example, Foran has suggested that "the main political consequence of the land reform was the effective replacement of the all-powerful landlord in the villages by the obtrusive state" (Foran 1993a:322). Thus, landless farmers remained landless and many of them were forced to migrate to the rapidly growing cities. Such a development might have aided the guerrillas since they now envisioned their movement to commence in the cities. Their argument was logical: Impoverished and dispossessed peasants arrive in the cities where they have to live in the slums as squatters and thus become easy targets for the guerrillas' recruitment efforts. However, "while the rural migrants were alienated from the government… they found their natural allies among the mollahs," and not among the guerrilla leaders (Nima 1983:48).[57] The result of this dynamic was that the guerrillas were unable to mobilize a large following both in the countryside and in the cities.

Another natural domestic political ally of any left-leaning guerrilla group is a country's communist party. However, the Tudeh withheld its support of the guerrillas for two main reasons. First, in the mid-1960s when the guerrilla movement began, the Tudeh was an organization in shambles and had been so for about a decade. The repression it had suffered at the hands of the SAVAK had left the Tudeh impotent and a political non-factor. Even if it had indeed decided to support the guerrilla fighters it is therefore unclear what that support might have looked like. The Tudeh had, as mentioned above, itself

[57] For more on the migrant poor, see Kazemi (1980).

been cut off by the Russians when Moscow and Tehran established mutually beneficial trade relations (Amjad 1989; Foran 1993a; Keddie 2003; Matin-asgari 2002). The second reason for withheld Tudeh support of the guerrillas was its disagreement over revolutionary strategy. Rather uniquely, the Tudeh was a nonviolent communist party and as such disagreed with the guerrilla movement's violent tactics. However, this second reason amounts to a rather moot point since the Tudeh was incapable of supporting the guerrillas even if it had concurred with their choice of methods. The Tudeh's overall weakness resulted in a scenario in which the guerrilla movement lacked political allies. In a way, the process of political repression had come full circle: the guerrillas had emerged in response to government repression of the political parties, and although benefitting from the political vacuum created by the removal of institutionalized parties, that very progression of events eventually left the guerrillas without allies. In short, the process that had given birth to the guerrillas also helped suffocate them (Abrahamian 1982; 1985b).

In contrast to many other guerrilla movements struggling against U.S.-supported dictators around the world at the time, and in addition to the lack of internal backing, the Iranian freedom fighters failed to secure meaningful Soviet support.[58] This is somewhat surprising since the guerrillas explicitly, at the height of the Cold War, sought to end a U.S.-sponsored regime that, on top of ideological concerns, resided in a resource-rich country sharing a long border with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, one of the two main

[58] Stempel (1981) notes that "some Soviet money and weapons probably worked their way to the Mujahidin and Fedayeen through Libya, but it was insignificant compared to that from other sources" (102).

guerrilla groups, the Feda´iyan, was explicitly pro-Soviet and sought to establish a social order mirroring those in Eastern Europe (Amuzegar 1991). Notwithstanding these facts, Moscow remained an opponent of Iranian guerrilla activities. In the early 1960s, the Soviets made it clear to the Tudeh that they "were against guerrilla action in Iran, due to a lack of objective revolutionary circumstances, and that if the Tudeh wanted to pursue the idea, it would have to be with backing other than theirs" (Behrooz 1999:85). Contrary to the Western perception of priority being placed on communist ideology in Soviet policy, Moscow based its decisions on whom to fund mainly on a movement's level of "anti-imperialism and geostrategic utility" (Herrman 1990:68).

In the case of Iran, the shah's regime had not been of "geostrategic utility" for the Soviet Union following the coup of 1953, and Moscow explicitly disapproved of the shah's close relationship with the United States, not to mention its involvement in the coup. However, in September 1962, in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis, the shah proclaimed that he would not allow any country to place missiles on Iranian soil, and the following year Iran and the Soviet Union signed an agreement of economic exchange, which included a deal for the Soviets to build a steel mill and other heavy industry factories in Iran (Matin-asgari 2002:61; Amjad 1989:87). These developments were reassuring to the Soviets and exemplify the shah's, at times, shrewd foreign policy instincts. Following these events "relations improved and a de facto bargain was struck: the U.S.S.R. accepted the shah's rule and American hegemony in Iran, while receiving a number of economic agreements of its own and a stable monarchy on its borders" (Foran 1993a:347). In other words, Moscow prioritized a stable and economically beneficial

neighbor to its south, even if this left the Americans with political and ideological hegemony. The Soviets therefore remained comparatively passive and refrained from intervening in Iranian politics, although its relationship with the shah fluctuated with time. While this arrangement benefited both the shah and the Soviet Union, it was a severe blow to the prospects of a successful guerrilla movement, and in stark contrast to Soviet backing of guerrillas in other parts of the world.

The guerrillas eventually received some support from an unlikely ally, namely the militant *ulama*. Because of their atheist ideology, the Marxist Feda´iyan guerrillas were not popular among the clergy. On the other hand, the Islamist Mojahedin was found to be more acceptable, and in the early 1970s some of Khomeini's proxies in Iran decided to help fund the organization. It should not be assumed however that this decision was an explicit approval of, or a clerical long-term commitment to, guerrilla tactics or objectives. Rather, as Rafsanjani, one of Khomeini's principal lieutenants, later explained, the opposition was so severely outnumbered by the regime, that the Khomeini faction "considered any form of struggle against SAVAK a blessing" (Bakhash 1999:44).

Khomeini himself did not approve of the guerrillas' activities. Meeting with some of the Mojahedin's leaders while in exile in Najaf[59] in 1972 and 1974, Khomeini reprimanded them and refused to give his support, instead arguing prophetically "that the regime would fall not when the masses took up arms but when the whole clerical stratum joined the opposition" (Abrahamian 1989:150). After these meetings the Mujahedin

[59] A holy Shi´ite city in Iraq.

found it increasingly difficult to receive the *ulama*'s blessings for their struggle against the regime.

As if lack of support from its potential allies was not enough of a handicap, the guerrillas found themselves facing an incredibly repressive state committed to their destruction. Amjad (1989) has suggested that out of all the factors that eventually contributed to the failure of the guerrillas, none was more elementary than the "brutal repression by the regime" (107). The one factor that could have mitigated the shah's harsh treatment of the guerrillas was U.S. disapproval, but their struggle against the regime

> coincided with a period in Iran's relationship with the United States when the shah had reason to believe that a crackdown on opposition elements would be welcome in Washington and that his methods would be regarded with a considerable measure of tolerance. (Sick 1985:23)

Furthermore, the fact that the guerrilla organizations identified with Marxist ideas and violent tactics made it still easier for the shah to justify their extermination.[60] Abrahamian has pointed out that "the Mojahedin has in fact never once used the terms socialist, communist, [or] Marxist… to describe itself" (Abrahamian 1989:2), but this appeared to have mattered little as long as the they subscribed to classic guerrilla tactics and rhetoric, thus becoming guilty of communist charges by association. Also, the guerrillas' commitment to violent overthrow of the state provided the shah with all the justification he would ever need to root them out. At the rare occasions when American newspapers

[60] Originally, the Feda'iyan had been the only significant Marxist guerrilla organization in Iran while the Mojahedin acknowledged a Marxism-inspired Islamic ideology. However, by 1975 the Mojahedin leadership altered its ideology and accepted Marxism. This led to a split within the organization with one faction remaining Islamist and the other becoming Marxist (Abrahamian 1989).

did report on the guerrillas' struggle with the regime, they referred to them as "Marxist and Islamic-Marxist terrorists," which naturally meant that during Nixon's administration the shah did not face any American objections to his brutal treatment of his enemies (Dorman & Farhang 1987:143).

In the face of these difficulties and the significant losses suffered, both the Mojahedin and the Feda´iyan realized that further violent opposition to the regime at this particular point in time would be futile. "By 1976," Amjad (1989) suggests "more than 90 percent of the founders and the original members of both organizations were executed or in prison" (107). Perhaps even more troubling, the guerrillas had failed to mobilize the masses and the potential for a violent revolution in the near future was not considered a realistic possibility. Therefore, in 1977, the guerrillas agreed to temporarily lay down their weapons and let other, more moderate factions of the opposition movement take over the revolutionary leadership. Jimmy Carter had recently won the presidency, a development that secular opposition leaders such as Bazargan and Sanjabi understood how to exploit (Stempel 1981). Carter's commitment to human rights, they reasoned, should be taken advantage of, something that could not be accomplished through the use of violent tactics.[61]

By voluntarily going underground the guerrillas bought themselves time to regroup. However, the price they paid was relinquishing any chance of revolutionary leadership in the movement that would begin within the following year. Although not in possession of a leadership role, the guerrillas participated in the revolution in several

[61] See Chapter 5 and the discussion of "the iron cage of liberalism."

ways. First, many of its members participated in the movement's nonviolent activities, such as strikes and demonstrations (Abrahamian 1989). Others, acting perhaps at their own initiative, tried to incite violence and provoke riots during the marches (Ansari 2003; Wilber 1981). More commonly though, the guerrillas "were formally linked to the revolutionary movement as a nascent security wing," policing marches and taking over certain government responsibilities toward the end of the revolution (Stempel 1981:85-6). Finally, the guerrillas did engage in violent attacks on the police and the military during the revolution, especially in its final three days (M. Fischer 2003; Seliktar 2000; Stempel 1981). These attacks were however rather limited, since "between 1971 and 1978, over 300 police, military, and government employees and approximately 10 foreigners were gunned down in the streets" (Stempel 1981:17). Although 35 state officials per year might sounds like a rather high figure, it should be kept in mind that the army alone was comprised of 400,000 troops. At that rate it would have taken the guerrillas over 10,000 years to defeat the government forces.

While a vast majority of scholars have emphasized the nonviolent nature of the Iranian Revolution it is true that the struggle was brought to conclusion through an armed exchange, which I will address in Chapter 6. However, that incident occurred after the revolution had already triumphed, and more than anything served a cathartic purpose for those who had longed for violent revenge against the regime. This "weekend war" had very limited consequences for the outcome of the revolution, and thus it would be a mistake to give the violent opposition credit for the success of the revolution, a mistake that no serious scholar of the Iranian Revolution has yet made. This point is reinforced by

Parsa who plainly minimizes the role of the guerrillas by asserting that such groups might have played an important role "had the course of the revolutionary conflict lasted longer and *required an armed struggle to overthrow the monarchy* [emphasis added]" (Parsa 1989:184). The Iranian Revolution did not require an armed struggle, and since the guerrillas played a limited role in defeating the shah they were treated to a very limited piece of the victors' pie in the revolution's aftermath.

Although unable to assume leadership of the revolutionary movement, it can be argued that the Iranian guerrillas still played a more influential role than the traditional opposition did. Using violent methods, the guerrillas at the very least made their presence known to both friends and foes, and even celebrated a few minor victories. Nonetheless, I contend that the real influence asserted by the guerrillas cannot be measured in the number of government agents killed or demonstration marshaled. Instead, their most important contribution was the lessons they allowed others to learn from their achievements and mistakes. By simply challenging a superior opponent and forcing that opponent to engage them over a period of several years, the guerrilla movement was able "to suggest the vulnerability of the regime" (Foran 1993a:374). In other words, the guerillas' "challenge did not result in a popular revolution led by the devoted Marxist vanguard, but the regime had not managed to uproot the guerrillas either," which contributed to the emergence of "a culture of resistance to dictatorship" (Behrooz 1999:94). Afshar (1985a) goes a step further in assigning credit to the guerrillas as he argues that Khomeini, "benefiting from the climate of resistance created by the urban guerrillas, [led] the crowd in a series of massive demonstrations [that] toppled the Shah"

(2). While it has then been suggested that the guerrillas made manifest the shah's vulnerabilities, I argue that they actually did the opposite: rather than revealing the shah's weaknesses they highlighted his strengths: The guerrilla movement allowed Khomeini to come to the realization that violent tactics against the shah would be pointless and only serve to strengthen U.S. support for the latter.[62] Learning from the guerrillas' failed strategies, Khomeini instead returned to those methods best known to Iranians: strikes and demonstrations.

To summarize, the guerrilla movement was unable to assume leadership of the revolutionary movement and make violent struggle the predominant method in the Iranian Revolution. The principal reason for this failure has been identified as lack of support from potential allies and harsh repression from the state. Ironically, just as the destruction of the moderate opposition led to the emergence of the guerrillas, the defeat of the guerrillas left the field open for the religious opposition. Given a monopoly on opposition activities, the *ulama* loyal to Khomeini eventually became the dominant force of the anti-shah movement. Some scholars have relied heavily on the resource mobilization paradigm as sketched out by McCarthy and Zald (1973; 1977), suggesting that the guerrillas failed because "they did not possess the financial resources, network of organization, or charismatic leadership that the clerical opposition enjoyed" (Siavoshi 1990:41-2), but such a characterization of the problem fails to take into account the geopolitical context in which the guerrillas struggle took place.

[62]Far from unexpectedly, I have not come across any evidence of U.S. disapproval of the shah's treatment of the guerrillas.

The combination of a Soviet Union content with its economic and strategic relationship with Iran, and a United States of America that under the Nixon doctrine provided the shah with any non-nuclear weapons he desired made for an impossible situation for the guerrillas. Just like in the case of the political opposition, the guerrillas' failure can largely be explained through the significant influence over Iranian policy wielded by the United States. U.S. approval of ruthless repression of the "communist" guerrillas helped the shah deal effectively and swiftly with his armed opponents. Although the United States had provided the shah with military aid at least ever since Eisenhower's stint in the White House, such aid increased under Johnson and culminated in the Nixon doctrine that provided the shah with near unlimited access to American arms. Armed to its teeth, his military consequently had little trouble defeating the guerrilla soldiers, who were eventually forced into hiding after making it painfully clear to other potential challengers that the shah's rule could not be ended by the use of violence. Therefore, Khomeini's followers drew inspiration from another outspoken opponent of the regime to which we now turn our attention.

The Student Movement

One final opposition group that actively resisted the shah's repressive regime was the Iranian students, particularly those studying abroad in Europe and the United States. The students were, in a fashion similar to the other two groups discussed above, affected by U.S.-Iranian relations. However, unlike the opposition politicians and the guerrillas,

the students benefitted from America's involvement with Iran, which helps explain why the students played the arguably most important role of the three groups. This section analyzes the abroad-based student movement, its contributions to the revolutionary movement, its choice of methods, and finally its inability to commandeer leadership of the opposition's activities.

Students have throughout history been notorious revolutionaries and Iranian students are no exception. Although the 1960s and 1970 represent the most significant period of Iranian student resistance, the nation's tradition of student opposition can be traced back even further. In the late 1920s, leftist Iranians studying in Germany engaged in "demonstrations and propaganda" against Reza Shah's government, apparently causing the king enough international embarrassment for him to reconsider the entire practice of sending students abroad for higher education (Matin-asgari 2002:21). In fact, these protests served "as another impetus for the establishment of the University of Tehran in 1934" (Matin-asgari 2002:23). The student movement against Reza Shah was ultimately unsuccessful in achieving most of its objectives, but these early activities helped set a precedent for future generations to build upon.

In 1953, in the aftermath of the August coup, Vice-President Richard Nixon made an official visit to Iran. He was "greeted" by an enormous student-organized demonstration that condemned U.S. involvement in the activities that had led to Mossadeq's downfall. As Iranian security forces were unable to control the students they resorted to firing into the crowds, killing three students in the process. This incident, occurring on November 1, became known as "the day of students," and was annually

commemorated by Iranian students all over the world until the end of the shah's regime in 1979 (Amjad, 1989: 109-10).

The 1953 demonstrations were unlike most of the major student activities in the 1960s and 1970s. As we have seen, the 1953 coup marked the end of a relatively liberal period in post-war Iranian history under the leadership of an insecure ruler. After the coup, the shah tightened his control of the Iranian polity, thus causing mass gatherings to become increasingly rare. Naturally, this diminished the potency of their movement since students overwhelmingly relied on mass action in their assaults on the state. The shah's new attitude toward dissent could have spelled the end of student activism, and to some extent it did. Following the coup and the shah's consolidation of power, university students in Iran became a largely inconsequential opposition group, but the tradition of student dissent survived abroad.

While the climate of repression explains the decline of domestic student activity, it does not elucidate why student opposition abroad increased dramatically in the coming decades. Our ability to solve this puzzle requires us to recognize the infrastructural pressures the booming Iranian economy placed on the rest of society, including the educational system. Beeman (1983) has argued that "with a burgeoning need for expertise at the postgraduate level and inadequate training programs to produce that expertise, and an insatiable public demand for undergraduate education, the only solution for Iran was to export its student population for training abroad" (208). Fortunately for Iran, both European and American colleges were more than willing to admit Iranian students to their programs. In the American case this attitude was partly a consequence of

the fact that many small colleges were struggling economically and therefore gladly welcomed foreign students, but it was also a result of the excellent relations that had been established between the U.S. and Iranian governments in the aftermath of the coup (Beeman 1983). As a result, the Iranian student population in the U.S. grew from 6,000 in the early 1960s to 54,340 in 1978. Iranians also made up sizable student populations in Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, Austria, and Belgium. At the eve of the revolution Iran had more students studying abroad than any other nation, and its citizens constituted the largest international student population in the United States (Matin-asgari 2002:57; 131; Milani 1988:113-4).[63]

The revolutionary role of the abroad-based Iranian students has been significantly underestimated by scholars and frequently left out of discussions of resistance to the shah. Nonetheless, a few insightful researchers have placed students in the centers of their studies. For example, Matin-asgari, perhaps the most important chronicler of the Iranian student movement, has suggested that "university students (including seminarians) provided the main social base of opposition to the shah's regime during the two pre-revolutionary decades" (Matin-asgari 2002:4). This point is echoed by Menashri (1990), who while seemingly downplaying the students' role has noted that in the period from 1963 to 1976, when the opposition was unable to muster a meaningful challenge to the shah inside Iran, "its most conspicuous manifestations were among Iranian students abroad – an embarrassment, but certainly no danger to the shah" (18). While largely

[63] Matin-asgari and Milani report the same numbers, which is why I have chosen to accept their figures. However, both Bill (1988a) and Sick (1985) have asserted that an estimated 60,000 or more Iranian students resided in the U.S. in the late 1970s.

sympathetic, Menashri's evaluation of the student movement is incomplete, as students played an immensely important part in the pre-revolutionary period as they helped direct the world's attention to Iran and the shah's human rights record.

Student activities abroad arguably became an element of the opposition movement when three separate organizations joined together in Paris in January, 1962, to create the Confederation of Iranian Students/National Union (CISNU). The three organizations merging were the Iranian Students' Association in the United States (ISAUS), the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe (CIS) and the Organization of Tehran University Students (OTUS). The ISAUS had started as a disguised CIA project but eventually achieved "independence" in 1960 when opposition-minded students gained control of the organization. At CISNU's inaugural 1962 meeting only the ISAUS and CIS were represented, as OTUS due to repression was unable to send delegates. Strengthened by their new union, students in the U.S. and Europe increased their lobbying activities against the regime in Tehran and soon received the support and appreciation of Khomeini (Matin-asgari 2002).[64]

The new student organization was almost immediately called into action. On January 21, just days after CISNU's Paris meeting, the shah approved of a military attack on unarmed students demonstrating on the campus of Tehran University. The soldiers

[64] In a statement issued to the foreign-based student body in 1966, Khomeini declared that "students must continue their struggle in unison, without ever forgetting the oppressed Iranian people and its destiny. The country's future is trusted to the youths who must not neglect its safeguarding. We, the clergy, are your companions on this path and shall cooperate with you according to Islamic precepts.' (Matin-asgari 2002:85)

applied such brutal force that the chancellor of the university resigned in protest of the regime's actions. In his letter of resignation Dr. Ahmad Farhad complained that he had

> never seen or heard so much cruelty, sadism, atrocity, and vandalism on the part of the government forces. Some of the girls in the classrooms were criminally attacked by the soldiers. When we inspected the university buildings we were faced with the same situation as if an army of barbarians had invaded an enemy territory" (Bill 1988a:146-7).

CISNU's response was near instantaneous as it issued the following statement:

> The Confederation of Iranian Students, representing 13,000 students in Europe and 6,000 students in United States, hereby informs government authorities of its demands, letting them know that unless we receive a response by Friday, 26 January, *we shall employ every means available abroad to show the Free World the true face of those in charge in Iran* [emphasis added]. (Matin-asgari 2002:57)

In the eyes of the shah's regime the last part of the statement might have appeared an empty threat. However, over the next decade and a half the students undermined the Iranian state by doing exactly what they had promised to do, and by doing so they helped bring about a structural context that would prove favorable to Khomeini and his collaborators.

The students' strategy was as simple as it was effective. By taking any opportunity to protest against the shah and his regime, the students were able to attract the attention of the international media, human rights organizations, and even foreign politicians. The strategy of advertising the shah's human rights abuses eventually caused several human rights organizations and news outlets to publish scathing criticisms of the Iranian leadership, criticisms that, in due course, made the shah's relationship with his key ally tenuous at best and, I argue, impossible at worst.

The earliest student demonstration against the shah outside of Iran occurred in the U.S. in 1959. The shah himself suspected that the demonstration was a CIA-coordinated response to his decision two years earlier to sign an agreement with the ENI (the Italian state oil company) at the expense of several American companies (Bill 1988a). Whether the shah's suspicions were indeed well-founded we may never know, but what is clear is that the 1959 demonstration was not to be an isolated occurrence. In January 1962, in response to the massacre at Tehran University, approximately 500 students protested against Prime Minister Amini as he visited London, and in the following months those scenes were repeated in Bonn. In April of that same year the shah made an official visit to the United States. As he arrived to New York he was met by ISAUS demonstrators and thus forced to leave the airport via a back exit. The demonstrations then continued outside the Waldorf Astoria where the shah was staying. In connection to these activities the students published an open letter to President Kennedy in which they criticized the shah and his human rights record. When the shah traveled to Washington to meet with the president the protesters were on hand to greet him there as well. In May 1967, the shah visited Cologne unaware of the fact that local Iranian students had already distributed over 100,000 leaflets all over Germany. Consequently the shah was met by protesters in Aachen, Bonn, Dusseldorf, and Munich. In August of the same year, ISAUS members, wearing face masks in order to avoid identification by the SAVAK, clashed with the police as the shah once again visited the United States (Matin-asgari 2002).

These and many other similar expressions of student dissent would probably have had a very minor impact on Iranian history had they not been accompanied by an

extensive and strategic propaganda campaign.[65] Milani's (1988) excellent summary of the chain of events that resulted from the students' efforts (and those of other opposition elements living abroad) deserves to be quoted at length:

> The Shah was exceptionally sensitive to his image in the international community as a benevolent ruler. A vulnerable aspect of his regime was its ignominious human rights record. The exiled opposition to the Shah in Western Europe and North America in the sixties and the seventies, including the Confederation of Iranian Students, adroitly manipulated this weakness by contacting human rights organizations and providing them with exaggerated and sometimes fallacious information about the so-called political holocaust in Iran, a country alleged to have more than 100,000 political prisoners. The human rights organizations in turn denigrated the Shah: In 1972, a United Nations panel found Iran guilty of consistent violations of human rights; and, in 1975, Amnesty International conferred on Iran the notoriety of having the world's most terrifying human rights record. (180-1)

While, as Milani proceeds to point out, Amnesty International and other human rights groups had little leverage within the Iranian regime, their criticisms amounted to a significant PR problem for the shah.[66] It is also worth noting that the numbers reported by the students – 100,000 political prisoners – was most likely a gross misrepresentation of reality. Regardless of its exaggerations, the strategy had the desired effect as first Europe's mainstream press, represented by such publications as the *Frankfurter Rundschau, Le Monde*, and London's *Times, The Economist, and The Guardian* and its more popular press, exemplified by Germany's *Der Spiegel* and France's *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and later the American mainstream media began to report on the shah's human rights record (Matin-asgari 2002:122).[67] Consequently, by the mid-1970s "a

[65] Please see Organization of Iranian Moslem Students (1979) for details.
[66] Please see the discussion in Chapter 5.
[67] The European media outlets engaged the topic in the early 1970s while its American counterpart followed suit in the middle of the decade.

definite publicity breakthrough had occurred, with the international news media viewing Iran as having one of the world's most repressive governments. Years of adverse publicity by the CISNU was the most direct and important cause of this situation" (Matin-asgari 2002:148).

The shah's regime tried its best to combat the CISNU and even managed to have some of its U.S.-based leaders arrested. In the face of such repression, both in Iran and abroad, the CISNU determined that its best response was neither to curb its activities nor negotiate with the regime, but rather to step up its attacks on the shah. By continuing its strategy of involving the international community in its struggle, the students equipped themselves with a protective shield the Iranian government proved incapable of penetrating (Matin-asgari 2002:124). Thus, in addition to initiating the Iranian Revolution, the foreign-based students showed Khomeini and his collaborator a viable strategy of how to defeat the shah.

Unlike the secular opposition and the guerrilla movement, the Iranian students were not unsuccessful in the challenge they issued to the Iranian state. Still, their movement remained in the losers' camp once the revolution had been completed as their struggle for democracy and human rights came to naught under Khomeini's leadership of Iran. In a sense then, and in contrast to the other opposition groups covered in this chapter, the students were never defeated by the Pahlavi state, but rather consumed by Khomeini and the *ulama*. Interestingly enough, the students, unlike the secular opposition and the guerrillas, were rarely condemned as communists. The Iranian government experienced great difficulties in its attempts to vilify a nonviolent opposition that in

contrast to the domestic opposition and the covert guerrilla fighters was clearly visible to the shah's foreign allies and the international media. I therefore suggest that while the shah's close relationship with the U.S. was an impediment to the domestic opposition it was of great benefit to the students studying abroad, particularly to those living in the United States.

So why then were the students unable to take control of the revolutionary movement? At least two factors seem to provide plausible explanation. First, although mostly outside of the shah's repressive reach by virtue of residing in the U.S. and Europe, and thus protected from persecution, the students also had to deal with the negative aspects of distance. Physically separated from the struggle on the ground, the student leaders were largely unable to emerge as potential leaders of the revolutionary movement. Second, the abroad-based student groups, unlike the politicians, the guerrillas, and Khomeini's religious opposition, seem to have been more interested in criticizing the regime than in proposing an alternative solution. Without a marketable vision of what Iran might look like after the shah's government had been ousted, the students were unable to portray themselves as plausible leaders. In other words, the student movement was a protest movement in the purest sense, designed for disruption rather than creation. Devised as it was to oppose the shah, it appears to have concerned itself little with offering a viable option for the Iranian people. Perhaps seeing itself as a part of the larger movement, the students willingly left leadership considerations to others.[68]

[68] For the relationship between the student movement and Khomeini, please see Matin-asgari (2002:85).

The other question outlined in the beginning of the chapter concerns the preference for nonviolent methods of struggle. While difficult to prove, it seems highly likely that Iranian students might have been influenced by the European and American political climates of the 1960s. The Civil Rights Movement, the student sit-ins in Berkely and on other American campuses, as well as the European events of 1968 must have made a powerful impression on the politically aware Iranian exchange students. With their American and European peers fighting battles not completely unlike their own, the diffusion of both ideas and strategies seem very plausible. The leap from concerns about civil rights in America to human rights in Iran cannot have been very difficult for shrewd Iranian students to make. Combined with their own cultural predisposition to nonviolent tactics, the Western infusion of liberal political goals must have made for a potent combination.

The students remained an important element throughout the revolutionary period as they marched and struck as members of Khomeini's nonviolent army. Still, it must be emphasized that these were to a significant extent different students. Although many students residing abroad undoubtedly returned home in time for the revolution, many others did not. Furthermore, those who were students in the 1960s and early 1970s when the students laid the groundwork for the revolution's success were not necessarily students in 1978. Accordingly, many of the students who marched in favor of Khomeini were seminary students, training for a career within the *ulama* – an obvious contrast to the students who went abroad. The youngsters studying in Europe and the United States were not necessarily supporters of Khomeini's ideas as many of them preferred the

secular/liberal ideas presented to them by their American and European professors (Beeman 1983). Instead, those students supported Khomeini because of his resilience and uncompromising stance toward the shah. Little did they suspect that the propaganda victories they had achieved in the outside of Iran would soon be appropriated by Khomeini's religious opposition.

Although ultimately unsuccessful, the students played a tremendously important part in the revolution as they were the ones that transformed a domestic struggle into an international one. "Through vocal demonstrations and publicity campaigns, [the CISNU] was instrumental in drawing the attention of the international media, human rights organizations, political groups, and foreign governments to repression in Iran, thus restraining the government's otherwise arbitrary treatment of its political victims" (Matin-asgari 2002:1). The students' realization that the best way to engage the shah was by involving the world community in their cause would later be mimicked by Khomeini and his lieutenants. If the guerrillas showed Khomeini how to be obliterated by the shah, the students gave him insight into how to defeat his opponent. In addition to introducing the world to the shah they knew, it was this larger advancement in tactical developments that remained the students' lasting contribution to what could have been "their" revolution.

Summary

Scholars have for several decades considered the impact of the international context on revolutionary movements. However, following Skocpol's lead most researchers have concerned themselves with the negative impact international rivalry and completion has had on the state. Approaching the matter from a different angle, this chapter examined the impact of the international context, in this case the close relationship between the U.S. and Iran, on opposition groups. Although each one of the three groups was affected differently, a few generalizations can be made. The groups operating in Iran, the political opposition and the guerrillas, were negatively affected by the friendly relations between the shah and the United States. As long as the shah could portray these groups as radical, disruptive, and, of course, leftist, he faced little opposition from the U.S. in his brutal dealings with them. As will be explained in Chapter 5, the international media did not begin to pay attention to the shah's repressive system until the 1970s, but by that time both the guerrillas and the established political parties were either already defeated or well on their way to becoming so. For the students, on the other hand, U.S.-Iranian cooperation allowed them to eventually constitute the largest student diaspora in the United States, and operating in the liberal climate of the 1960s, they were able to instigate a protest movement against the shah, aided by their brothers and sisters in Europe, that consequently came to signify the most serious threat to the shah's international image in the decade leading up to the revolution. Visible as they were to the shah's allies, and largely out of reach of his repressive machine, the students

managed to do what neither the political opposition nor the guerrillas managed to accomplish – attract the world's attention and rock the very foundation of the shah's power.

Although the students were more successful than the politicians and guerrillas when it came to challenging the Iranian state, none of the groups were able to assume leadership of the revolutionary movement. In the case of the political parties and the guerrillas, both of the groups had been brutally repressed – indirectly due to U.S. support of the shah's regime – by the time of the revolution and were thus incapable of mobilizing sufficient support. The abroad-based students on the other hand appear to have been uninterested in revolutionary leadership, content with raising the world's awareness of the shah's wrongdoings and then aligning themselves with Khomeini's movement.

Out of the three groups, only the guerrillas opted for violence out of a sense of desperation and despair. Thanks to U.S. support, the shah had been able to repress all institutionalized opposition activities following the 1953 coup, thus eliminating the political parties and thereby the opposition's preference for peaceful means of struggle. The guerrillas, emerging as a result of overwhelming state pacification of the traditional opposition were, again thanks to U.S. support, easily suppressed by an Iranian military with access to the most advanced weapons money could buy. In contrast, the students residing abroad, relatively safe from violent repression, opted for nonviolent action in hopes of attracting world attention. Just like the political opposition and the guerrillas' failures can be explained by U.S. involvement in Iranian politics, so can the students'

success. By embracing the nonviolent, liberal values of the West, the students managed to bring the shah's brutality to the world's attention, a development that proved crucial to the movement's success and which will be dealt with in depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

4. A RELIGIOUS REVOLUTION? KHOMEINI, THE *ULAMA* AND THE BAZAAR

The shah's strategy of severely repressing his domestic political opponents initially served him well, and by defeating both the political opposition and the guerrilla movement he was able to achieve a semblance of social order. Society's tranquility in the mid 1970s, however, was simply the calm before the storm. By forestalling the possibility of a serious challenge from the political opposition or a violent one from the guerrillas, the shah sought to further fortify his grasp on political power. Unfortunately for the king and his political ambitions, the destruction of his enemies had the unintended consequence of also benefiting the group that would eventually separate him from his throne, namely the radical *ulama* forces under Khomeini's stewardship.

This chapter revolves around two central questions. How can we explain why nonviolent methods achieved hegemony in the Iranian Revolution? To do so it is essential to first trace the ascendance to leadership of the group that came to espouse nonviolent action and infuse it into the entire movement. Thus, the first part of this chapter will examine its other main question, namely, how did Khomeini and the *ulama* became the leaders of the Iranian Revolution?

As Kurzman (2004) has noted, some scholars have argued that the clergy was always the most likely revolutionary leaders in Iran, but a careful analysis of modern Iranian history tends to indicate that such assumptions are questionable. In contrast to the persuasions of *ulama* apologists and advocates, the Iranian clergy has always been a group concerned first and foremost with its own well-being. Consequently, as we shall

see, the clergy was highly rational in its political calculations, which made it starkly different from the more idealistic guerrillas. I intend to show that throughout the 20th century, and even slightly prior to that, the clergy's relationship to the state, first in the shape of the Qajar dynasty and later personified by the two Pahlavis, was in constant flux with the determinant factor being the collective best interest of the *ulama* itself.[69] Consequently, the clerics only became revolutionary in response to specific circumstances, all of which were related to the group's shifting fortunes, and its relationship to the crown. When the monarchy's interests coincided with those of the *ulama*, the clerics assumed the role of loyal collaborators, but when the regime's policies threatened the clergy's position in society, it decisively turned oppositionist. This process unfolded most clearly in the early 1960s and culminated in the *ulama*-led revolution of 1977-79. In short, the clergy only became revolutionary when it found itself with its back against the wall.

In addition to exploring the *ulama*'s rise to power, this chapter also seeks to understand its and Khomeini's preference for nonviolent methods of struggle. In contrast to Chapter 3, which focused mainly on the U.S.-Iranian relationship's influence on the unsuccessful revolutionaries, this chapter will emphasize the cultural dimensions of the Iranian Revolution. I argue that not only was nonviolent action deeply and traditionally rooted in Iranian activism, but supplementing this cultural preference was Khomeini keen understanding of the dynamics of nonviolent social change. The combination of Iranian

[69] As Parsa (1989) has noted, it is helpful to keep in mind that the *ulama* was not an altogether homogenous group and thus rarely completely unified in its politics. Throughout the chapter I will therefore point out those instances when significant internal difference existed. In general I will however refer to the *ulama* as one entity.

culture's compatibility with nonviolent struggle and Khomeini's strategic awareness made for a potent mix that eventually facilitated the shah's overthrow.

The chapter also briefly examines the role played by the *ulama*'s revolutionary ally, the *bazaaris*. Although the links between the clerics and the merchants were historically strong, the relationship was never a guaranteed component of revolutionary success. Rather, the *ulama* and the *bazaaris* were self-interested groups that only made common cause when their dissatisfactions coincided. The cause of these converging discontents was the shah's policy of westernization and modernization, which to the *ulama* manifested itself in the shape of social secularization, and for the *bazaaris* took the form of economic industrialization. Thus, the monarch's attempts to modernize Iran, naïve as it might seem in hindsight, allowed the clergy and the merchants to join forces (Miklos 1983). Accordingly, an implicit argument of this chapter is that one possible cause of the revolution was the regime's desire to break with Iranian culture and tradition, a move that infuriated society's two most autonomous social groups and had disastrous consequences for the shah.

The Ulama

The Birth of the Activist Clergy

The *ulama*'s ascendance to the political stage can be dated back at least to the Tobacco Movement of 1891. This rather brief popular uprising was a response to the

monarchy's decision to grant a British entrepreneur, Major Gerald Talbot, a special concession that would give him and his company the monopoly on Iranian tobacco both on the Iranian and the international markets. The domestic tobacco traders and growers were obviously infuriated by the proposition, as were many other merchants who feared that similar concessions might be given to foreigners in their respective areas of commerce. What is less obvious is the source of the clergy's outrage. True, the *ulama*'s welfare depended on donations from the wealthy *bazaaris*, many of whom were involved in the tobacco industry, but there were other, even more central reasons for the clerics to oppose the tobacco concession. In addition to the ills associated with foreign economic intrusions, "the cultural impact of Western penetration also started a trend toward the secularization of the society, and undermined the position of the Ulema and the Islamic culture" (Amjad, 1989: 37). These two related concerns, economic competition from foreigners and secularization of Iranian society, helped forge an alliance between the merchants and the clergy, a partnership that would be rekindled in the late 1970s.

Alarmed by the secularization of society, the *ulama* under Ayatollah Shirazi's (at the time the country's highest ranking religious figure) leadership mobilized large numbers of people in massive demonstrations and general strikes all over Iran. These tactics were coupled with a consumer boycott of tobacco that emanated from an alleged *fatwa* said to have been issued by Shirazi himself. The brief ordinance simply stated: "In the name of God, the Merciful and the Forgiving. As of now, the consumption of tobacco in any form is tantamount to war against the Imam of the Age" (Moaddel 1994:15). Keddie (2003) reports that Shirazi did indeed confirm the edict, which was observed

widely, "even by the shah's wives and by non-Muslims" (61), while Moaddel (1994) disputes the authenticity of the fatwa as "fabricated by a group of merchants" (15). Poulson (2005) reconciles the two positions by suggesting that Shirazi verified the fatwa despite knowing it was a forgery. Regardless of the decree's authenticity, it helped mobilize the Iranian masses to such an extent that both the Qajar state and the British eventually were forced to recognize that the tobacco concession would not be operational. Consequently, in early 1892 the government was forced to cancel the agreement in its entirety (M. Fischer 2003; Keddie 1983a; Moaddel 1994).[70]

In addition to marking the birth of the politically active *ulama*, the Tobacco Movement illustrates a few other key points of importance for this study. First, the movement constituted for Iranian politics a distinct break with the past – the age of popular politics had begun and the campaign against the concession had shown all Iranians, including the *ulama*, the merchants, and the state, that collective opposition to the monarchy was indeed possible. Secondly, the effectiveness of religious themes and nonviolent tactics, such as the traditional practice of *basts*, or sanctuary, and the use of *fatwas*, suggested to the clergy its own political leverage. Finally, the Tobacco Movement delivered to Iranian politics the potent *ulama*-bazaar alliance, which although inconsistent and at times dormant in the 20th century, remained close to the surface (Abrahamian 1982; Foran 1993a). Put succinctly, the Tobacco Movement established what was to become a 20th century tradition of mass-based opposition to the government,

[70] Initially the monarchy sought to only withdraw the concession's domestic elements, thus allowing Talbot's company to keep its monopoly on Iranian tobacco on the international market, but this course of action proved unfeasible.

and in its first major manifestation, nonviolent tactics had been established as a national preference.

As discussed in chapter two, the *ulama* and the *bazaaris* once again united in 1906 to help lead the Constitutional Revolution, which to some extent can be seen as the continuation of the Tobacco Movement. Although ultimately unsuccessful in drastically altering the shape of Iranian politics, the Constitutional Revolution confirmed the revolutionary tendencies of the *ulama*. At the same time, the *ulama* played a more limited role in the Constitutional Revolution than it had in the Tobacco Movement, a fact that might help explain that movement's failure. Why did the clerics resist the urge to throw its full support behind the revolutionaries? The most convincing explanation might simply be that a large portion of the clergy was unmotivated to participate in the movement. Floor (1983) has captured the varying nature of the *ulama*'s support of various movements as he contends that "if the Shi'i *ulama* appeared to espouse a popular cause, there was more often a parallelism of interest than the *ulama*'s advocating a cause for the same reasons as the other groups involved" (75). In other words, the *ulama* only supported popular movements when it sought to benefit from them. As Afary (1994) has shown, many members of the clergy grew suspicious of the decidedly secularist desire for a constitution as the movement progressed, and worried that if the constitutionalists were successful, the new social order might be detrimental to Islam and the interests of the *ulama*.[71] The validity of these concerns was "confirmed" when two leading clergymen

[71] For example, during the Constitutional Revolution some groups proposed far-reaching land reforms. As a major land owning group, the *ulama* was less than excited by the prospect of losing its property to land-less peasants (Afary 1994).

and several lesser clerics fell victim to the constitutional radicalism that partially defined the latter stages of the Constitutional Revolution. Consequently the clergy became skeptical – and divided in its support – of the movement, which quite possible reduced its chances of success (Arjomand 1988).

A large faction of the *ulama* remained suspicious of the constitutional movement, which after the aborted revolution survived in the shape of the newly created parliament, the Majles. Similarly, the clergy sustained its quiet opposition to the Qajar monarchy and its close links to both British and Russian imperialists. The fact that Reza Khan, soon to be Reza Shah, was greeted by the *ulama* as a liberator of Iran and protector of the Shi'i nation when he overthrew the Qajars in the early 1920s is therefore hardly surprising. Furthermore, the new king assumed a hostile stance toward his political rivals and succeeded in turning back the clock on the accomplishments of the constitutional movement. When faced with the choice between royal autocracy and secular constitutionalism the majority of the *ulama* gladly threw its support behind the former (Arjomand 1988).

For his part, Reza Shah went through the motions of appealing to the Shi'i clergy in order to receive their support, and during his rise to power embraced the religious heritage of his nation. For example, in March, 1924, Reza Shah went to Qom to visit Iraqi Shi'i leaders that had been expelled from that country's holy sites by the British to confer with them about the possibility of returning to Iraq. In May, he ordered his security forces to participate in religious ceremonies, and in December he went on a pilgrimage to the holy shrines in Najaf. While many members of the *ulama* were fooled into attaching

significance to royal acts such as these, the shah's gestures of religiosity were simply that – a charade designed to attract the clergy's support. The apparent success of this strategy is partly evidenced by the fact that at least two high-ranking religious leaders "publicly branded those who opposed Pahlavi's rule as enemies of Islam" (Arjomand 1988:81).

With the support of the *ulama*, Reza Shah was able to establish a powerful and repressive autocracy. However, by drastically increasing the size and reach of both the army and the bureaucracy he was able to sequentially decrease the importance of, and his own reliance on, the clergy. Once he had repressed his and the cleric's mutual enemies, the secular politicians and their supporters, the shah turned his attention to the *ulama*. Consequently, as Arjomand (1986) has noted, "under Reza Shah, the state deprived [the clergy] of all its judiciary functions, eliminated its prebendal, fiscal, and social privileges, and greatly reduced its control over education and over religious endowments" (391). Despite this rather comprehensive attack, Arjomand (1986) points out, the *ulama* did not muster a serious challenge against the state.

Furthermore, and in addition to direct attacks on the social and economic status of the *ulama*, Reza Shah embarked on a Westernization project that included a campaign to unveil the women of Iran. This amounted to a grave insult to the clergy and a fundamental attack on the nation's religious tradition. Women were not the only ones facing new clothing norms as the king attempted to severely regulate the garbs of the clerics and went as far as to have the police forcibly and publicly remove their turbans. Reza Shah also allowed liquor to be legally sold in the holy city of Qom and prohibited the teaching of the Koran in Iranian schools. Articulating his approach to the

development of Iran, Reza Shah declared upon returning from a visit to Atatürk's secularizing Turkey in 1934 that he would "eradicate religious superstition during his reign" (Arjomand 1988:82). These developments eventually culminated in the bloody repression of an *ulama*-organized protest meeting in Mashad in the summer of 1935 (Abrahamian 1982; Arjomand 1988; Keddie 1983).

Here we must return to the proposition offered above, stating that the *ulama* has historically opposed the state when its own interests have been threatened. It seems clear that the situation under Reza Shah represents a serious attack on the status of the clergy, and perhaps to the very existence of Iran as a Shi'i Muslim country. We might therefore expect some sort of reaction from the *ulama*. Yet, beyond the 1935 protest meeting and a few instances of clergy-organized "passive resistance that occasionally broke out into active opposition" (Bakhash 1990:22), such a reaction seems to never have materialized. A plausible explanation of this situation appears to be Reza Shah's willingness to repress his opponents. Unlike his son in the 1970s, Reza Shah was not concerned with how he was perceived by the rest of the world. Perhaps more importantly, it is unclear if anyone even bothered to perceive him. Iran was not a major player on the world scene and of less interest to imperial forces since Reza Shah's approach to foreigners was less welcoming and more nationalist that that of his predecessors. As a result, the *ulama* found itself fairly isolated as all other opposition groups had been suppressed and its traditional allies, the *bazaaris*, were experiencing a time of relative growth in the absence of significant imperialist intrusions. At the time of the Iranian Revolution almost 50 years later, some of these conditions would be eerily similar: the political parties had been repressed and

no meaningful armed resistance existed. However, unlike in the 1930s, the *bazaaris* had now turned against the regime, and, perhaps more importantly, this time around the world was eagerly watching.

By virtue of a powerful repressive machine, Reza Shah was able to unilaterally dominate the Iranian political scene for over a decade. However, his decision to repress every important political group in the country eventually backfired. When the Allies disapproved of his close relationship with Nazi Germany prior to and during World War II, no social group rushed to his side and in 1941 he was forced to abdicate in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Ulama Resistance in the Era of Mohammad Reza Shah

Under the new shah the *ulama*'s relationship with the state improved drastically for a few different reasons. First, the young king was an insecure and initially rather weak regent, and thus stood to benefit from the clergy's support, while this simultaneously allowed the *ulama* to exert significant influence, thus making for a mutually beneficial alliance. A second, and arguably more important reason for the shah-*ulama* alliance, was the rapid growth of secular and Marxist political parties in the 1940s and 1950s. The *ulama* was especially concerned with the potential of a communist takeover, the realization of which, due to the dogmatic atheism that characterized the movement, could have amounted to an existential threat for the clergy (Arjomand 1986). The shah's government banned the Tudeh in 1949, but the political vacuum created by the removal

of the communist party was quickly filled by the secularist National Front and its populist leader Mohammad Mossadeq, a combination that appeared to the *ulama* as only a slight improvement from the threat of communism.

The *ulama*'s suspicion of the National Front was not simply the fruit of the clergy's collective paranoia. Rather the National Front had given the clergy concrete reason to oppose its agenda. One scholar has vividly captured the rather intense character of the *ulama*-National Front antagonism at the time of Mossadeq's rule:

> On one occasion, Mosaddegh's supporters had put a pair of glasses on a dog, taken it to the Majles, and named it "ayatollah." They then toured the dog through the streets. Speaking later of that event, Khomeini said that he had predicted, "Mosadegh will be slapped; and it was not long before he was slapped; had he survived, he would have slapped Islam. (Parsa 1989:193)

While insults did not win the secular politicians many clerical friends, the real source of concern for the *ulama* was what such insults symbolized: their anti-religious nature combined with Mossadeq's close links to the banned Tudeh party was enough to justify the clergy's analysis that the oil nationalization movement would eventually deliver Iran to communism and atheism. This in turn caused the *ulama*, perhaps more unified than at any other time in the 20th century, to align itself with the shah and his Anglo-American supporters. Under the leadership of the country's preeminent cleric, Ayatollah Boroujerdi, and with the backing of royalist members of the Majles, the *ulama* organized demonstrations in Qom and sent representatives to Tehran to support the king. When the shah left the country for Rome on "vacation" after the first, aborted, coup on August 16, 1953, Boroujerdi sent a telegram urging him to "return because Shiism and Islam need you. You are the Shiite King" (Parsa 1989:193). The brief telegram suggests where the

ulama's allegiances rested as it does not seem to have been concerned with the well-being of the Iranian people, but rather with the well-being of the *ulama*.

The Ulama and the White Revolution

The coup that ended the oil nationalization movement and a decade of at least nominal democracy in Iran was followed by a decade of stricter autocratic rule in which the *ulama*'s position in society remained on solid grounds. The shah was strengthened by his return to the throne and vowed to never again let his adversaries take advantage of him. The coup was therefore consolidated by means of significant repression and persecution, mainly carried out by the SAVAK, that initially targeted only political groups. In time, however, the shah sought to limit the influence of the *ulama*, but rather than utilizing the same physically repressive means that he had employed against his political opponents, the shah opted to battle the clergy through his policies.

The king's return to power had been a direct consequence of some British, but especially major American intervention, and the shah was well aware of this fact. Hence forward he would therefore pay close attention to American advice and, with the exception of those periods in time when he seems to have enjoyed extraordinary confidence, labored hard to maintain a positive image in the eyes of American officials in both Iran and Washington. The shah's repression of his political opponents, which while severe stopped short of being altogether debilitating for the opposition, was generally met with approval by his American allies (Bill 1988a). Opposition elements, such as a revised

version of the National Front remained active in the Majles, but by now true power rested with the shah and those appointees that served at his pleasure. Thus the most urgent threat of the late 1950s and early 1960s came not from the political opposition or a relatively pacified clergy, but rather from the type of militant communists that had recently celebrated triumphs in other parts of the world. Of course, no such threat yet existed in Iran, but the shah and his American supporters, Kennedy in particular, were committed to preempt any possibility of such a threat.

The concern with a communist takeover was the most significant American-Iranian unifier, and the tool designed to combat it was in large part an American creation. An American report authored by John W. Bowling advised the shah to take concrete measures toward creating an agricultural middle class in order to prevent the birth of a communist peasant movement in the countryside. Bowling highlighted fourteen policy recommendations for the shah's consideration, including the reduction of soaring military expenditures, steps toward assuming a less public pro-Western stance, making symbolic gestures against the international consortium that was profiting from Iranian oil, scapegoating of public officials in order to appear tough on corruption, and relaxation of political repression. The shah paid little attention to most of these suggestions. Although he decreased political repression in the early 1960s under pressure from President Kennedy, the king preferred to focus on another one of Bowling's recommendations, namely the implementation of a land reform program (Milani 1988).

Bowling's report was consistent with the early 1960s policies of the Kennedy administration which "considered land reform an effective deterrent against communist

expansion or an agrarian revolution of the Chinese type and a prerequisite for the success of any industrialization program" (Milani 1988:83). In light of events in China, Cuba, and Vietnam, the United States had been advocating similar programs of land reform for its Latin American allies, and to collaborating regimes throughout the developing world. In order to combat the potential of Iranian communism, the U.S. reasoned, economic development should be prioritized over military buildup, an area in which the shah had already made significant progress due to exorbitant arms purchases from both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The Kennedy administration was so keen on the idea of Iranian land reform that it offered the shah a $35 million loan "contingent on the implementation of land reform" (Parsa 1989:49).

The idea of a land reform program had been on the Iranian agenda long before it was realized through the shah's White Revolution.[72] In fact, the shah's minister of agriculture, Dr. Hassan Arsanjani, organized the Congress of Rural and Cooperative Societies in Tehran in late 1962 where large numbers of peasants and farm workers expressed their support for him and his plan for land reform. Alarmed by Arsanjani's popularity among the peasants, the shah solicited the minister's resignation in order to be able to take personal credit for the land reform program that was to be a central piece of the White Revolution. The shah hoped that by presenting himself as a champion of the poor peasants he would not only prevent the emergence of a communist party in the countryside, but also widen his own popular support (Milani 1988). Populist appeals

[72] For details about the White Revolution, please see Amjad (1989), Bill (1988a), Dorman & Farhang (1987), Foran (1993a), Golan (1990), Milani (1988), Parsa (1989), Parsons (1984), Sick (1985), and Stempel (1981)

aside, the actual intention of the land reform program was to not only prevent rural communism, but also to increase the shah's own landholdings. Consequently, the objective of the program was to prepare the way for capitalist agribusinesses that would mainly benefit the monarchy and its supporters (Amjad 1989).

For the peasants the land redistribution program had extraordinarily limited benefits. As Amjad (1989) explains, the land redistribution program had three phases, and "while the first stage of the land reform provided lands for some peasants, during the second and throughout the third stage the small holders lost their lands and became landless again" (84). The dominant position in the countryside that had previously been held by powerful landlords was now to be replaced by the Pahlavi state. For many of the re-dispossessed peasants their sole option was to migrate to the cities where they and their children almost twenty years later helped dethrone the man who had forced them off their land (Foran 1993a).

While perhaps more disadvantaged by the shah's land reform than any other social group, the impoverished peasants were not the only ones who disapproved of the king's measures, as the *ulama* found much of its endowed land redistributed. Although this constituted a serious, and in the eyes of the clergy even outrageous assault, the shah's White Revolution proved unacceptable to the clergy for additional reasons. First, owing to one of the six central points of the White Revolution the state was committed to combating rural illiteracy. This struggle against ignorance was waged through the mobilization of a literacy corps that descended on the country side, a state strategy that comprised a direct attack on the *ulama*'s monopoly on rural education. In addition, the

state's involvement with the countryside included Health Corps, Extension and Development Corps, and other government organizations, most important of which was the implementation of rural courts. Such courts often replaced those *ulama*-controlled ones that operated according to Islamic law. This judicial challenge amounted to another severe setback for the clergy and was perceived as an attempt to limit its authority in the rural areas (Foran 1993a). The leading clerics' indignation can be easily detected in a 1963 letter from Ayatollah Milani to Ayatollah Khomeini:

> The people must be told that the ruling body no longer insists that a judge must be a Muslim as it makes any debauched person or *communist a judge* [emphasis added]. The people must be told of how the path has been opened in Iran for agents and spies of Israel. (Floor 1983:90)

In other words, the *ulama* feared that the shah's White Revolution would lead to another episode of secularization and thus a golden opportunity for the communists and other enemies of Islam to reemerge.

The Muharram Uprising of 1963

These clerical fears of secularization did not stem mainly from the shah's land redistribution program or even his modernization project that included the education of the rural population. The most threatening element of the White Revolution in the minds of the clergy, and the one point that allowed virtually all of Iran's religious officials to unite, was the shah's decision to bestow suffrage upon the women of Iran. The vote was granted to women in February 1963, a month after a referendum on the shah's White

Revolution had passed decidedly, despite several political parties imploring the population to boycott the vote. On March 21, around the Iranian New Year, the *ulama* led demonstrations in cities around Iran, especially in the holy city of Qom which hosts the country's main seminary. The following day, in response to the demonstrations, army commandos dressed up as civilians assaulted students at the Faiziyyeh seminary in Qom (Foran 1993a; Bakhash 1990).

The radical faction of the clergy, led by the uncompromising Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, continued to voice its opposition to the state and its White Revolution. The tensions reached their peak at the time of the annual celebration of Imam Hussein's seventh century martyrdom on the tenth of Muharram (this particular year this date fell on June 5). On that day, Ayatollahs Khomeini and Qumi were arrested in the early morning, charged with the intent of leading disturbances. The arrests of the two senior clerics guaranteed the occurrence of the protests the government had anticipated as demonstrations took place in the cities of Tehran, Qom, Shiraz, Isfahan, Tabriz, Kashan, and Mashhad. These protests emanated in the bazaar areas and proved difficult for the government to control, as is evidenced by the fact that the security forces were unable to prevent the demonstrations from continuing the following day (Foran 1993a; Bakhash 1990). However, at that point the shah and his cabinet had seen enough. The army was called in and according to one scholar, "the collision between the Shah's forces and the opposition was the bloodiest since the overthrow of Mossadegh ten years earlier" (Bakhash 1990:30). The rioting continued for a few more days and did not end until June

8 when martial law was proclaimed in several of the cities that had witnessed some of the most severe disturbances.

According to government sources the bloody confrontations cost twenty people their lives, although the opposition estimated the number to be "between five and fifteen thousand" killed (Baktiari 1996:45). An interesting disagreement between different historians and other area specialists concerns the question of who ordered the army's massacre. Some have argued that the shah himself allowed the military to attack the demonstrators (Amjad 1989; Bakhash 1990), while others have suggested that it was the prime minister, Asadollah Alam, who had to give General Uvaisi the orders to brutally repress the protests as the shah wavered (Foran 1993a). The uncovering of who gave the armed forces the green light might seem irrelevant, but it becomes interesting 15 years later as the shah refuses to use decisive force against protesters demanding his removal from power. If the shah did indeed order the military to use deadly force in 1963 it would suggest that he possessed the mentality necessary to consider such measures against his own people, but for some other reason refrained from doing so in 1977-79. If, on the other hand, he did hesitate, that would suggest that he was perhaps the more gentle and benevolent king that some scholars and apologists have claimed. Regardless of which interpretation is correct, the fact of the matter is that the government did indeed use deadly and decisive force and that the United States remained firm in its support of the shah despite, or perhaps because of, his government's willingness to massacre its citizens. James Bill has captured this American attitude personified by soon-to-be President Lyndon B. Johnson, who

> approved of the shah's highly touted reform program and White Revolution. He approved even more of the shah's brutal treatment of demonstrators throughout Iran in June 1963. To LBJ, the shah was a defender of American interests – a "good guy" manning the barricades for America in the Persian Gulf region. (Bill 1988a:156)

American sentiments toward the 1963 uprising differed starkly from those surrounding the 1977-79 revolution. As we shall see in Chapter 5, these contrasting behaviors cannot be reduced to the nature of Johnson's, Nixon's, and Carter's presidencies. By then, something had been qualitatively transformed in the structural relationship between Iran and the United States, with the former no longer being a silent supporter of the latter. Instead, by the time of the revolution Iran was to a significant degree its own master, a country with considerable economic strengths. Such a nation's undemocratic and repressive actions against its own people could no longer be blindly approved by the United States, the world's beacon of human progress, and would cause severe publicity problems for both nations that will be discussed in the next chapter.

The 1963 Muharram uprising had several significant consequences for the future of Iranian politics. First, government repression of the uprising, and the harshening political climate that followed in its aftermath, constituted the end of institutional opposition to the shah as secular parties, including the National Front umbrella, were destroyed. Second, and in part contributing to the downfall of the traditional opposition, Iranian guerrilla groups emerged as a consequence of the shah's new, more forceful approach to handling political dissenters. In the minds of the guerrilla leaders, the government's reaction to the Muharram protests suggested a new turn in Iranian history: the shah's increased willingness to brutally repress political opponents caused them to

conclude that institutionalized responses to despotism had been rendered futile. From now on, they reasoned, government violence would have to be met with opposition violence.[73] Third, the Muharram uprising of 1963 served as a "dress rehearsal" for the Iranian Revolution. In fact, this function of the uprising might be one of its most significant outcomes, and has duly been noted by several commentators (Abrahamian 1982: M. Fischer 2003: Milani 1988: Sick 1985: Stempel 1981). Just as it can be argued that the nonviolent, but ultimately failed, Czechoslovakian resistance to the Soviet invasion of 1968 was a dress rehearsal for the 1989 "Velvet Revolution," these scholars have suggested that the Iranian opposition movement learned important lessons from its 1963 bout with the state, most importantly the potentially decisive role of the military (Stempel 1981).[74] Finally, the Muharram uprising helped establish Khomeini as the de facto leader of the opposition. His cause probably benefitted from his imprisonment on the eve of the uprising, his subsequent sentencing to house arrest, and finally from the shah's decision to exile the Ayatollah to first Najaf, Iraq, and later to Paris. Khomeini had been an outspoken opponent of the shah for quite some time before the 1963 protests, but it was this particular incident that irrevocably put him on Iran's political map.

To summarize, the rise of the revolutionary *ulama* can be seen as a historically contingent development. As long as the state was treating the clergy with the reverence it felt it deserved, religious leaders were content to support the state regardless of almost any other consideration. It was only when the shah, following the 1953 coup, and

[73] For more on the emergence of the guerrilla movement, please see Chapter 3.
[74] Amuzegar (1991) has noted that the 1963 Muharram uprising is unique in 20th century Iranian contentious politics as it marks the only instance in which "the military actively engaged in successfully defending the crown against insurgents" (301).

especially after his fateful decision to enact the White Revolution in the early 1960s, alienated the *ulama* that the group decisively rose up against him. However, the alienation of the clerics, a direct result then of the shah's westernization/secularization policies, became detrimental only when the same policies estranged Iranian society's only other autonomous group, the *bazaaris*, to whom we know turn our attention.

The Bazaaris

Bazaaris is the collective term used to describe the various participants of the traditional Middle Eastern market, the bazaar. As Milani (1988) explains, the internal structure of the bazaar consisted of three different groups. The smallest and most powerful group was made up of the merchants and money lenders. Because of their substantive wealth these individuals, as a group, wielded significant political influence. The second level of the bazaar was constituted of "small commodity producers and shopkeepers" (Milani 1988:116). Finally, the bottom strata consisted of all the remaining workers tied to the bazaars, such as salesmen, store assistants, and street vendors. Combined, these three groups totaled 481,026 individuals in 1966, and in 1976, at the eve of the revolution, their numbers had grown to 561, 583. Milani further reports that sixty-seven percent of all *bazaaris* were self-employed, a fact that likely contributed to their independence from the state (Milani 1988:116).

Similarly to the *ulama*, the *bazaaris*' relationship with the state in the twentieth century was rarely uncomplicated. Scholars have shown that just like the clergy's

political outlook, that of the *bazaaris* simply reflected the core interests of the group. Thus, the merchants were rarely motivated by ideology or solidarity with other groups, but rather moved to action based on their economic interests (Parsa 1988). As noted above, the merchants played important roles in many of the social movements, revolutionary or otherwise, in the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, they partnered with the clerics in the early 1890s to defeat the monarchy's plan to concede the rights to Iranian tobacco to a foreigner (Bakhash 1991; Keddie 1983), and while partaking in the Constitutional Revolution, the merchants threw their support behind the popular movement in order to reduce the influence and access of Russian and British traders. However, in perhaps the broadest movement preceding the revolution of the late 1970s, the *bazaaris* parted ways with most members of the clergy and sided with Mossadeq and his liberal-nationalist coalition. As in all previous instances of the politicization of the merchants, the motivation for backing Mossadeq was simply the prime minister's "nationalist economic policies designed to halt growing international penetration of Iranian markets" (Parsa 1988:59). Protectionist as his policies were, they found passionate support among the trading classes.

Despite at times breaking with the clergy on political issues, the shared conservative values that bound the *bazaaris* to the *ulama* were never in question. The relationship between the two groups was however based on a stronger foundation than just common values. The *bazaaris* depended on the clergy for religious and ideological guidance. The *ulama*, on the other hand, was economically dependent on the merchants as the latter paid religious taxes and shouldered the economic burden of maintaining and

managing Iran's religious shrines (Amjad 1989). The strength of the bond is nicely captured by Halliday (1979) who suggests that "the *bazaar* merchants who sustain the *mollahs* are reckoned to pay the latter more in *zakat*, religious tax, than they do in secular taxes to the state" (19). While this mutually beneficial arrangement provided both the *bazaaris* and the *ulama* with ample incentives for collaboration, each group's respective interests seem to historically have trumped their potential affinities for one another. Consequently, when one group benefitted from certain state policies that group would generally support the state, even if such support resulted in hardship for the other group.

Not surprisingly then, Parsa (1988) has noted that the potentially powerful alliance between the mosque and the bazaar has historically only been activated at those points in time when the two groups' interests have coincided, as they did in response to the tobacco concession of 1891. The most crucial of such instances, however, emerged in the aftermath of the White Revolution in the mid-1960s when the shah's regime embarked upon a program of westernization and industrialization. The westernization program was implicitly, if not explicitly, an attempt to drastically reduce the influence of the *ulama*, a group the shah condescendingly referred to as the "black reactionaries," referencing their conservative values and black robes.[75] By westernizing his kingdom, the shah hoped to bury the opinion of Iran as backwards and ascend the nation into the community of developed countries. Part of such a transformation would by necessity have to include the industrialization of Iran. Therefore, an important component of the

[75] The shah considered the *ulama* one half of the threat to his plans of rapidly transforming Iran into an industrialized country on par with some of the world's most advanced states. The other half were the "red revolutionaries," i.e. the communists.

White Revolution was to modernize Iran's means of production. Since this was admittedly an expensive affair, the shah's government invited the active participation of foreign corporations, which were perceived, correctly, by the traditional merchants as a threat to their leadership role in Iranian manufacture (Foran 1993a). Stempel (1981) succinctly summarizes the situation by stating that "before the Shah's industrialization program gained headway, the *bazaaris* were the most influential businessmen in the country. Since the mid-1960s they had been eclipsed by the new entrepreneurs - bankers, manufacturers, and export-importers" (45), many of whom were either foreigners themselves or collaborated with non-Iranians.

The *bazaaris*' contentious relationship with the state suffered another blow in the mid-1970s when the shah decided to replace the country's two-party scheme with a one-party system. The irony of the creation of a one-party system by a self-defined pro-westerner such as the shah has not been lost on commentators. For example, Foran (1993a) explains that

> In 1961 the shah noted in his autobiography, "If I were a dictator rather than a constitutional monarch, then I might be tempted to sponsor a single dominant party such as Hitler organized or such as you find today in Communist countries." The façade of democracy and constitutionalism came down completely with the formation of just such a single party system in 1975. The new *Rastakhiz-i Milli* (National Resurgence) Party was set up under Prime Minister Huvaida and all loyal Iranians were ordered to participate. (315)

Amjad (1989) has suggested that the shah's main motivation for establishing the Rastakhiz party was to limit the power of the *bazaaris* and the *ulama*. By demanding that all loyal Iranians join the party, the shah hoped to funnel popular support his way. This expectation would eventually prove disastrously optimistic, as the new party with time

became more likely to alienate potential supporters than bring them into the ranks of the monarchic loyalists (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994; Stempel 1981).

The most concrete attempt by the shah to limit the *bazaaris*' political power was the anti-profiteering campaign that was launched in 1975 and designed to be carried out by the Rastakhiz party.[76] Due to mindless government spending the Iranian economy was at the time overheated and experiencing catastrophic levels of inflation. The shah, unwilling to either admit or believe that his policies were the sources of the economic crisis, found himself in urgent need of scapegoats. By blaming "profiteering" *bazaaris* for the poor economy the shah sought to kill two birds with one stone: not only would he not have to assume responsibility for the failing economy, but he would deal some of his most potent rivals a powerful blow. Accordingly, "some 20,000 [*Rastakhiz*] party members were mobilized to carry out this campaign. Between 1975 and 1977, more than 250,000 shops were closed down, and 31,000 *bazaaris* were imprisoned or exiled." (Amjad 1989:100). While Amjad's numbers might be exaggerated or perhaps even incorrect,[77] the salient point remains: the shah's anti-profiteering campaign amounted to a declaration of war against the *bazaaris,* whose support of Khomeini and the radical faction of the *ulama* was in turn solidified.

The radicalization of the *bazaaris* that followed as a consequence of the shah's anti-profiteering campaign firmly placed most merchants in the revolutionary camp. During the revolution they participated directly by resurrecting a traditional response to

[76] For details about the anti-profiteering campaign, please see for example Amjad (1989) and Parsa (1988).
[77] Elsewhere in the same work he states that "The anti-profiteering campaign of 1975-1976 was also aimed at weakening the bazaaris. During this period more than forty thousand shops were closed and eighty thousand bazaaris were imprisoned or exiled" (Amjad 1989:31).

dissatisfaction with state policy, namely by shutting down the bazaars. While many *bazaaris* whole-heartedly supported the revolutionary movement, some merchants had to be "convinced" to participate by Islamic radicals through the threat of property destruction should they refuse to close their shops. Although temporary market shutdowns might have put some pressure on the state as such actions amounted to an assault on the economy, the main role of the bazaar during the revolution was the same role it had played in social movements historically, that is, to finance it (Amjad 1989; Amuzegar 1991; Skocpol 1982; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994). As Skocpol (1982) explains,

> The traditional urban communities of Iran were to play an indispensable role in mobilizing and sustaining the core of popular resistance. Modern industrial workers who struck depended on economic aid from the bazaar, and secular, professional middle class opponents to the Shah depended on alliances with the clerical and lay leaders of the bazaar, who could mobilize massive followings through established economic and social networks. (272)

In other words, the most important role played by the *bazaaris* as a group in the revolution of 1977-79 was that of financiers. The job of mobilizing and motivating the masses they largely left in the hands of the Khomeini-faithful *ulama*. Like the clerics, the merchants only became revolutionary and assumed leadership positions in the revolutionary movement when pushed in that direction by the Westernizing state. By alienating the country's two autonomous groups through the intertwined processes of secularization and industrialization, the shah inadvertently helped created the foundations of the revolutionary coalition that brought him down.

A Religious Revolution?

The converging discontents of the clergy and the merchants were a crucial component of the revolution. However, such convergence of interests would not have been enough to overthrow one of the militarily most powerful states in the world. Furthermore, while the emergence of an *ulama*-bazaar coalition in the absence of other viable opposition groups helps explain why this alliance was able to assume leadership of the revolution, it does not explain why the coalition opted for nonviolent methods of struggle. To solve the puzzle of repertoire selection we must take into consideration both culture and strategy, and, most importantly, come to the realization that the Iranian Revolution was nonviolent *by design*. The purpose of this section is therefore to examine how Khomeini and his followers created a nonviolent revolutionary movement to oppose the shah.

A Tradition of Nonviolent Action

Iran's past is abundant with examples of nonviolent opposition to both the state and foreign exploiters. From the Tobacco Movement of the early 1890, to the Constitutional Revolution, Mossadeq's oil nationalization movement, and the 1963 Muharram uprising, Iranians have repeatedly resorted to nonviolent tactics as ways to channel their discontent. Reflecting on the plethora of Iranian social movements in the 90

years leading up to the 1977-79 revolution, Foran (1994a) has expressed his amazement with

> the tactics employed, which have consistently been far more peaceful than their revolutionary counterparts outside Iran… Sit-ins in the form of *basts* go far back in Iranian history, and have religious roots in the institution of the sanctuary that could be found from governments or private parties in mosques, shrines, and sometimes the homes of religious leaders. (230-1)

Although cultural explanations of the Iranian preference for nonviolent methods over violent ones are useful, they are arguable unable to fully explain the emergence of this preference. Culture and tradition might explain the ideological preference for nonviolent methods of resistance, but they do not bring much clarity into the question of movement dynamics. In other words, why and how were Iranians able to mobilize large masses as early as the late 19th century? In order to answer those questions, it is useful to amend cultural perspectives with structural points of view.

One powerful such structural argument for why organized nonviolent methods of political struggle, rather than violent and chaotic riots, have dominated Iran's past has been made by Abrahamian (1985a). His theoretical proposition is worth quoting at length.

> Riots are the product of spontaneity; strikes, rallies and demonstrations that of organisational premeditation. In Europe, through the long duration between the decay of the traditional guilds and the rise of modern trade unionism, there were few organs that could represent popular interests and mobilise the working man into effective pressure-groups. Thus, public dissatisfaction was expressed often through outbursts of unplanned rioting, rarely through organised protests. In Iran, the transitional period between the decay of the guilds and the birth of unionism did not take centuries, but a mere 15 years. As a result, the crowd in Iran, even more so than in Europe, was rarely a mob, but was usually a demonstration or a rally. (144-5)

If Abrahamian is correct, the lack of nonviolent challenges in world history has as much to do with political challengers' ability to organize as anything else. In the case of Iran, the *ulama*'s coalition with the *bazaaris* emerged as a unifying force with real leadership potential. As a consequence, Iranian collective action early on established itself as orderly manifestations rather than spontaneous riots.

Although approaching the historical trajectories that have steered Iranian activism in the direction of nonviolent struggle in a somewhat different manner, Amuzegar (1991) favors a similarly structural argument. Describing Iran's past as one characterized by frequent foreign occupations that "created an almost unbridgeable gap between the population and the governing class," he argues that Iranians in response to this reality "not only withheld their support from the state, but considered noncooperation with public agencies morally right and socially justified" (Amuzegar 1991: 296). The term "noncooperation" is particularly important here as it suggests opposition to the state through means other than violence. Although Amuzegar leaves the reader to speculate as to why Iranians have historically preferred nonviolence over violence, his point validates Abrahamian's assertion that nonviolent action has traditionally been the Iranian repertoire of choice. Abrahamian and Amuzegar's structural theories can be used to fortify a more cultural explanation of Iranian nonviolent action. Structure and culture constantly finds itself in interaction with each other, and Iranian preference for nonviolence is a case in point. By combining structural elements, such as organizational capabilities, with religious-cultural leanings, we may be able to construct a credible theory of Iranian preference for nonviolence.

At the center of a cultural explanation of Iranian nonviolence must be placed the story of Imam Hussein's martyrdom at Karbala in 680 AD, a religious myth that carries significant weight for Shi'i Muslims. At Karbala, Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, willingly chose death over submission to the Sunni caliph, Yazid, and was joined in his martyrdom by 72 followers, consisting of friends and family. Hussein's decision to die for his faith and in opposition to the corrupt secular rule of the villain-caliph set a powerful example for Shi'ites to live by (Algar 1983; Heikal 1982). Utilizing the Karbala myth throughout the revolution, Khomeini would compare the shah to the caliph, and himself, albeit only implicitly, to Hussein (Amjad 1989).[78]

The precise role of the Karbala myth and the notion of martyrdom in the Iranian Revolution have been subject to much scholarly attention.[79] Some researchers have argued that Iran's Shi'i Islamic heritage almost by necessity makes the nation more prone to revolutionary activities than its Sunni neighbors. For example, Algar (1983) has suggested that the religion's

> rejection of *de facto* authority and the belief in the virtue of martyrdom, has given Shi'ism, particularly at certain points in its history, an attitude of militancy that has been sadly lacking in a large number of Sunni segments of the Muslim *Ummah*." (12)

Similarly, Zonis and Brumberg (1987) explain that the notion of dying for one's faith through martyrdom "is by no means absent in Sunni thought, but it is not central, in part because Sunni Islam does not derive inspiration from the example of a religious figure

[78] For a detailed treatise on the political role historically played by Karbala symbolism, see Aghaie (2004).
[79] On the relationship between the Karbala myth and the Iranian Revolution, see Fischer (2003), Foran (1993a), Hegland (1983), Heikal (1982), Keddie (2003), Kurzman (2004), Milani (1988), and Mottahedeh (2000).

who dies for his faith" (55). The assumption here is that Shi'i Muslims, because of their religion's heavy emphasis on martyrdom, have historically been more likely to engage in revolutionary activity directed at the state than their Sunni counterparts. However, suggestions such as these tend to be made either by supporters of the revolution or enemies of it, arguing respectively that Shi'i Muslims are either firmly on the side of justice and morality or inherently prone to violence.[80]

Furthermore, the suggestion that Imam Hussein's martyrdom has historically been the source of revolutionary inspiration has been challenged by researchers. According to Hegland (1983), Hussein was traditionally not a source of activism, but rather a source of pity that moved devout Shi'ites to self-flagellation and weeping. The image of Hussein as a revolutionary, she argues, was conveniently developed in the course of the Iranian Revolution. Supporting this argument, Kurzman (2004) found in his interviews with revolution participants that the presumed existence of a "Kerbala complex – which ensured that the revolution would triumph" (Heikal 1982:176), or a powerful "Karbala paradigm [that] helped unite disparate interest groups into a mass movement against an entrenched tyranny" (M. Fischer 2003) overstates the facts of the matter. He concludes from his interviews that "the language of martyrdom did not necessarily match behavior in the Iranian revolution" (Kurzman 2004:71).

The counterevidence presented here is not meant to suggest that the Karbala myth, Imam Hussein, and the general concept of martyrdom were inconsequential in the Iranian Revolution, because they were not. Instead it should be noted that since these

[80] For a discussion of the role historically played by culture in Iranian politics, see Behnam (1986).

concepts had not been utilized in previous assaults on the Iranian state, they cannot be considered inherent parts of the Iranian opposition's repertoire. As Foran (1993a), Keddie (1983; 1994), Moaddel (1992; 1994), Skocpol (1982) and others have explained, these notions had to be woven into a revolutionary religious-ideological narrative in order to assume political significance. It was in this role of master weaver that Khomeini emerged as leader of the revolution. The type of cultural explanation proposed in the following pages does therefore not suggest that Shi'i Islam by definition is a revolutionary ideology, but simply argues that tenets from Shi'ism were appropriated by the religious opposition and transformed into a religious ideology.[81] This newly fashioned ideology, I argue, deliberately helped reinforce the compatibility between Shi'ism and nonviolent action.

Khomeini, Shi'ism, and Nonviolent Strategy

A common approach to understanding Khomeini in the West has been to paint the ayatollah as an Islamic fundamentalist. However, Abrahamian (1993) has skillfully pointed out that "populism is a more apt term for describing Khomeini, his ideas, and his movement because the term is associated with ideological adaptability and intellectual flexibility" (2).[82] He then proceeds to explain that contrary to the familiar image of Khomeini, the ayatollah "succeeded in gaining power mainly because his public

[81] See Moaddel (1992; 1994).
[82] Arjomand (1984) has made a similar argument, referring to Khomeini's ideology as "revolutionary traditionalism."

pronouncements carefully avoided esoteric doctrinal issues. Instead, they hammered away at the regime on its most visible political, social, and economic shortcomings" (Abrahamian 1993:16-7). The fact that Khomeini's clandestine vision for Iran, including political domination by the clergy, was radical rather than fundamentalist is evidenced by the fact that

> The idea of revolutionary overthrow of the state and the establishment of an Islamic government was Khomeini's invention – there was no ideological precedent to justify the *ulama*'s direct rule in society. Indeed, many grand ayatollahs disagreed with Khomeini's political views. (Moaddel 1992:366)

Succinctly put, there was nothing fundamentalist about Khomeini's grand plan for Iran.

Part of the western confusion regarding Khomeini's alleged fundamentalism can possibly be traced precisely to his incessant use of the term "Islamic." In response to these misconceptions, scholars have shown that "Shi'ism" and "Islam" in the context of the Iranian Revolution came to hold extra-religious meanings. In Khomeini's rhetoric, Shi'ism became near-synonymous with both democracy and nationalism,[83] and through this coalescence of terms Khomeini "managed to be all things to all people" (Bakhash 1990:19).[84] For example, he once explained that "an Islamic government cannot be totalitarian or despotic, but is constitutional and democratic," only to add that "in this democracy, however, the laws are not made by the will of the people, but only by the Koran and the Sunna [Traditions] of the Prophet" (Khomeini 1980:15). No wonder many Iranians failed to grasp the ayatollah's true intentions.

[83] On the issue of Iranian nationalism, see Cottam (1979) and Menashri (1999).
[84] In fact, many Iranians did not know what Khomeini had in mind for the post-shah era (Benard & Khalilzad 1984; Esposito 1990). Especially women were in for a rude awakening when many of their advancements under the shah would be nullified by the Islamic Republic. For details, see Azari (1983) and Esfandiari (1997)

Perhaps Khomeini's populist use of religion is best summarized by Amuzegar (1991) as he states that "the ayatollah's 'religious' appeal was attractive and effective because everything that [Iranians] rightly or wrongly resented about the Pahlavi's rule was portrayed to them as un-Islamic" (294).[85] In this sense, the revolutionary use of religion had in fact little to do with religious sentiments. In fact, the eventual first president of the Islamic Republic, Mehdi Bazargan, later "argued that the term 'Islamic' was used in order to emphasize the social and moral values, and the concept of justice, for which they fought" (M. Bayat 1987:79). Hence, for many Iranians revolutionary religiosity had little to do with religion. Rather,

> Iranians could join together even beyond the ranks of the religiously devout, because Shi'a Islam and Khomeini's visibly uncompromising moral leadership provided a nationally indigenous way to express common opposition to an aloof monarch too closely identified with foreigners. Even secular Iranian could participate under these rubrics. (Skocpol 1982:274)

So how exactly did Khomeini manage to convince his secular followers to "nevertheless [turn] to the traditional value system represented by Shi'ism as a means of expressing their profound rejection of the shah's repression and mindless pursuit of things Western" (Dorman & Farhang 1987:174)? Mansoor Moaddel, who has alluded to the central role of ideology by suggesting that "the distinctive feature of the Iranian revolution was the all-encompassing role played by the imageries and symbolism of Shi'i Islam in initiating and sustaining the revolutionary movement" (Moaddel 1992:353), has developed the concept of "ideology as episodic discourse" (Moaddel 1992; 1994).[86] The

[85] See also Dorraj (1990).
[86] For the role played by Islam in the revolution, see also Keddie (1983c); Cole and Keddie (1986), Cottam (1986), Mortimer (1982), and Salehi (1988).

term episodic discourse refers to the process in which Khomeini and other revolutionary leaders constructed a novel, temporary, and non-fundamentalist Shi'i ideology based on the "imageries and symbols" traditionally present in Shi'i Islam. This strategy of modifying Shi'i Islam had been used before, as Bazargan's secular Liberation Movement in the early 1960s had "aimed at formulating a lay-dominated religion that would be acceptable both to the Anti-Shah clergy, especially to the junior clergy, and to the modern-educated middle class, particularly the discontented intelligentsia" (Abrahamian 1985b:161). Similarly unsuccessfully, the Islamic guerrillas had attempted to merge Marxism and Islam into a religious revolutionary ideology (Abrahamian 1989; Amuzegar 1991). However, it was not until Khomeini successfully mastered the craft in the late 1970s that Shi'i Islam became revolutionary.

In the West it is often presumed that Khomeini was the lone ideological leader of the Iranian Revolution, but such assumptions are inaccurate. In fact, it has been argued that Khomeini was not even the most important ideologue of the revolution, with that epithet instead befalling Ali Shari'ati,[87] a tremendously popular Paris-educated sociologist who managed to rather successfully merge Islamic doctrine with radical revolutionary ideologies (Foran 1994b). Keddie (2003) has emphatically emphasized Shari'ati's importance for the Iranian Revolution:

> It was he, more than all the poets and writers who made such brave attempts to employ the simple language of the masses in order to change their consciousness, who most touched their sensitive nerve. Once dependence on the West was associated with Western culture, and Western culture with moral decay, it was

[87] For biographical information about Shari'ati, see for example Rahnema (1998) and Sachedina (1983).

> natural to seek Iran's salvation not in the Westernization pushed by the shah's regime but in a return to an idealized indigenous Islam. (188)

Although not a close collaborator of Khomeini's, it seems clear that Shari'ati's (1979; 1980; 1981) message helped justify Khomeini's Islamic ideology, and the ayatollah was indeed careful to often and publicly praise the sociologist.

Perhaps Shari'ati's most important ideological contribution was to emphasize the historic role of martyrdom in Shi'i Islam. "He distinguished revolutionary Shi'ism (the religion of Imam 'Ali in the seventh century) from official state Shi'ism (what he called 'Safavid Shi'ism'), thereby clearly differentiating the few oppositional clerics from the many quietest *ulama* who accepted the monarchy" (Foran 1993a:370), thus implicitly endorsing Khomeini. Furthermore, Shari'ati argued that "Islam's most basic tradition is martyrdom, and human activity, mixed with a struggle against oppression and establishment of justice and protection of human rights" (Foran 1994b:174). The fact that the concept of human rights clearly is much too recent to be part of "Islam's most basic tradition," only adds to the perception of Shari'ati as a powerful and innovative communicator. As we shall see in the next chapter, Shari'ati's reference to human rights as central to Islam may not have been coincidental.

Although most Iranians were probably not sufficiently opposed to the shah's regime to assume the role of revolutionary martyrs (Kurzman 2004), a significant portion of the population was prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. This segment of the population was composed of devout men, who "could find inspiration in the Husayn myth for martyrdom in the face of repression" (Skocpol 1982:275). Consequently, during

the revolution "young men willing to die formed lines at the front of the demonstrations between the soldiers and the people" (M. Fischer 2003:214). These men came mainly from the ranks of the "urban marginal classes… suffering many of the 10,000 casualties of the revolution" (Foran 1993a:388).

These willing martyrs were of course helpful to Khomeini's cause, and his rhetoric was consistently framed so as to appeal to their sentiments:

> Isn't it true that martyrdom is inherited by our martyr-nourishing nation from our Imams who regarded life as the manifestation of "belief and Jihad", [*sic*] who safeguarded the degnified [*sic*] school of Islam with their blood and the blood of their youngsters? Are dignity, honor and humanistic values not invaluable virtues for safekeeping of which our virtuous forefathers and their comrades devoted entire lives? (Khomeini 1982:123)

But Khomeini's revolutionary ideology was not simply directed at those willing to die for the revolution. He knew that martyrs were available, but he needed the masses to capture the streets. For the revolution to succeed, he argued, "the people with all their forces must be taken as a firm base on which to rely and depend" (Khomeini 1979:94). Therefore, in addition to his populist message of social, political, and economic improvement, Khomeini needed to move the population to action. He did so by artfully combining his populist appeals with shrewd nonviolent strategizing.

It is not for naught that Khomeini has often been referred to as Iran's Gandhi.[88] Rather, and probably contrary to popular Western belief, Khomeini acquired this reputation due to his many nonviolent statements. For example, Khomeini once noted that "it is my wish that the national movement should not assume the form of an armed

[88] See for example Ansari (2003:208-9), Cottam (1988:164), Milani (1988:214), Shivers (1980:76), Sick (1985:82-85)

struggle" (Ansari 2003:208-9), a comment that resonates well with his reprimanding of the guerrillas in the early 1970s as mentioned in Chapter 3. He encouraged his followers to "talk to the soldiers, have a dialogue with them. Bare your breasts, but do not fire. Do not throw so much as a brick against the soldiers" (Heikal 1982:155). Furthermore, the protesters should "not attack the army in its breast, but in its heart" (Heikal 1982:145). Statements such as these, of which there are many recorded, differ sharply with the Western view of Khomeini as the face of the 1979 hostage crisis at the American embassy in Tehran. However, at the time leading up to the revolution even the U.S. Ambassador to Iran, William Sullivan, sent a cable back to the State Department warning that "Khomeini could become Iran's Gandhi" (Cottam 1988:164).

For readers familiar with Gandhi's writings, Khomeini quite obviously displays several similarities with the Indian independence leader. First, the ayatollah was able to strike a special chord with the "urban and rural marginal populations whom he extolled as the *mustazafin* (the dispossessed masses)" (Foran 1993a:369). Gandhi had in an almost identical fashion embraced the cause of India's lowest social strata, the Untouchables, whom he referred to as the *harijans* (children of God). Second, Khomeini urged his followers to "appeal to the *wujdan* of the army" (Heikal 1982:146). *Wujdan* is a term often used in Sufism and refers to "the inner consciousness, the conscious that is deep in a man's heart (Heikal 1982:146). Gandhi, on the other hand, often talked about the "still small voice within," which he argued was the voice of God that we could all hear if we just listened carefully enough. Finally, Shivers (1980) has compared the role of martyrdom in Khomeini's rhetoric to Gandhi's concept of self-sacrifice. All of these

similarities could obviously be coincidental, and Khomeini exhibits much dissimilarity from Gandhi, such as his refusal to compromise with his opponents. What is particularly interesting, however, is the fact that Khomeini possessed "detailed knowledge of modern India" (Abrahamian 1982:525). It seems near impossible that anyone could possess such knowledge without being intimately familiar with the unquestionably most important Indian of the century and the nonviolent movement he commandeered. This conclusion is not simply deductive, but a close look at the strategic decisions made by Khomeini and his followers suggest that the Iranian Revolution was indeed nonviolent by design.

Stempel (1981) has asserted that "at no time did opposition leaders fear the Shah's political efforts, but until the revolutionary takeover in February they were apprehensive about the potential of the military to destroy them" (136). In other words, Khomeini and his lieutenants had a clear understanding of who the central adversary was. To use a terms often employed by nonviolent action scholars, Khomeini had successfully identified one of the crucial "pillars of support" upon which the shah's power rested.[89] It therefore followed naturally that the army became the main target of Khomeini's actions.

Remembering the failure of 1963 and having recently witnessed the demise of the guerrillas, Khomeini determined that the military could only be defeated through a nonviolent struggle. Drawing partly from Shari'ati's popular rhetoric, "Khomeini's tactics for dealing with the army was martyrdom for his followers in whatever numbers were required to break its links with the shah" (Sick 1985:85). In one of his taped

[89] For detailed discussion about pillars of support and related concepts, please see Sharp (2005).

messages to the nation, illegally smuggled into Iran by his collaborators, Khomeini revealed his tactic to the Iranian people:

> It is sometimes said that the hero is the essence of history. But those who say it are wrong. It is the martyr who is the essence of history, the motivating spirit of history. So bare your breasts to the army, for the Shah is going to make use of the army and the army is going to obey him. We know that the soldiers are confused, not knowing how to act, but they will be obliged to obey their orders. How can they refuse to obey orders when they are bound by army discipline? But one day they will liberate themselves from the discipline of the devil and come to the discipline of God. If the order is given to them to fire on you, bare your breasts. Your blood, and the love which you show them as you are dying, will convince them. The blood of each martyr is a bell which will awaken a thousand of the living. (Heikal 1982:146)

The seemingly loving and nonviolent nature of the message is contrasted with what appears to be a disturbing lack of concern for the people who would actually "bare their breasts" for the cause. In this aspect Khomeini is quite unlike Gandhi who saw extreme voluntary suffering, such as dying, as something that should be avoided if at all possible. Khomeini's lack of apprehension could be rooted in Shi'i culture and religion where, as Shari'ati informs us, "martyrdom is not an unpleasant and bloody accident," but rather "death by choice, chosen by the strugglers with complete consciousness, logic, and awareness" (Milani 1988:129). This would of course be a generous interpretation of Khomeini's apparent indifference. However, a more realistic reading of Khomeini's approach is based on an understanding of his strategic shrewdness. As far back as March 1963, as the unrest of that year was still in its infant stage, Khomeini had reacted to the massacre at the Faiziyyeh seminary where one student was killed and many others injured by explaining to his colleagues that the attack was "'no cause for anxiety, and

even beneficial' because it sharply galvanized feeling against the authorities" (Bakhash, 1990: 28).

Further evidence of Khomeini's shrewd calculations are evidenced by his instructions for how to conduct demonstrations:

> Whenever there was a chance of confrontation with the security forces, the crowd would organize itself into a peaceful procession, at the head of which were school children followed by women and old people. The idea, suggested by Khomeini himself, was that security forces should be faced with a choice between firing on children and women or doing nothing. "The death of a child is especially important," the Ayatollah said in one of his taped instructions. "When a child dies the true nature of this Zionist regime becomes clear." (Taheri 1985:215)

While this approach to protesting against a government might seem horrendous, it is but an extreme example of what nonviolent action scholars refer to as "political jiu-jitsu" (Sharp 1973:657). By giving the army the choice of killing women and children "or doing nothing," Khomeini exhibits a very thorough understanding of the dynamics of nonviolent action. If the soldiers opted to kill women and children they would attract tremendous outrage from the population and possibly radicalize individuals who had not yet decided which side to support. As in jiu-jitsu, the physical might of the opponent is thus used to serve the protagonist's objectives.

Additional proof that Khomeini seemingly instinctively understood how to utilize nonviolent resistance against the regime can be found in his book *Velayat-e Faqih*, a work otherwise most famous for being the place where Khomeini outlines his idea of "government of the Islamic jurists," that is, the rule of the ayatollahs. However,

> This book also lays down the steps for which the Pahlavis are to be overthrown. It is thus a manual for revolution – but not violent revolution. Khomeini urged religious students and clerics, teachers, university professors, and all Iranians to

> work for the realization of the Islamic state by speaking out, teaching, and actively organizing. 'When they oppress you,' he stated, 'cry out, protest, deny, uncover falsehood.'" (Bakhash 1990:39)[90]

Specifically, Khomeini (1979:114) outlined four ways of "destroying unjust governments:"

1. Boycotting agencies of the unjust government.
2. Abandoning cooperation with them.
3. Steering clear from any action that is of benefit to them.
4. Setting up new judiciary, financial, economic, cultural and political agencies.

While Khomeini's understanding of nonviolent social change thus appears to have been quite sophisticated, he sometimes flirted with the idea of using violence. Nonetheless, throughout the revolution "Khomeini and his followers refrained from mobilizing paramilitary institutions" such as the guerrilla leftovers (Kurzman 2004:155-6).

The ayatollah was the undisputed leader of the revolution, but his cause was helped by other high-ranking clerics, who, like Khomeini, comprehended the advantage of rejecting violence. As the revolutionary movement gathered momentum in the spring, summer, and fall of 1978, prominent members of the *ulama*, such as Ayatollahs Shariatmadari, Madani, and Montazeri, as well as *Hojjat al-Islam* Rafsanjani, some of whom had in the past been open to the use of revolutionary violence, all followed suit and publicly endorsed nonviolent methods of struggle (M. Fischer 2003:196; Kurzman 2004:156).

In sum, the predominantly nonviolent nature of the Iranian revolutionary movement can be traced back to the interaction between cultural and strategic factors.

[90] For a discussion of the *Velayat-e Faqih*, see Enayat (1983).

First, Shi'i culture provided the backdrop against which a nonviolent challenge became a credible option. The tactics proposed by Khomeini and others made sense to Iranians, that is, Shi'i culture and the Iranian tradition of resistance were ideologically compatible with nonviolent action. Second, Khomeini and other revolutionary leaders managed to successfully weave together various cultural elements into a viable strategy to oppose the government. Although these two elements – culture and strategy – are conceptually independent of one another, the two had to be invoked at the same time for a nonviolent revolution to become a possibility.

Culture and strategy go a long way to explain why nonviolent action achieved movement hegemony, but they do not explain why such a movement succeeded. The question of success can only be explained when consideration is given to structural factors as well, which will be the task of the next chapter. Already at this point, however, we can begin to identify one important structural element of the revolution, namely the organizational potential inherent in Iran's vast web of mosques.

The Mosque Network

Khomeini, Shari'ati and others' politicization of Shi'i Islamic ideology served as a powerful motivator for large segments of the Iranian population, including those who were not willing to themselves become martyrs. While religion played an important role as a producer of what Foran (1993a) labels "a religious political culture of opposition"

(385),[91] it also played a more concrete, organizational role. Specifically, the infrastructural organization of Shi'ism provided Khomeini with an extensive network of mosques through which revolutionary leaders could communicate with each other and organize anti-government actions (Amuzegar 1991; Foran 1993a; Kurzman 2004; Stempel 1981; Parsa 1989).

Scholars have estimated that at the time of the revolution the *ulama* consisted of at least 90,000 clerics, although numbers number fluctuate depending on whether one includes "low ranking preachers, teachers, prayer leaders and religious procession leaders" (Foran 1993a:336).[92] Regardless of how the *ulama* is defined, it seems clear that "despite government attempts at repression it was impossible to effectively surveil and control 90,000 *ulama* (as opposed to only a few hundred left-wing guerrillas)" (Foran, 1993: 337). In addition to the tens of thousands of clerics, Iran housed thousands of mosques. Milani (1988) reports that in 1975, there were 8,439 mosques in the country, with 983 mosques in Tehran alone. To that number can be added tens of thousands of other religious meeting places such as hey'ats (religious associations for debates or reading of the Koran), of which there were 12,300 in Tehran in 1974 (193). Based on these impressive numbers, and perhaps after totaling all religiously related meeting places in Iran, Amjad (1989) concludes that "in the absence of a nationwide political organization, the network of 80,000 mosques run by 180,000 mollahs played a crucial role in mobilizing the masses against the regime" (Amjad, 1989: 117).

[91] The concept of "political cultures of opposition" is central to Foran's theory of revolutions. For a detailed discussion please see Foran (2005).
[92] Halliday (1979) puts the number at 180,000.

The mosques themselves were used in two principal ways. First, they served as "an unparalleled communications network" through which religious leaders were able to pass along messages to one another and coordinate actions (Amuzegar 1991:25). Even before being forced into exile in the mid-1960s Khomeini had begun to create a small network of trusted clerics (Seliktar 2000), but it was not until the movement started to gain momentum that a greater number of them joined in. Suggesting that this was one of the unique dimensions of the Iranian Revolution, one scholar has explained how the mosque network became the central vehicle of revolutionary communication:

> Tapes of Khomeini's sermons and speeches passed through the mosque network from his residence in Iraq to Qom… From there, they were taken to other cities, where enterprising and friendly bazaar merchants duplicated tapes and sold them to the faithful. Beginning in 1976 the mosque network eliminated the middleman and delivered the cassettes and pamphlets which spread revolutionary doctrine directly to the sympathetic mullahs. They in turn passed it to the people in the mosques. (Stempel 1981:45).

The second function filled by the mosques was to serve as the physical centers of the protest movement. "Mosques were ideal places to gather because they were relatively safe from violent attacks" (Parsa 1989:190), and at those rare occasions when security forces followed demonstrators into mosques, such occurrences would generally serve to radicalize moderate clerics and the general population (Seliktar 2000).[93] This radicalization of political moderates, especially within the clergy, was a necessity for Khomeini and his already radicalized followers. The latter group was originally comparatively small, but as an increasing number of *ulama* were alienated by the

[93] Kurtz and Smithey (1999) and Schock (2005) have referred to this dynamic as the "paradox of repression."

regime's response to the opposition's activities the mosque network grew exponentially (Parsa 1989). Kurzman (2004) has summarized this reality succinctly, arguing that "before the revolutionary movement, the mosque network was not a particularly valuable resource. It was a *potentially* valuable resource that had to be commandeered before it could be mobilized [emphasis in original]" (49). Once commandeered and mobilized, "the traditional system of mobilizing the faithful from the mosques, takiyes [places for commemorating the death of Imam Hussein], hey'ats and the bazaar proved efficacious and extremely difficult to contain by the authorities" (Milani 1988:193). At the height of the revolution, "virtually the entire mosque network was mobilized… organizing demonstrations, coordinating general strikes, distributing scarce food, ensuring neighborhood security, and handing out arms in the two final days of the upheaval" (Kurzman 2004:49). According to Moaddel (1986), this period might very well mark "the first time in their history" that the *ulama* "unanimously turned against the state" (542). In short, not only had religion provided the revolutionaries with a way to motivate the masses to nonviolently oppose the government, but it also offered them a means of mobilizing the population in the shape of physical revolutionary centers.

Summary

This chapter sought to answer two questions: First, how did the *ulama* under Khomeini's leadership and supported by the *bazaaris* gain control of the revolutionary movement, and, second, why did Khomeini and his collaborators opt for a nonviolent

struggle? In part the first question received its answer in the previous chapter as I argued that the shah's relentless repression of alternative sources of opposition, including the destruction of his and the *ulama*'s common enemies, left the playing field wide open for the clergy and the merchants. This explanation was amended in the current chapter as I contended that the tremendous size and relative autonomy of both the *ulama* and the *bazaaris* left these groups with some leverage over the monarchy and made it difficult for the shah to apply the same repressive mechanisms that had destroyed the secular opposition and the guerrillas without validating charges against him of being anti-religious. Also, the *ulama-bazaar* alliance did not reemerge until both groups simultaneously, and as a direct result of the U.S.-favored White Revolution, found themselves under attack from the monarchy, a situation that I have referred to as one of converging discontents. In the case of the clergy, it was the shah's attempts to Westernize Iran and thus marginalize the clerics that attracted their wrath. For the traditional merchants, it was the regime's policy of privileging foreign investors coupled with the anti-profiteering campaign that irrevocably turned them against this state. To this explanation must be added more contingent factors, such as Khomeini's leadership qualities, his uncompromising stance against the state, and the regime's oftentimes dreadful decision making. All of these factors combined to place the leadership of the revolution firmly in the hands of the ayatollah.

The second question, asking why nonviolent action became the predominant method of the revolution was answered in part by alluding to Iran's cultural heritage, and in part by examining the strategic shrewdness of Khomeini himself. As I have shown

above, Khomeini's approach to disarming the military was to "appeal to the soldiers' hearts," that is, oppose them with nonviolent means and offer them martyrs (Sick 1985:85). Khomeini was able to motivate his countrymen by appealing to a populist version of Shi'i Islam which not only cast the shah as an enemy of Iran, but also made nonviolent action the appropriate response in dealing with the king.

Here it might be helpful to think of Shi'i Islam as *compatible* with nonviolent action "as certain specific features of Shi'ite Islam are highly suitable for the mobilization of the masses" (Arjomand, 1988:99-100). Khomeini skillfully highlighted those features, as Amjad (1989), citing Keddie, explains:

> Moreover, Shiism, with its emphasis on martyrdom and resistance against oppression and tyranny (*zolm*), provided the ideological basis for the revolution. It was very easy for people to understand and follow the antiregime slogans in familiar Islamic terms, hence the effectiveness of the Islamic ideology for the mobilization of the masses against the regime. (121)

Shi'ism's compatibility with the principles and dynamics of nonviolent action, such as the need to maintain nonviolent discipline, helped Khomeini's movement remain resilient in the face of, albeit relatively limited, repression. As Skocpol (1982) elegantly explains,

> It *did* matter that the Iranian crowds were willing to face the army again and again – accepting casualties much more consistently than European crowds have historically done – until sections of the military rank-and-file began to hesitate or balk at shooting into the crowds [emphasis in original]. Over time, the crowds would therefore grow while the army became less and less active and reliable as an instrument of repression. (274-5)

Finally, this chapter highlighted the organizational role played by religion in the shape of the mosque network. The revolutionaries benefitted greatly from the presence of an existing infrastructure that could be used to mobilize the masses. "In sum, Shi'a Islam

was both organizationally and culturally crucial to the making of the Iranian revolution against the Shah" (Skocpol 1982:275).

One crucial point that must be made before moving on is that the religious nature of the revolution was never predetermined as other groups also experimented with nonviolent resistance. The fact of the matter is that until the publication in January, 1978, of an article slandering Khomeini, most of the clergy was not ready to support his uncompromising position against the shah. Furthermore, the revolutionary movement had up to this point been led by intellectuals and employed such nonviolent tactics as letter-writing campaigns and poetry readings (Bakhash 1990). One particular reading in the fall of 1977, featuring popular poet Saeed Soltanpour, attracted a large crowd that spontaneously staged an overnight sit-in, leading to government repression. After this event the organizing group, The Writers' Association, was blocked from staging any future events and thus became unable to successfully position itself in the revolution (Parsa 1989). In a sense then, the momentum of Khomeini's movement had been initiated by secular oppositionists. The religious opposition simply benefitted from that momentum, and, in connection to the slandering article, hijacked the entire movement. In short, the Islamic Revolution was only Islamic in its last year, that is, "the pre-revolutionary opposition neither was led by the '*ulama*, nor was it inspired by a revival of traditional values of Shi'i Islam" (Matin-asgari 2002:4). Instead, the revolution was initially inspired by Western liberal values, such as human rights and the superiority of democratic and constitutional government. It will be the task of Chapter 5 to show how Western liberalism was able to accomplish what various Iranian ideologies had been

unable to do for decades, namely spark a successful revolutionary challenge against a highly militarized state – a spark that would eventually be turned into a nonviolent firestorm by virtue of Khomeini's revolutionary Shi'ism.

5. An Internationalized Revolution: A Special Relationship and the Iron Cage of Liberalism

This chapter is to identify the structural factors that allowed nonviolent action to become a viable weapon against the Iranian regime and to explore how the revolutionaries exploited those conditions. As we have seen in previous chapters, Iran's relationship with the United States partially explains why certain groups, particularly the secular opposition and the guerrillas, failed to assume leadership of the revolutionary movement, why the expatriate student movement could lobby against the regime abroad, and how the state's elimination of rival revolutionaries cleared the way for the *ulama*-bazaar coalition. In Chapter 4 I argued that this coalition strategically selected nonviolent methods as its principal avenue to social change by utilizing the cultural and organizational capacities inherent in Shi'i Islam. However, a group's opting for nonviolent methods does not alone equate nonviolent success. Therefore, the central question to be answered in this chapter can be formulated as follows: What structural factors made Iran conducive to a successful nonviolent revolution in the late 1970s?

The central structural factor to be examined is the development of the relationship between the United States and Iran over the course of four decades. Ever since Skocpol (1979) "brought the state back in," scholars of revolution have noted the importance of the international context in many of their theories (DeFronzo 2007; Foran 2005;

Goldstone 2001).[94] However, most theorists have remained faithful to Skocpol's notion that it is competition, rivalry, and war between nations that may have revolutionary consequences by contributing to state breakdown. In contrast, I argue that it is not hostile international contexts that lead to revolutions in the late 20th century and beyond, but rather specific types of amicable international relations. We may ask ourselves why nonviolent revolutions have occurred mainly in authoritarian semi-periphery nations such as Iran, the Philippines, Chile, the Soviet satellite countries of Eastern Europe, South Africa,[95] Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, all of which lived in relative peace with their neighbors at the time of their respective revolutions. The answer, I contend, can be found in these nations' relationships with powerful core nations that embrace some form of democratic rhetoric. Specifically, it is the implicit obligations surrounding a public commitment to human rights and other liberal principles inherent in such relationships that constitute what I refer to as the *Iron Cage of Liberalism* (ICL).

Borrowing from Max Weber's (1978; 1992; 1999) notion of an iron cage of bureaucracy, the ICL posits that friendly relations between a democracy and a dictatorship can constitute a rhetorical trap for both regimes if the ideological inconsistencies of such relationships can be exploited by revolutionary groups and/or their sympathizers. For an authoritarian leader, the support and friendship of a powerful democratic ally becomes a liability when he is expected to behave in a manner befitting a friend of the Western world. For the democratic ally in turn, cognitive dissonance occurs

[94] For a longer discussion of existing revolution theory, please see Chapter 2.
[95] The nonviolent nature of the South African anti-Apartheid movement can be argued, but the struggle has historically been included among the cases of nonviolent resistance.

when an authoritarian regime's hypocritical public commitment to democratic ideals is exposed and problematized by opposition groups. This was exactly what happened in Iran when foreign-based students and exiles *deliberately and strategically* emphasized the obvious dissonance between American rhetoric surrounding liberal values in general, and human rights in particular, and its support of the shah.

Having established conceptually what an ICL is, it becomes the task of this chapter to explain how and why one emerged in Iran in the late 1970s. To do so it is imperative to analyze the development of a "special relationship" between Iran and the United States over the course of a near half-century. The first part of the chapter explores how the relationship between Iran and the United States with time was transformed from a dependent to a more interdependent one. This is critical, because as long as Iran found itself unequivocally inferior to the United States it was not obligated to adhere to democratic principles. Correspondingly, the U.S.'s reputation as a defender of democracy and human rights was not seriously threatened by the shah's record as long as its relationship with Iran was of minor interest to the general public. Only when the shah's regime became internationally recognized as an important ally and friend of the United States did its lack of democratic commitments become a problem for both parties. The second part of the chapter therefore examines the political factors that caused the U.S.-Iranian special relationship to result in the emergence of an ICL in the late 1970s. Specifically, I explain how the opposition contributed to, and exploited the creation of an ICL. This feat was accomplished through deliberate actions taken by the revolutionaries, who emphasized America's commitment to liberalism and, later, President Carter's

human rights rhetoric in order to internationalize the movement. In the concluding section I discuss how structural conditions and activist strategy must interact for an ICL to be created.

Iran and the United States: The Anatomy of a Special Relationship

A History of Foreign Domination

"External pressure," one scholar has noted, "has always been an historic fact of life in Iran" (Stempel 1981:1), and although "Iran was never directly colonized by any single colonial power… its history is a history of colonial interventions and external powers vying for influence" (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994:11). While the U.S. became the hegemonic power in Iran by the mid-1900s, Western intrusions can be dated back much further than that (Elton 2001; Ghods 1989). This section sets the stage for a discussion of the U.S. role in Iranian politics in the 20th century by briefly outlining Iran's history as a target of imperialist attacks.

The early 19th century arrival of first imperial Russia, and later the equally imperial British, marks the advent of Western interference and exploitation. By the middle of the century, foreign intrusion was having a significant impact on Iranian politics (Abrahamian 1982:50-1). For Britain, Iran was an important component in the safeguarding of its Indian and Persian Gulf interests. Russia, on the other hand, used its control of northern Iran as a buffer from which it could protect its southern border. Also,

Russia's interest in gaining increased control of Iran at the expense of the British was fueled by the promise of ready access to warm water ports courtesy of the Persian Gulf. Although officially hostile to one another, the British and the Russians were able to co-exploit Iran for decades, oftentimes finding themselves united in their shared desire to keep the Iranian monarchy sufficiently weak (Keddie 2003: Stempel 1981).

In an effort to combat Anglo-Russian dominance "Iran's rulers tried to protect the country by balancing between the influences of the two great powers, but they were never very successful" (Stempel 1981:1). Instead, the Russians and the British would when necessary look past their differences, as they did during the Constitutional Revolution when their dominance was threatened by nationalist Iranian constitutionalists who sought to limit foreign influence over the country. In response to this potentially damaging outlook, "the Anglo-Russian Entente settling the two governments' differences in Tibet, Afghanistan, and Iran was signed" in 1907 (Keddie 2003:69-70). This development negatively affected the revolutionaries' prospects of success, and in 1911 the two imperial countries, by issuing an agreed upon ultimatum to the Iranian government, effectively ended the Constitutional Revolution (Keddie 2003:71).

The defeat of the constitutional movement resulted in continued Russo-British hegemony in Iran until Reza Khan seized power through a coup in 1921, and crowned king in 1925 he ended the 130-year Qajar dynasty. Under Reza Shah Iran[96] set out on a new, more independent path to national development. However, while

[96] It was under Reza Shah's rule that the country officially changed its name from Persia to Iran.

> No Western power re-shaped the economy to the degree that Britain and Russia had during the Qajar era… Iran remained dependent despite Reza Shah's avowed nationalism, self-reliance, and strong state, due chiefly to three interrelated mechanisms: control of oil by the British, unequal trade with the Soviet Union and Germany, and the vicissitudes of trade as a peripheral supplier of raw materials. (Foran 1993a:249)

Each of these three mechanisms had enduring consequences for Iran's economic and political development: British control of oil eventually led to Mosaddeq's oil nationalization movement in the early 1950's while continued Russian influence helped usher in the birth of the Iranian communist movement. For Reza Shah personally however, as we shall see next, it was his country's close relationship with Germany that eventually spelled his personal doom.

"At the outbreak of the war, in September 1939," Keddie (2003) writes, "German influence in Iran was paramount. German agents were active, and the shah's sympathy for the Germans was no secret" (105). Reza Shah's friendly stance toward the Germans quickly became a cause of concern for the Allies. The Soviet Union and Great Britain therefore joined forces with the United States and demanded that the shah expel all German forces from Iran. The fear among the Allies was that Germany would use Iran as a base from which to attack the Soviet Union, while the Allies themselves wanted to use Iran as a supply route to the Soviets. Faced with this ultimatum the king stalled, causing Russian and British forces to enter Iran on August 25, 1941. Within a month Reza Shah had been forced to abdicate, gone into exile, and been succeeded by his son, Mohammad Reza Shah. The British and the Russians once again divided Iran into spheres of influence, albeit this time with Iranian approval, and in early 1942 the two occupying

forces and Iran signed an alliance committing the former to help protect the Iranian economy from the negative effects of the war. Also, the agreement mandated that the Soviet Union and Great Britain withdraw their troops within six months of the end of the war (Keddie 2003). Despite publicly assuring Iranians that the allied forces would indeed leave at the end of the war, the new king secretly confided to an American official, partly in an attempt to foster friendly relations with the U.S., that "he would prefer that Allied forces remain in Iran to prevent a revolution against the monarchy, at least until he could rebuild his army and gain an upper hand in the domestic power struggle." The shah also hoped that closeness to the U.S. would prevent "British and Russian interference" in domestic affairs (Foran 1993:271). Few would probably have predicted that the king's request would inadvertently usher in the era of U.S. hegemony in Iran.

American Hegemony and Iranian Dependency: Aid, Grants, and Loans in the Early Cold War Era

At the conclusion of the war, as the British departed Iran on schedule in March 1946 while the Soviets lingered, the shah urged "the United States to expand its role in Iran and force the termination of the allied occupation" (Stempel 1981:4). In response to the U.S.S.R outlasting its welcome, Iran also appealed to the Security Council of the recently established United Nations and received the support of Harry Truman, who took an uncompromising stance in support of Iran's sovereignty. American diplomacy soon caused Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet Union's Security Council delegate, to announce that

all Russian troops would be withdrawn within five weeks, and so they were (Stempel 1981; Zonis 1991). Unbeknownst to most observers, "this act signaled the beginning of extremely close ties between Iran and the United States, which were to last until the expulsion of the Shah in January 1979" (Stempel 1981:4). While highly beneficial to both the shah and the United States in the short term, the lasting consequences of this special relationship would eventually spell disaster for both parties.

The emergence of American dominance on the Iranian stage represented a distinctly new era for Iranian international relations. The role of the U.S. differed markedly from that of Russia and Great Britain, particularly the manner in which the relationship with the Iranian monarchy was initiated. Russia and Great Britain had descended on Iranian soil as colonizers in disguise while the United States was invited and welcomed by virtually all Iranians as a liberator and benefactor, "a disinterested protector of Iranian freedom and dignity" (Cottam 1988:8). The shah hoped that the U.S. would shield him from Russian and British advances, whereas "the Iranian nationalists counted heavily on U.S. support to build a democratic and independent Iran" (Moaddel 1993:141-2). Unfortunately, Iranians were as united in their welcoming of the United States as they were naïve about its true intentions.

The altruistic motivations that many Iranians expected would fuel U.S. involvement in Iran were indeed mostly wishful thinking. However, as Cottam (1988) has argued, a benevolent, if not altogether altruistic, mindset appears to have at least influenced U.S. policy towards Iran in the 1940s, resulting in something similar to the

colonialists' "white man's burden," as the perceived "task of the United States was to help Iranians in the process of 'modernizing' and 'nation-building'" (Cottam 1988:4).

A more important set of motivations for U.S. involvement was, rather unexpectedly, strategic and economic in nature. In the 1930s, the U.S. ranked only fourth among Iran's trade partner, "providing 7-8 percent of the imports, mostly motor vehicles and agricultural machinery, and taking 12-13 percent of exports, mainly carpets" (Foran 1993a:248). In the period 1940-44, the U.S. doubled its trade with Iran. As Foran (1993a) explains,

> The context for this growing involvement was an emerging American policy goal of achieving a new international economic order to avert a relapse into the 1930s depression by taking measures to ensure the free international movement of capital – both raw materials and finished manufacturers – rather than returning to exclusive trading blocks that had existed prior to the war. (271)

In order to accomplish the goals set forth, and per Tehran's request, the U.S. dispatched financial advisor A.C. Millspaugh to Iran. Accepting the mission, Millspaugh, who had already served one stint in Iran in the early 1920s, was informed by the State Department "that the United States after the war was to play a large role in that region with respect to oil, commerce, and air transport, and that a big program was under way." Under Dr. Millspaugh's stewardship Americans were put in charge of all "key economic departments" (Keddie 2003:10-7). Clearly, the U.S. was involving itself with Iran for American, not Iranian, reasons.

Although the U.S. stepped up its involvement in Iran even before the war had ended, it was the conclusion of the 1951-3 oil nationalization movement that established

a "special relationship" between the countries.[97] As noted in Chapter 3, in an attempt to destroy the British monopoly on Iranian oil, the U.S. initially sided with Mossadeq's popular movement. However, as it became clear that it was not in America's best interests to have any country nationalize its natural resources, "President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles claimed that Mosaddegh was ready to open the door to communist influence" (Parsa 1989:44), with the result of the U.S. instead supporting the shah and Britain's boycott of Iranian oil. The situation was settled in August 1953 when a CIA-devised coup overthrew Mossadeq and allowed the shah to return to the throne. The American decision to directly intervene in Iranian domestic politics had far-reaching consequences:

> If the 1946 crisis [involving the Soviet refusal to leave Iran as agreed] had been the turning point in American-Iranian relations, the 1951-53 period marked the point of no return, during which the United States eventually committed itself to bolster the shah on his throne and took over from Great Britain the role of hegemonic power in Iran. (Foran, 1993a:292)

Following the coup the shah decided to restructure Iran's oil arrangements. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) that to this point had monopolized Iranian oil, was given a 40 percent share, and renamed British Petroleum (BP). An equal 40 percent share was given to five American oil companies (Standard Oil of New Jersey, Standard Oil of California, Texaco, Socony-Mobil, and Gulf Oil) in return for technical assistance and development of the oil fields. Although the Iranian state according to this agreement would keep 50 percent of the profits, this marked a significant improvement for the

[97] The exact term "special relationship" has been used by several scholars to describe the U.S.-Iranian relationship, including Bill (1988a:233) and Foran (1993a:170-1). Foran and Sick have called the relationship "unique" (Foran, 1993a: 343-4; Sick 1985:22), while Afkhami (1985) refers to it as "privileged" (145).

United States compared to the pre-coup situation (Keddie 2003; Stempel 1981). The new arrangement also marked the beginning of a quite cynical understanding between the U.S. and the shah as actions taken by the Iranian state benefitting the U.S. or its interests were rewarded, rather rapidly, through economic aid or other favors. Hence, immediately following the new oil deal Iran received $127 million in aid, which must be added to the $68.4 million the shah's new government obtained within three weeks of the coup (Foran 1993:344).

The new oil arrangement allowed the U.S. to complete its journey towards political hegemony in Iran, and during the period of 1954-1960 it provided Iran with over $1 billion in economic, technical, and military aid, an amount of U.S. aid surpassed by only Turkey among Third World countries (Amjad 1989; Bill 1988a; Daneshvar 1996; Foran 1993a). In this period, military aid accounted for approximately half of all support given to Iran by the U.S. It should not be assumed that the U.S. had no interest in seeing Iran improve its infrastructure and become a useful trade partner, but "beyond these purely economic ties lurked perhaps even greater political and strategic bonds. Richard Helms, one-time CIA director and ambassador to Iran, even went as far as referring to Iran as 'in political terms, the center of the world'" (Foran 1993a:344).

The political and strategic bonds Foran refers to have also been discussed by other scholars. Gasiorowski (1990) explains that with the beginning of the Cold War, U.S. officials sought to formulate a "new, more aggressive strategy for containing Soviet

expansionism" (55).[98] The fruit of their labor was the creation of the Perimeter Defense strategy, which advocated that large sums of military aid be given to "countries located on the borders of the emerging Sino-Soviet sphere of influence" (Gasiorowski 1990:146). Because of its strategic location, including a 1,200 mile long border with the Soviet Union, Iran was considered "a prime target for Soviet subversion in peacetime and a likely Soviet military objective in the event of general war" (Gasiorowski 1990:147). In addition to these defensive concerns, Iran's proximity to the U.S.S.R. made it an ideal location from which to launch "cross-border espionage operations" and for setting up "electronic intelligence-gathering devices aimed at the Soviet Union" (Gasiorowski 1990:147-8). Thus, in order to contain Soviet expansionism and gain a strategic base in the Soviet sphere,

> the United States established a strong cliency relationship with Iran in the years after the 1953 coup. Under this relationship, Iran was given large amounts of U.S. military, economic, and intelligence assistance and was encouraged to join the Baghdad Pact. These measures were intended both to reduce political unrest in Iran and to strengthen it against foreign threats. (Gasiorowski 1990:148)

In sum, U.S. paranoia helped the shah both improve his army and set forth on an ambitious industrialization agenda which I will address shortly.

While the king benefitted greatly from U.S. obsession with Soviet expansionism, such support came at a price. For example, when Kennedy in the early 1960s temporarily changed U.S. policy so as to promote social over military development in the Third World, the shah was forced to not only embrace a land reform program, but also to select

[98] This marked a significant change in U.S. foreign policy as the majority of U.S. aid had been previously been given to "countries in Western Europe, the eastern Mediterranean, and East Asia" (Gasiorowski 1990:146).

a prime minister favored by the Americans (Amjad 1989; Daneshvar 1996; Foran 1993a; Keddie 2003; Milani 1988; Parsa 1989). While such displays of dependency probably hurt the shah's image in Iran, even more damaging in the long term was the signing of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the United States and Iran on October 13, 1964.

SOFA was approved by the Majles, although Keddie (2003) reports that the measure only passed "with an unusual number of negative votes and speeches" (148). The agreement stated that Americans living in Iran fell under U.S. rather than Iranian jurisdiction, thus for all practical purposes providing them with diplomatic immunity. The measure was received with great discontent by critics such as Khomeini, who argued that Iran had capitulated to the United States. Twelve days later the Majles passed another bill, this time authorizing the government to accept a $200 million loan from private American banks, guaranteed by the U.S. government, to be used toward military purchases from the United States. To most Iranians the link between the two bills was obvious and Khomeini again took the opportunity to criticize the government (Bakhash 1990; Bill 1988a; Keddie 2003).

The U.S. policy of rewarding Iran for specific actions continued in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, the U.S., in return for promised social reform, granted Iran an $845 million loan in the face of the economic and social turmoil of 1960 (Amjad 1989), and following the shah's commitment to a program of land reform he received another $35 million (Parsa 1989). In time the shah was able to use American aid to commence his ambitious industrialization program and upgrade his military.

Early U.S. intervention in Iran can be described as anticipatory charity work. Hoping that Iran would play an important role in the future, American policy makers showered the shah with economic and military assistance while receiving little in return. However, this would prove to be prudent policy as the Iranian economy began to grow, at least in part as a result of U.S. aid. By the late 1950s American government assistance had prepared the ground for private investments. Consequently, the American government was to a significant extent replaced by American corporations. The shift from aid to investments can be described as the turn from dependent to interdependent relations between Iran and the United States. No longer would relations between the countries be characterized by one-way streams of reliance.

U.S.-Iranian Interdependency: Investment and Trade 1960-1978

Foran (1993a; 1994b) has built his theory of the Iranian Revolution, and subsequently a more general theory of revolutions (Foran 2005), around the type of development experienced by Iran in the period following World War II. Drawing from world systems analysis and dependency theory,[99] he has argued that although Third World countries have experienced economic development and industrialization as a result of aid from core nations, such development is

> generally accompanied by significant negative consequences, such as inflation, unemployment, health problems, inadequate housing and education, and the like. It is thus a *dependent development*, meaning growth within limits, advances for a

[99] For a brief introduction to world-system analysis, see Wallerstein (2005).

> minority of the population, and suffering for the majority [emphasis in original]. (Foran 1993a:5)

According to this framework, the temporary benefits for a specific periphery nation of aligning itself with one or more core powers are eventually replaced by disastrous consequences. Although this understanding of international relations can perhaps be successfully incorporated into a general theory of revolutions, it seems that the concept of dependent development would apply to virtually all Third World countries. To be sure, Foran's theory of revolution is multi-causal, with dependent development being just one of several necessary causes. Still, by categorizing Iran's development as similar to most nations in the Third World, Foran appears to abandon his own description of Iran's relationship with the U.S. as both "unique" and "special" (Foran 1993a:170-1; 343-4). Rather than grouping Iran with most Third World countries, I argue that Iran's relationships with the U.S. was indeed special and unique, and that it was this particular relationship that in part permitted a nonviolent revolution to succeed. To make that argument it is necessary to unfold the process through which the U.S.-Iranian relationship transformed from dependency to interdependency in the 1960s.

Perhaps realizing that foreign aid alone would not allow him to accomplish his goal of rapidly industrializing Iran, the shah in 1958 met with more than forty leading American businessmen during one of his many visits to the United States. At their meeting, the shah "strongly urged them to make major investments in Iran, maintaining that the only industries that the Iranian state would continue to own were petroleum and steel" (Bill 1988a:118-9). In order to further entice foreign investors, among which

Americans were the largest and most important group, the shah's regime provided large corporations with compelling incentives. For example,

> private investors were given tax exemptions and were allowed to repatriate their profits whenever they wished. The return of profit was estimated to be as high as 30 to 40 percent. Large Iranian and foreign entrepreneurs were eligible for a subsidized [interest] rate that was below 12%. The small businesses (and bazaaris), on the other hand, had to borrow at much higher rates, between 25 and 100 percent. This policy allowed the large and capital-intensive factories to grow at the expense of small and labor-intensive factories. (Amjad 1989:88)

Favorable conditions such as these naturally motivated American and other foreign corporations to invest in Iran, and their investments helped kick-start the Iranian economy and the shah's modernization program.[100] Foran (1993a) has described the focus of American investments in the period:

> In the course of the 1960s and 1970s a considerable amount of direct foreign investment by American-based multinationals was added to [U.S. oil investments], in the agribusiness ventures, in the most advanced industrial sectors, such as petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and aluminum, and in the growing banking sector, where American banks played a major role. The United States overtook the British as the major foreign investor in the 1950s and held this position until the 1970s when the Japanese surpassed them. (344)

The fact that American corporations invested in the industries identified by Foran is hardly a coincidence. Most of those industries were capital-intensive and therefore required foreign assistance. While Iranian factories and workers were not as productive as their European counterparts, the lower costs and generous conditions allowed multinationals to profit from their investments (Graham 1980). Also, foreign investments resulted in impressive growth figures for the Iranian economy, which led the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) to close its Tehran office in 1967, one year

[100] For the effect of capitalist ventures on the course of the revolution, see Jazani (1980).

after President Johnson's Cabinet Committee on Balance of Payments had declared Iran a developed country (Bill 1988a:177-8). In short, in a matter of a decade and a half, Iran had moved from being one of the foremost recipients of U.S. aid to be considered a nation with little need for economic support. Henceforth the relationship between the U.S. and Iran would be characterized by trade and military-strategic collaboration.

Foreign investments helped build the Iranian economy, but the central driving force was its oil sales.[101] In the period 1954-1977 "Iran's oil revenues leaped almost *a thousand times* from $22.5 million in 1954 to $20 billion in 1977 [emphasis in original]" (Foran 1993a:312). Foran (1993a) has also pointed out that although the state was exploited by the foreign oil companies it still received "considerable income" from its oil, especially after the 1960 formation of OPEC (312). Since the shah was not overly interested in spending his country's oil wealth on its people, he looked for other avenues of investment and found them in his armed forces.

The king's preferential treatment of the armed forces had been a rather lengthy obsession, and due to this fascination the shah, "himself a product of his father's military academy, had taken good care to reorganize [the military] and update its armaments. In the 1970s, he made it into one of the dozen best equipped armies in the world" (Arjomand, 1988: 120).[102] Ever since the U.S. had adopted the Perimeter Defense strategy, Iran had enjoyed steady access to American arms, but in the late 1960s, with the U.S. heavily involved in a disastrous war in Vietnam, which left it with "fewer resources

[101] For the role played by oil in the revolution, see Bakhash (1992).
[102] See also Amjad (1989:95-7)

to commit worldwide and more need for support from its allies" (Stempel 1981:68), Richard Nixon and his administration transformed the Perimeter Defense into the Nixon Doctrine, stipulating that the United States become even more indirectly involved in its defense around the globe. Gone were the days of serving as the world's police officer backed by regional allies. From now on, "American troops would be used abroad only in special cases," and the U.S. would instead "rely on other nations to defend Western interests by encouraging them to defend themselves" (Stempel 1981:72). However, in order for the proxies to do so successfully they needed access to the best arms and training available, goods and services that would be purchased from the U.S.

In accordance with the Nixon Doctrine, Iran was identified as the most important among a group of nations that were friendly towards the United States. Other regional powers in this group included Israel, Indonesia, and Brazil. Nonetheless, Iran was foremost among them based on two factors. First, the shah had over the previous 25 years taken great care to develop a solid relationship with the United States which caused his loyalty to be beyond doubt. Second, thanks to its ever-growing oil incomes, Iran had the funds necessary to buy America's most sophisticated weapons. Thus, in a secret agreement signed in May 1972, the U.S. consented to provide Iran with any non-nuclear weapons it wanted. This agreement was beneficial for both parties. The shah's obsessive desire to sport one of the world's finest armed forces was significantly promoted, whereas the U.S., which found itself in dire economic times, discovered a way to improve its worsening balance of payments position by selling expensive weapons to Iran (Amjad

1989; Foran 1993a; Moaddel 1993; Sick 1985; Stempel 1981).[103] Thus, while the Nixon Doctrine applied to many other nations, Iran's relationship with the U.S. in the late 1960s became truly "special" and "unique." If the U.S. was now the world's sheriff, rather than its police officer, Iran would become its best equipped deputy.

As Iran's oil output rose from 1.6 million barrels per day in 1965 to 3.5 million barrels in 1970 the government's revenues steadily rose. However, when OPEC decided to drastically increase the price of oil in 1973-74 Iran multiplied its income over night. The *carte blanche* arms purchase Nixon had granted the shah in 1972 was already fueling his compulsion with the army, but now that obsession was taken to a new level. As table 4.1 shows, the increase in U.S. arms sales to Iran corresponded with the OPEC price hike in 1973 and Nixon's decision to arm Iran to its teeth. Between 1955 and 1978 Iran purchased almost $21 billion worth of U.S. arms, $20 billions of which were bought in the 1970s. Of that sum, over $19 billion were spent after the oil price hike of 1973.[104]

Thanks to this spending spree, the Iranian government was "more than once responsible for bailing out an American arms manufacturer" facing difficult times, and U.S. arms producers consequently "spent vast sums, often illegally, lobbying Iran for business" (Keddie 2003:165). While the arms manufacturers made some of the largest profits, other industries also benefitted from Iran's recent wealth increase. For example, and lthough the U.S. government complained about the new high oil prices, the American

[103] The need for increased export was acute since "In 1971 the U.S. foreign trade balance showed a deficit for the first time since 1893" (Moaddel 1993:56).

[104] As with many other statistics the exact amounts vary depending on the source. Foran (1993a) reports total U.S arm sales to Iran for 1950-77 of $16 billion. Regardless of what figure one uses this amounts to a considerable boost to the U.S. export industry.

companies included in the Iranian oil consortium naturally welcomed them. Furthermore, American "producers of high technology, grain and agricultural equipment, and consumer goods also had large sales in Iran" (Keddie 2003:165).

Table 5.1. U.S. Military Sales to Iran, 1955-78 (in thousands of dollars)[105]

Year	Foreign Military Sales Agreements	Foreign Military Sales Deliveries
1955-68	505,414	145,874
1969	235,821	94,881
1970	134,929	127,717
1971	363,844	75,566
1972	472,611	214,807
1973	2,171,355	248,391
1974	4,325,357	648,641
1975	2,447,140	1,006,131
1976	1,794,487	1,927,860
1977	5,713,769	2,433,050
1978	2,586,890	1,792,892
Total	20,751,656	8,715,810

By the mid-1970s, the economic and strategic relationship between Iran and the United States reached its peak and began to transform the formerly dependent relationship. In 1973 the two nations signed an agreement to establish a "joint economic commission to accelerate further commercial relations," and in the following year American companies signed joint venture contracts with Iran valued at $11.9 billion (Bill 1988a:204). By 1975, U.S. officials privately anticipated that nonmilitary and nonoil trade over the next six years could amount to $23-26 billion. At that time, thirty-nine major American arms, telecommunication, and electronics companies were represented and had contracts in Iran, including such giants as General Electric,

[105] Adapted from Moaddel (1993:57).

Lockheed, Westinghouse, Bell Helicopter International, Grumman Aerospace, McDonnell-Douglas, International Telephone and Telegraph, and Sylvania (Bill 1988a:204-9). A concrete example of the huge business deals American companies had with the Iranian state is "American Bell International's $10 billion project to revitalize Iran's telephone system" (Stempel 1981:72).[106] Clearly, Iran was emerging as an important and profitable trade partner for American corporations.

One dimension of the increasingly interdependent economic relationship between the two countries was thus constituted by direct trade and American investments in the Iranian economy. The other dimension concerned oil and represents the realm in which the shah first realized that he had significant leverage in his relationship with Washington and "felt strong enough to break with the United States" (Stempel 1981:8). Realizing his position of strength, the shah responded to subtle U.S. threats of consequences if he proved unable to have a moderating influence on OPEC policies by replying that "we can hurt you as badly if not more so than you can hurt us" (Milani 1988:162). Using his leverage again a few years later in 1977, the shah changed his stance on the upcoming OPEC meeting in Caracas during a visit to the U.S. Before his arrival he had announced that Iran would be a passive spectator at the meeting, but after consulting with U.S. officials, the shah proclaimed that "Iran would try to keep oil prices down in order 'to show sympathy and comprehension' of American views" (Menashri 1990:48). Clearly the shah was using his OPEC influence to solidify his relationship with Washington.

[106] Rather ironically, Iranian revolutionaries, outraged by U.S. involvement in Iran, would make excellent organizational use of the improved telecommunications system in the course of the revolution (Arjomand 1988:71; Sick 1985:57).

Notwithstanding the importance of trade and oil, the U.S.-Iranian relationship, at least in the eyes of the U.S., was still based mainly on military-strategic considerations. Following the Vietnam War and the Nixon Doctrine, this aspect of the relationship became increasingly important, especially since all alternative U.S. "policy bridges had been burned years before" (Sick 1985:22):

> Richard Nixon's decision to rely exclusively on the shah for the protection of U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf had been so thoroughly institutionalized in U.S. policy and practice that the United States now lay strategically naked beneath the thin blanket of Iranian security. (Sick 1985:18)

The severity of U.S. strategic dependence is illustrated by the conclusion of a May 1972 meeting between the shah and Nixon. At the end of their meeting, "Nixon looked across the table to the shah and said simply, 'Protect me'" (Sick 1985:14). Clearly, U.S. policy had made the country militarily dependent on Iran.

American policy makers began to realize that the days when Washington could tell the shah what to do and expect obedience were gone. Although still dependent on U.S. support, the shah had come to realize that the U.S. needed him as well, "and the vast oil wealth pouring into his treasury liberated him from the usual array of persuasive leverage that a superpower might exercise in its relation with a 'client' state" (Sick 1985:36). This fact had indeed become evident to members of the American political elite. When journalists in 1976 suggested to Richard Helms, then U.S. Ambassador to Iran, that the U.S. should tell the shah to liberalize Iran, he replied that "the first time I try to tell the Shah what to do on such matters will be the last time I see him" (Stempel 1981:21). While Helms might have exaggerated the shah's independence, the general

point is well taken: The shah was not simply a helpless puppet without leverage of his own. Thanks in part to his oil wealth, the relationship he had taken such care to build was now paying off as the U.S. relationship with Iran was for all practical purposes a relationship with the shah personally, and the U.S. needed the shah.

Although Iran's relationship with the U.S. might be called "dependent development" or a host of other terms, what made this relationship "unique" and "special" was not the cliency relationship between the two countries. Instead, the shah's relationship with Washington was unique because "after the OPEC price rise, major United States business interests became more closely tied to, *and even dependent on,* the Shah's regime than ever. This was especially true of three key sectors of American business: armaments, oil, and banking [emphasis added]" (Keddie 2003:160), but, as suggested above, it was also a consequence of the exclusive military-strategic understanding between the two nations. That the U.S. officially recognized this transformation from Iranian dependence to U.S.-Iranian interdependence[107] is suggested by a 1976 U.S. Foreign Service report released just months before the election of Jimmy Carter.

> After four months of interviews and policy examinations in Washington and in Iran, *the report concluded that "The government of Iran exerts the determining influence" in the relationship with United States*. Iran, the inspectors noted, contributed far more in financial terms than did the United States, and "He who pays the piper calls the tune" [emphasis added]. (Sick 1985:20)

[107] The term interdependence is used due to the lack of a better term. Clearly this was not a relationship between equally dependent parties, but neither was it a relationship in which one party was left at the mercy of the other. The U.S. needed Iran and that need limited U.S. leverage over Iran. For a treatise on the dynamics of U.S.-Iranian relations, see Ramazani (1982).

In other words, a fundamental shift had taken place. No longer was Iran dependent on U.S. aid, but rather it exerted significant influence of its own in the relationship.[108] Thanks to the immense revenues generated by higher oil prices, the shah had made himself, and Iran, an important contributor to the American economy. If we add the continuing strategic importance of Iran in the Cold War era to this newfound economic relevance, it seems clear that Iran had taken significant steps towards becoming an equal of the United States in the sense that the two nation's relationship was no longer as uneven as it had been in the 1940s and 1950s. Although this must have been a great source of pride for the shah, he would soon discover that the new equalized relationship also came with obligations in the form of increased scrutiny from pro-democracy organizations and the international media.

The Missing Piece of the Puzzle: Soviet Acquiescence to U.S. Hegemony

As we shall see, the shah's new status as U.S. ally put increased pressure on him to uphold the democratic and liberal values embraced by the United States and the West. However, the shah's relative autonomy also helps solve another major puzzle of the Iranian Revolution, namely the role, or lack thereof, played by the Soviet Union. Why did Moscow not object to U.S. hegemony south of its border? Two main explanations can be offered. First, beginning in the early 1960s the U.S.S.R. not only tolerated the shah, but

[108] Moshiri (1985:1) disagrees with this evaluation and states that "the position of Iran in the international world in 1977/78 can be summarized as one of extreme dependence on the United States and on Western European countries."

supported and even preferred him to any other plausible Iranian option.[109] The Soviet Union had maintained its trade with Iran since the days of Russia, but the relationship between the countries declined rapidly following the U.S.-led 1953 coup (Herrman 1990). In 1959 Iran signed a mutual defense agreement with the U.S. which permitted the creation of American bases on Iranian soil (Golan 1990). The Soviets not surprisingly opposed this development and chastised both Washington and Tehran for entering into the agreement. However, in 1962, in the face of the Cuban missile crisis, the shah announced that the U.S. would not be allowed to establish bases in Iran, and that no country would be permitted to place missiles on its soil (Afkhami 1985; Bill 1988a). Concurrently with these promises Iran and the Soviet Union entered into several high profile trade agreements. For example, in 1966 the Soviets agreed to build a steel mill in Isfahan and provide Iran with other industrial aid in exchange for $600 million worth of natural gas, and the following year the shah spent $110 million[110] on Russian arms (Ansari 2003). This marked the beginning of heavy trade between the two countries, and in the period before the revolution "the Soviet Union was the largest market for the export of Iranian manufactured goods. At the same time, Iran had become the largest market for Soviet nonmilitary goods in the Middle East" (Herrmann 1990:70). In addition to economic trade, the Soviet Union dispatched about 3,000 scientific and technical advisers to Iran, which at the time was the largest contingent of Soviet advisers in any

[109] Golan (1990) and Behrooz (1999) have both suggested that Moscow fairly early realized that the odds of a socialist revolution in Iran were slim. The only real alternative to the shah were reactionaries, and such a regime would likely be more hostile to the Soviet Union than the shah was.
[110] Herrman (1990) reports that between 1966 and 1970 Iran purchased a total of $344 million worth of Soviet arms.

Third World country (Herrmann 1990). Finally, the two countries agreed to build a 700-mile pipeline that would provide both the U.S.S.R. and Western Europe with natural gas intended for tripartite deals (Golan 1990).

Second, and in addition to beneficial trade relations, Moscow did not oppose U.S. hegemony in Iran for a very simple reason: It was not perceived to be a threat. While U.S. policymakers allocated international aid based on the "anticommunism" of a candidate regime, their Soviet counterparts seem to have been more level-headed and flexible (Atkin 1990; Bill 1988a). Cottam (1988) has provocatively suggested that "the perception of Iran as a U.S. surrogate was an American, but not necessarily a Soviet, image," and that "there was little in Soviet rhetoric regarding Iran to indicate that the Soviets viewed the American presence in Iran as a matter of serious alarm" (182). Phrased differently, Iran did not have the same geostrategic utility to the Soviet Union as it did to the U.S., and consequently Moscow was willing to live with American hegemony on its southern border as long as the shah displayed a sufficient amount of autonomy and anti-imperialism. Prudently enough, ideological preferences gave way to geo-strategic utility (Cottam 1988; Golan 1990; Herrmann 1990).

To sum up, Soviet officials were content with the shah's leadership as long as they received their fair share of Iranian trade,[111] provided that the shah appeared independent enough to refrain from turning Iran into an American military base (Foran 1993a; Golan 1990; Milani 1988; Stempel 1981). The fact that Moscow perceived the

[111] As Golan (1990) explains, "by the time of the 1978 revolution Moscow was supporting some 147 projects in Iran, which had become one of the Soviet Union's most important Third World partners" (180).

shah to be sufficiently independent of the U.S. supports the interdependency argument advanced above. Foran (1993a) succinctly captures the U.S.-Iranian-Soviet situation by suggesting that "a de facto bargain was struck: the U.S.S.R. accepted the shah's rule and American hegemony in Iran, while receiving a number of economic agreements of its own and a stable monarchy on its borders" (347).[112]

Internationalizing the Revolution: The Consequences of a Special Relationship

It is tempting to assume that Soviet contentment left the close U.S.-Iranian relationship without many hurdles to overcome. However, U.S. hegemony eventually became a tremendous burden for both the shah and the United States. Once American companies had been unleashed on the Iranian market in the 1960s and 1970s, "the rush to make money was on" and there was little Washington or Tehran could do to stem the tide (Stempel 1981:75).

While beneficial to the Iranian economy in the short term, Iranians soon came to despise the growing foreign presence. Since U.S. citizens constituted the largest and most disliked group of foreigners, Iranians eventually began to consider all Westerners living in Iran to be Americans. In fact, the 53,000 military and civilian U.S. nationals living in Iran in 1978 made up slightly more than half the total number of foreigners residing in Iran, and in Tehran Americans accounted for 85 percent of all foreign nationals (Stempel

[112] An additional bonus attached to the less intrusive policy of the U.S.S.R. is that after the revolution it fared better than the U.S. when it came to relations with the new Iranian regime, although both countries standing worsened (Grayson 1982; Halliday 1991). For a broader discussion of Soviet-Iranian relations during the Cold War, see Keddie and Gasiorowski's (1990) edited volume as well as Malik (1987).

1981).[113] Many of the Americans working in Iran had their wages paid by the Iranian government. The government also paid for their housing costs, causing Americans to worry little about how much they paid for their apartments and houses. As a consequence, Americans often accepted outrageous rental agreements, thereby contributing to the skyrocketing Iranian costs of living (Beeman 1983).

The presence of tens of thousands of foreigners coincided with the Iranian sentiment that the shah was simply running America's errands instead of promoting the best interests of Iran (Keddie 1983b; Stempel 1981). Such an interpretation of events in the late 1970s was consistent with long held perceptions of foreigners' activities in Iran as "the usurpation of the rights of believers" (Keddie 1983b:585). Meanwhile American officials had done little to reduce these impressions. For example, Kissinger proclaimed that "on all major international issues, the policies of the United States and the policies of Iran have been parallel and therefore mutually reinforcing" (Bill 1988a:203). The shah might have enjoyed this type of glowing endorsement from his main ally, but to most Iranians the coalescing interests must have seemed somewhat absurd. After all, how could a developing Middle Eastern nation share foreign policy interest with the world's most powerful nation engaged in a Cold War with Iran's mighty neighbor?

In addition to promoting discontent with the shah, the close U.S.-Iranian relationship had an even more important structural effect on Iranian society. When "Third World governments rely heavily on external resources, especially Western technology

[113] According to Foran (1993a) the number of Americans living in Iran at the time was 37,000, with "most enjoying diplomatic immunity" (345).

and arms, [they reduce] their dependence on internal allies and supporters," thus placing all their proverbial eggs in their ally's basket (Parsa 1989:189). The process the shah had begun after the 1953 coup of alienating every social group potentially capable of supporting him, including the landlords, the ulama, the secular politicians, and the intellectuals, came to its fruition in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[114] Comfortable with the categorical American support he enjoyed during Nixon and Ford's stints in the Oval Office, the shah enjoyed almost complete autonomy from Iranian society. This seemingly ideal situation for a Third World dictator can however have catastrophic consequences for both the dictator and his patron:

> Because highly autonomous states lack societal constraint, the policies of client states increasingly diverge from the interests and needs of society. Serious unrest and instability may eventually result and even lead to revolution. *A relationship initially designed to promote political stability in the client country may therefore promote instability in the long run, threatening the patron's strategic interests* [emphasis added]. (Gasiorowski 1991: xiii)[115]

When the shah's autonomy from Iranian society and his close collaboration with the U.S. eventually became a commonly recognized reality, "the Pahlavi state and its chief supporter, the United States, came to be widely perceived as the cause of Iran's problems" (Foran, 1993a:363).

This burden of friendship, created by the close relationship between the U.S. and Iran in the economic and military-strategic spheres, has by some been perceived as a fundamental cause of the revolution (Arjomand 1988). However, the relationship simultaneously makes the revolution's success all the more puzzling and does nothing to

[114] See Chapters 3 and 4.
[115] Similarly, Katouzian (2003) has used the shah's autonomy from society to explain the outbreak of the revolution.

explain relative U.S. indifference to the course of the revolution. If American support of Iran was so entrenched, and if Iran was considered one of America's most important allies, then why did U.S. officials not do more to help the shah cling to power? To answer that question we must keep in mind the extent of U.S. investments in the Iranian economy which most likely limited the range of options available to the American government. More importantly, however, we must take into account and analyze the shifts in U.S. and world sentiments taking place at the time.

Iran, the U.S., and Human Rights

During his first 25 years on the throne, the shah had grown accustomed to dealing with U.S. administrations more than willing to turn a blind eye to his handling of the political opposition, as long as such actions did not interfere with U.S. interests. As we have seen, President Kennedy tried to steer the shah towards liberalization of Iran's political climate in the early 1960s, but this initiative by the White House was aimed primarily at reducing the likelihood of a peasant-based uprising, and not necessarily founded on concerns about political openness. Although Kennedy's policies did result in a temporary relaxation of political repression, this brief period certainly represents the exception to the rule of American collaboration with the shah's autocratic system (Daneshvar 1996; Foran 1993a; Keddie 2003; Milani 1988; Moaddel 1993; Parsa 1989; Sick 1985; Stempel 1981). This state of affairs changed with the election of Jimmy Carter to the presidency in 1976.

Carter's foreign policy platform during the election emphasized heavily the issue of human rights throughout the world. Arguing that a solid U.S. commitment to the spread of human rights would "remove the reason for revolutions that often erupt among those who suffer from persecution" (Milani 1988:182), Carter's perspective represented a drastic break with the foreign policy outlooks of the Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations. American core values, such as freedom, democracy, and human rights, would be allowed to once again guide U.S. interactions with the rest of the world.[116] While this dramatic policy shift must have seemed idealistic to even some of the most liberal voters, Milani (1988) suggests that Carter's "campaign theme was balm to the soul of the Americans bitter about the insanity of their bloody adventure in Vietnam, and the immorality of the Watergate episode" (182).

Carter did of course win the 1976 election and returned to the emphasis of human rights in his inaugural address delivered on January 20, 1977, proclaiming that America's "moral sense dictates a clear preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights" (Bill 1988a:16). However, once in office Carter had to balance his personal moralistic inclinations with the best interests of the United States. The White House thus determined that attention to the former would have to remain a secondary priority, as evidenced by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's later admission that the administration "decided early on that it was in our national interest to support the shah so he could continue to play a constructive role in regional affairs" (Bill 1988a:227).

[116] One scholar particularly emphasizes the shift from Nixon's *realpolitik* to Carter's *moralpolitik*. (Seliktar 2000:xx)

Consequently, President Carter's active commitment to human rights turned out to be little more than an election promise. Nonetheless, that promise had a tremendous impact on Iranian politics as Carter's human rights rhetoric constituted a "perceived political opening" for the Iranian revolutionaries to exploit (Kurzman 1996).

Numerous scholars of the Iranian Revolution have incorporated Carter's commitment to human rights into their discussions of its causes (Abrahamian 1982; Amjad 1989; Amuzegar 1991, Arjomand 1988; Bakhash 1984; Baktiari 1996; Bill 1988a; Cottam 1988; Daneshvar 1996; Falk 1980; Foran 1993a; Gasiorowski 1990; Grayson 1981; Heikal 1982; Kamrava 1990; Keddie 2003; Matin-asgari 2002; Menashri 1990; Milani 1988; Moaddel 1993; Parsa 1988; 1989; Seliktar 2000; Sick 1985; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994; Stempel 1981; Strong 2000; Wright 2001). Kurzman (1996; 2004) is one of the main critics of this perspective (as well as of all other explanations of revolutions). Besides suggesting that no scholar has provided any evidence of Carter ever pressuring the shah on the human rights issue, Kurzman (1996) also argues that "the shah received no international complaints about his handling of Iranian protests, even when his troops shot hundreds, perhaps thousands, of unarmed demonstrators in Tehran on September 8 [1978]" (158). Kurzman's reasonable charge is that if the shah did not feel pressured by the rest of the world, particularly the United States, then it would be incorrect to speak of a human rights effect. Somewhat surprisingly, Foran (1993a), while in the process of disproving Skocpol's structural model, seems to agree with Kurzman, stating that "there was no external pressure on the Iranian state" and "no major shift in world economic and geopolitical conditions" (360).

Although Foran and Kurzman may have a point, it is arguably a rather week one, as the charge that President Carter never pressured the shah on human rights may itself be tenuous at best. According to one scholar, the president, in a response "to a question from European journalists on May 2, 1977, declared that his administration had been putting pressure on Iran both privately and publicly to improve its [human rights] performance" (Grayson 1981:154).[117] Also, the critique overlooks the implicit pressure Carter's human rights policy constituted. As Brzezinski (1988), Carter's National Security Adviser, put it in a December 1978 speech at the height of the revolution: "There is today not a government in the world that does not know that its human rights record will affect its relationship with us" (108). However, the larger problem with Kurzman and Foran's critiques of the human rights explanations of the Iranian Revolution is that they demand concrete evidence of U.S. *pressure* on the shah, when it may in fact be more informative to evaluate the former's relative *lack of support* of the latter.[118]

This reversal of reasoning can be found in Algar's (1983) rather antagonistic evaluation of the role played by Carter and his human rights framework, and his insights warrant a lengthy citation:

> We find, for example, that as one consequence of President Jimmy Carter's hypocritical election propaganda concerning human rights, *people decided that this was a useful instrument to employ against the Iranian regime*. It is sometimes

[117] Stuckey (2008) has argued that Carter did indeed criticize the shah and "may have been one of the first world leaders to broach the subject of human rights with him" (122). Carter (1982:436) himself reports that he discussed the issue with the shah on November 4, 1977, telling the king that "Iran's reputation in the world is being damaged" and asked if there was "anything that can be done to alleviate this problem by closer consultation with the dissident groups and by easing off on some of the strict police policies?" This may not be the type of direct pressure that would satisfy Kurzman, but it certainly suggests that the shah knew where Carter stood, and the President reports that the "shah listened carefully and paused for a few moments before he replied somewhat sadly" (Carter 1982:436).

[118] See Kurtz's (1994) discussion on the "geometry of deterrence."

> said in America in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution that Carter somehow undermined the Iranian regime by promising people human rights and that people, encouraged by President Carter, therefore took to the streets. This is an absurdity. *A more accurate version of the situation is that it was seen as a useful tactic to demand human rights, not that the regime was deemed capable by its nature of giving human rights, but simply that given this apparent verbal change in American policy, the slogan of human rights was a useful one to be used for tactical purposes against the regime* [emphasis added]. (100)[119]

Carter's human rights agenda did not cause the revolution, but it did provide the opposition with the strategic opening it had been searching for. The president's articulation of support for individual freedoms resembled Kennedy's call for social and political reform in the early 1960s, but his call for change had dramatically different consequences. By publicly articulating a human rights policy in the course of his presidential campaign, Carter trapped himself in an ICL since his rhetoric about liberal values and human rights became a virtual policy prison.[120] "All" Iranian protesters now had to do in order to neutralize American support was to hold Carter accountable for his own words, which is exactly the strategy Algar describes above. However, to understand why Carter's human rights agenda became so detrimental to the shah while it had limited effects in other parts of the world it is necessary to historically trace the development of the Iranian human rights debate.

[119] See Chapter 6 for details about how the opposition exploited Carter's human rights policy and how it resulted in limited American support for the shah.

[120] For example, in a September 8, 1976, campaign speech dedicated to the issue of human rights, Carter suggested that the United States "can support the principle of self-determination by refraining from military intervention in the domestic politics of other countries" (Carter 1977:170). Needless to say, policy articulations like these made it difficult for him to justify a coup that might have saved the shah's throne.

The Iranian Opposition, Human Rights Organizations, and the International Media

Carter's human rights framework represented the political opening Iranian activists had been waiting for, and it would be quite reasonable to assume that this political opening constitutes a structural explanation of the timing of the Iranian Revolution. However, such an assumption would be overly simplistic. True, Carter's human rights emphasis eventually spelled disaster for the shah, but the president's stance on the issue was not specific to Iran. Why then did the ICL created by Carter's human rights framework affect Iran's regime so severely while it resulted in very limited advances for human rights activists in other countries? To answer that question it is useful to return to the Iranian student organizations based in the U.S. and Europe that were discussed in chapter two.

What appears to be a structural opening was in fact the result of a deliberate and strategic process through which student actors in effect lobbied the world for its attention. Iranian students living abroad, Matin-asgari (2002) explains,

> played the most important role in portraying the shah's regime as a repressive dictatorship, *thereby undermining its international legitimacy and support*. Through vocal demonstrations and publicity campaigns, it was instrumental in *drawing the attention of the international media, human rights organizations, political groups, and foreign governments to repression in Iran*, thus restraining the government's otherwise arbitrary treatment of its political victims [emphasis added]. (1)

Throughout the 1960s, Iranian students living abroad protested the regime and its treatment of its political opponents whenever given an opportunity to do so, whether in Europe or in the United States. Most of the student protests occurred on a relatively small

scale, but beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the European mass media had begun to notice the students' activities (Matin-asgari 2002).

Arguably, the decisive breakthrough for the opposition occurred in 1972 when Amnesty International and a United Nations panel published the first human rights reports on Iran (Matin-asgari 2002; Milani 1988; Abrahamian 2009).[121] The Amnesty report noted, among other things, "that Iran had been a signatory to the 1948 U.N. International Charter of Human Rights and the 1966 International Pact on Political and Civil Rights," a fact that increased the perceived severity of the allegations directed at the shah's regime (Matin-asgari 2002:134). Iranian students and exiled members of the opposition had for years provided the international media and human rights organizations with "exaggerated and sometimes fallacious information about the so-called political holocaust in Iran, a country alleged to have more than 100,000 political prisoners" (Milani 1988:180-1), and in 1972 their efforts were rewarded.

Evidence that these numbers had been significantly inflated by the opposition can be gathered by analyzing the number of political prisoners released from prison in the period immediately preceding the revolution. Abrahamian (1989) reports that between early 1977 and early 1979 the shah ordered the release of 2,298 political prisoners, including "the last batch of political prisoners" (170-1). It is certainly possible that Abrahamian's count is incomplete and that many prisoners were released before 1977, but it seems somewhat unlikely. The shah only began to liberalize, and releasing political prisoners was a part of the liberalization process, when he came under perceived pressure

[121] The UN panel "found Iran guilty of consistent violations of human rights" (Milani 1988:180-1).

from the Carter administration. It thus appears far-fetched that the Iranian government would have held more than 100,000 dissenters imprisoned, a claim that was even made at an academic meeting at Columbia University in 1976 (Grayson 1981:151). Exaggeration or not, the commonly accepted number of political prisoners in Iran at the time was somewhere between 25,000 and 100,000 individuals, a range popularized by Amnesty International in a 1975 report. In the previous year Martin Ennals, the organization's secretary general, had forestalled the report by proclaiming that "no country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran" (Bill 1988a:187).

Regardless of their veracity, the shah was forced to deal with the atrocious human rights numbers attributed to him and his regime. Although no longer the insecure ruler of his youth, he still displayed an obsession with the world's opinion of him. This fixation resulted in a bizarre scenario in which "a major and continuous assignment of [the Iranian ambassadors to London, Washington, and the United Nations] was to review Western press coverage of Iran and to do whatever they could to prevent or minimize negative publicity about Iran and its supreme leader" (Dorman & Farhang 1987:24). Yet despite the severe allegations from Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Red Cross, and other human rights organizations, "the humanitarian efforts of these organizations were by and large inconsequential," as they were "devoid of effective leverage within the Iranian regime" (Milani 1988:180-1). This absence of leverage would soon be remedied by the independent emergence of two new actors on the Iranian human rights stage: the international media and President Carter.

As noted in chapter two, the European media had been paying some attention to its Iranian student populations' activities aimed at the shah's regime since the 1960s, and its curiosity now increased thanks to the human rights organizations' reports. In the early 1970s, encouraged by visiting Iranian students, publications such as Germany's *Der Spiegel* and *Frankfurter Rundschau*, France's *Le Monde* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*, and England's *Times*, *The Economist*, and *The Guardian*, all began to report on alleged torture and political repression in Iran (Matin-asgari 2002:122). These journalistic efforts culminated in a special report published by the *Sunday Times* of London on January 19, 1975, that confirmed "the systematic use of torture in Iranian prisons," including "the worst allegations, such as the burning of victims on an electrically-heated metal table" (Matin-asgari 2002:151).

Perhaps motivated by its European counterpart, the American media eventually began to address Iran's human rights situation in the mid-1970s. In the previous decades, American news outlets had been content to simply echo the sentiments of the aligned American and Iranian governments without paying closer attention to conditions on the ground. As Sick (1985) points out, a useful example of the American media's complacency before the 1970s is the fact that the violent Muharram uprising of 1963, "which had so many parallels with the 1978 revolution, went almost entirely unreported in the United States" (11). Nonetheless, the mid-1970s represented a renaissance for American journalistic interest in Iran, as "the mainstream press for the first time began to raise troubling questions about the shah's regime, especially concerning his quest for military power, method of rule, and repression of human rights" (Dorman & Farhang

1987:131). Iran's human rights situation was still at this point only one of several factors deemed problematic by American journalists and politicians. The latter group was particularly concerned with the shah's rapid military buildup, which was made possible by U.S. arms sales. The shah's repression of human rights was "finally" addressed when the *New York Times* published an article on the topic in September 1974, and the king's reliance on the secret police was the target of a report in *Newsweek* that same year (Dorman & Farhang 1987:108; Halliday 1979). *Washington Post*'s Jack Anderson devoted a May 1976 column to "the shah's 'rule by torture and terror' and [the reality] of SAVAK spying on Iranians in the United States." Three months later, in August 1976, "*Time* magazine published a special report on torture as government policy, naming Iran and Chile is the most frequently cited examples." Also in that same month, the *New York Times* criticized the close U.S.-Iranian relationship, lambasting the shah's method of rule as "militaristic and dictatorial" (Matin-asgari 2002:154).

The mid-1970s thus represent a brief period of time in which the U.S. media began to seriously examine the shah's regime, with the result that "by 1976 references to human rights abuses had become routine in press coverage" (Dorman & Farhang 1987:108). Matin-asgari (2002) elegantly captures the monumental shift that took place in the second half of the 1970s by arguing that

> a definite publicity breakthrough had occurred, with the international news media viewing Iran as having one of the world's most repressive governments. Years of adverse publicity by the CISNU (Confederation of Iranian Students, National Union) was the most direct and important cause of this situation" (148).

While the students deserve significant credit for bringing the Iranian political situation to the media's attention, they did so indirectly, with international human rights organizations serving as midwives. Far from a fortuitous fluke, this development was the result of deliberate strategy choices made by Iranian students and exiles (Matin-asgari 2002; Zonis 1991). The fact that American media outlets were oblivious to Iran in 1963, while increasingly active in reporting on the nation a decade later is perhaps best explained as a reflection of the world's newfound interest in Iran due to the nation's human rights reputation. It is difficult to imagine that such interest would have been awakened without the contributions of Iranians living abroad.

The Final Straw: The Election of Jimmy Carter

Although the media and human rights reports represented a "nuisance" for the shah, "who sought to depict himself as a modern progressive statesman of world stature," they did not significantly improve Iran's political conditions (Behrooz 1999:94). Quite on the contrary, the shah's regime became even more repressive and autocratic in the early and mid 1970s, culminating in the 1975 merger of the country's two permitted political parties into one, the *Rastakhiz* (Resurgence) Party (Foran 1993a). While complaining about "the treachery of the American Press," the shah did little to improve his standing in the West, arguably because there appeared to be little reason to change (Zonis 1991:235-6; Dorman & Farhang 1987). This would change dramatically with Jimmy Carter's ascension to the American presidency in 1977.

Familiar with Carter's human rights agenda, the shah viewed the Democrat's 1976 victory as a personal catastrophe, reportedly suggesting to one of his aides on the eve of the election that "it looks like we are not going to be around much longer" (Foran 1993a:394). However, once the immediate disappointment of Carter's victory had subsided, the shah set upon a liberalization project that most commentators agree was designed to appease not the domestic opposition, but rather the new American president. The human rights organizations that had been criticizing the regime's treatment of its opponents suddenly found a ruler willing to listen and work with them to improve Iran's human rights conditions. William J. Butler, the chairman of the executive committee of the International Commission of Jurists, had been studying Iran's political conditions since 1975, and, as Bill (1988a) reports,

> was able to develop an impressive rapport with the shah during personal meetings in Tehran on May 30, 1977, and in Shiraz on May 2, 1978. During these sessions, the shah and Butler discussed in detail various reforms of Iran's Penal Code and overall system of justice. Although Butler's efforts did not result in any substantive changes, they did reinforce a process of procedural reform from which there was to be no return. (227)

It is of course possible that the shah suddenly became interested in liberalizing his country for reasons other than his concern with American support. The two most popular alternatives suggested by scholars have been that either the shah's mind had taken a hit from his battle with cancer (Zonis 1991), or that the shah realized that his son would not be able to succeed him in the current political climate, and that liberalization was therefore necessary in order to assure the prolongation of the Pahlavi dynasty (Milani

1988).[122] While these are plausible explanations of the shah's liberalization efforts, the dominant perspective, focusing on the shah's insecurity about continued American support, appears a more fruitful avenue to travel (Abrahamian 1982; Amjad 1989; Arjomand 1988; Bill 1988a; Cottam 1988; Foran 1993a; Milani 1988; Moaddel 1993; Parsa 1988).

Although disconcerting, the election of Carter was not an altogether new experience for the shah. Sixteen years earlier he had been shocked by the unexpected victory of another liberal, John F. Kennedy, who had forced the king to liberalize and even selected a prime minister for him. Having learned from the Kennedy experience, the shah did not wait for Carter to dictate policy for him, instead preferring to preempt the Americans and thus be able to take personal credit for the liberalization measures that he assumed would eventually be forced upon him at any rate. "For example, he introduced new regulations that permitted civilian defendants brought before military tribunals to be represented by civilian lawyers and to enjoy open trials. The Shah also slightly eased press controls" (Bakhash 1990:9). By enacting policies such as these the king not only hoped to appease the Carter administration, but also to gain approval from the human rights organizations that had focused their criticisms on Iran's legal system.

Iranians on both sides of the political spectrum carefully watched Carter's every move. After 25 years of American dominance in Iranian politics both sides believed that the shah remained untouchable as long as he enjoyed support from Washington. In what

[122] Note that Milani takes more than one stance on this issue as he also considered Carter's human rights policy to be a crucial cause of the shah's liberalization efforts.

appears to be an effort to guarantee American backing, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Fereydoun Hoveyda, wrote an open letter published by the *New York Times* on May 18, 1977, in which he "declared that his country was committed to the human rights ideals of the United Nations and had made more progress toward the realization of human rights than had the United States in a similar time frame" (Grayson 1981:155). This might seem like an insignificant gesture, but I contend that Hoveyda's public commitment to human rights on the Iranian government's behalf sealed the shah's destiny of being Carter's cellmate in an iron cage of liberalism.

Summary

In the age of an efficient and omnipresent mass media, world leaders are held accountable for their and their proxies' words in a manner that is unprecedented in human history. Carter's campaign theme of human rights was a shrewd political move that helped him get elected, but once in office his campaign rhetoric now limited the policy options at his disposal (Milani 1988). Being the candidate of human rights made it almost impossible to turn a blind eye to the fact that a close ally was considered by many pro-democracy organizations and media outlets to be one of the world's worst offenders of human rights. When the shah, via Ambassador Hoveyda's letter to the *New York Times* in 1977, joined Carter in the ICL, the two regimes were effectively trapped by their own rhetoric. For the king this meant that unless his regime came under armed attack he could not repress protesters without appearing hypocritical. Similarly, Carter could not offer the

shah the type of wholehearted support that his predecessors had provided as long as the human rights question hovered above the Iranian government. This lack of support, which I return to in the next chapter, caused both the shah and the Iranian opposition to assume that the tide in U.S.-Iranian relations had turned and that the American government was no longer backing the shah. The fact that such an evaluation of the situation was at best only partially accurate is irrelevant since most Iranians assumed it to be true.

For the ICL to come into effect, Iranian history had to progress through three distinctive steps. First, Iran and the U.S. had to become entwined in more than just a dependent relationship. As described earlier in this chapter, that transformation occurred over the course of four decades as Iran, by encouraging private American investment, made itself an important partner of the American economy. In addition to corporate investments, Iran became America's most important ally in the struggle to keep oil prices down, and when the American economy struggled at the time of the Vietnam War, Iranian purchases of U.S. arms helped many companies stay afloat. To all of this must of course be added the military-strategic importance Iran played in American Cold War calculations. As the relationship between the U.S. and Iran matured, the latter became globally recognized as an important ally of the U.S., and was therefore expected to embrace the liberal/democratic values so highly cherished by the West in the Cold War era. Perhaps nobody understood these expectations better than the shah himself, who writes that "as an ally, I was expected to live up to the West's idea of democracy regardless of its unfeasibility in a country like mine" (Pahlavi 1980:21).

Second, this relationship and all its components had to become high-profile. The world had to be informed about the discrepancy between the shah's international image and the political conditions of Iranian society. While revolutionaries can perhaps do little to foster the type of special relationship identified and discussed in this chapter, they can contribute significantly to the promulgation of that relationship. Ironically, this task was made easier by the special relationship as Iranian students, thanks to the political amicability between the two countries, migrated to the U.S. in greater numbers than students from any other country (Matin-asgari 2002). Once outside of the repressive context of their home country, the students were confronted with the political benefits of an open society, and thus both motivated and free to publicly criticize their own government. Their critiques were eventually appropriated by human rights organizations and the international mass media that helped portray the shah's regime as a brutal dictatorship, a fairly new image of the government for the international audience to absorb.

Finally, Carter's campaign rhetoric guaranteed that the discrepancies pointed out by the media and human rights organizations became problematic for the shah (Milani 1988:183). The human rights issue, which previously had been little more than a source of annoyance, now became a potentially disastrous situation that the shah had to deal with in order to retain the U.S. support his regime depended upon after having alienated virtually every social group in Iran.[123] But the shah's public commitment to human rights

[123] Please see Chapters 2 and 3.

and his liberalization efforts only served to encourage potential revolutionaries.[124] As Abrahamian (1982) eloquently puts it, "liberalization, which had been introduced as a political tranquilizer, was proving to be a potent stimulant" (505), and liberalization was a direct effect of Carter's human rights rhetoric and the ICL it had helped erect.

The emergence of the Iranian-American ICL inevitably forced the U.S. to become more than an anxious spectator of the revolution. Instead, the U.S. found itself an unwilling partner of the Iranian opposition in its effort against the shah's regime. Chapter 6 thus explores how the Iranian opposition went about exploiting the opportunity it had played a major role in crafting for itself. By contributing to the construction of the world's first iron cage of liberalism, Iranian revolutionaries helped create a structural context conducive to a nonviolent assault on the Iranian state. As we will see, this overwhelming reliance on nonviolent methods served to further internationalize the revolution as it dragged the U.S. and the world into the struggle.

[124] Anthony Parsons (1984), Britain's ambassador to Iran, has speculated whether Iran's human rights situation was "any worse" than that of other countries in the developing world "or did it simply appear to be so because [the shah] insisted on Iran being judged by Westerns standards as part of the Western world" (3)? The shah's eagerness to be seen as a western leader helped trap him in the ICL.

6. A DELIBERATE REVOLUTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGY

The iron cage of liberalism (ICL) introduced in Chapter 5 constitutes the structural context in which a nonviolent challenge to the shah's regime became viable. However important, the establishment of the ICL only begins to explain how the revolutionaries were able to defeat the government. To fully understand the revolution's success it is necessary to more closely examine its final phase, namely the popular struggle of 1977-79. How did the nonviolent revolutionaries overthrow a state in control of one of the planet's most powerful militaries, and why did the state fail to repress the movement? In order to answer these questions this chapter explores the strategies chosen by the revolutionary leadership and seeks to place them within the larger structural context of the ICL. I show that Iranian revolutionaries strategically chose to target not simply the shah's regime and army, but also the world in general and the U.S. in particular.

In order to defeat its opponent, the anti-shah movement had to ensure that the military was not allowed to derail its efforts the way it had in 1963. As we saw in Chapter 4, Khomeini and other leaders knew from experience that the armed forces had the capacity to crush a popular uprising, and in 1978 the military was even better organized and equipped than it had been fifteen years earlier. One of the opposition's main concerns was therefore to minimize the role the army would be permitted to play this time around. The movement leadership was also concerned about the potential effect the U.S. could have on the struggle as Operation Ajax and the ousting of Mossadeq were still relatively

fresh in the collective Iranian memory. Consequently, in addition to the military the U.S. had to be neutralized as well.

The good news for the opposition was that it knew what the movement needed to accomplish. The bad news was that neutralizing a well equipped army consisting of 400,000 members, as well as the world's most powerful nation, was no easy task. Hence, the revolutionaries had to approach the struggle in a strategic manner where its tactics and actions were rationally calculated. As I showed in Chapter 4, Khomeini appears to have had a solid comprehension of the dynamics of nonviolent action, but he was not the only revolutionary leader with good instincts. Mehdi Bazargan and other leaders of the liberal-nationalist movement understood that Carter's human rights rhetoric was the political opening they had been waiting for, and they proceeded to exploit it as soon as the shah began to liberalize Iran in early 1977. Although enjoying some limited success, the liberal movement eventually lost out to Khomeini's hard-liners and had to accept that the revolution would be fought under the banner of Islam. The type of tactics the secularists had employed was, like the revolution itself, appropriated by the religious movement that successfully guided the struggle to its conclusion.

The chapter's focus on strategy – defined as structurally situated agency – is unusual compared to existing revolution research. However, Iran's nonviolent revolution did not come, but was at least in part made, a fact that has been acknowledged even by some of the staunchest proponents of structural explanations of revolutions.[125] The chapter shows that the revolutionaries opted for strategies that were appropriate

[125] See Skocpol (1982) and Keddie's (1982) response.

considering the structural context of Carter's human rights rhetoric and the ICL. By relying on nonviolent tactics that internationalized the revolution, the opposition managed to sequentially break down the Iranian state and its repressive capacities while simultaneously neutralizing the United States. Ironically, the fashion in which the United States was neutralized was through the movement's strategy of involving Washington in the conflict.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section briefly summarizes the key events of the long revolutionary year of 1978 and outlines some of the concrete tactics employed by the opposition in its quest to break down the state. The success of any revolutionary movement depends on its ability to withstand government effort to crush it (Schock 2005). The second section therefore concerns itself with the question of government repression and identifies the structural and strategic factors that explain the government's failure to repress the movement. The section demonstrates how the movement intentionally sought to internationalize itself by strategically dragging the world into the conflict. Finally, I take a brief look at the comparative roles of violent and nonviolent opposition strategies in the Iranian Revolution.

Preamble to a Revolution: The Year of Liberalization (1977)

The shah began to liberalize Iran in early 1977, that is, at almost the exact of time of Carter's entry into the Oval Office, and even went as far as to publicly call 1977 "the year of liberalization" (Bill 1988a:219). Beginning in April, the shah allowed

international human rights organization to inspect prisons and observe trials against his political opponents, and the use of torture was "significantly reduced" (Keddie 2003:216-7). In August the shah announced that parliamentary elections "that would grant the electorate a free choice" would be held in the following year (Cottam 1988:172). Up to this point this was the king's most concrete expression of a willingness to share power.

Although these liberalization measures, as well as many others, certainly had real consequences for those individuals who had been constrained by the absence of political freedoms in the past, the most important effect of the liberalization process was largely symbolic in the message it sent to the shah's opponents. If Carter's human rights agenda had an anomic effect on the shah, it served the opposite role for the opposition, which "attributed the Shah's liberalization measures to President Carter's human rights policy and was becoming increasingly convinced that the Americans did not mind seeing the Shah replaced" (Arjomand, 1988: 130). As Bazargan put it after the revolution, "Carter's election made it possible for Iran to breathe again" (Abrahamian, 1982: 500). Khomeini's hard line faction of the opposition interpreted Carter's election victory in a similar manner. Ibrahim Yazdi, the coordinator of the Muslim Students Association in the U.S. and a collaborator of Khomeini's alerted the ayatollah to the fact that "the shah's friends in Washington are out" (Seliktar 2000:63).

Some scholars have argued that Carter's election was a minimally important "factor in generating opposition" to the shah (Parsa 1989:116). Others, however, have been much more sympathetic to the argument that the Iranian opposition tailored its resistance to fit Carter's new paradigm, and that "the opposition was greatly encouraged

by the 'Carter revolution' and hoped to use the human rights issue to maximize its advantage" (Seliktar 2000:62). As Algar explains, "it was a question of tactically harassing the regime in a fashion which might be thought to coincide with the new emphasis in American policy abroad" (Algar 1983:100). This point is echoed by Keddie (2003), who explains that

> interviews and statements do indicate… that professionals and intellectuals were determined to utilize the American human rights policy to wedge an opening by publishing their grievances, hoping to widen the crack in order to change government policies. In the spring and summer of 1977 several petitions and open letters were circulated. (215)

Thus, beginning in March moderate oppositionists commenced "an effort to test the limits of liberalization," which included the circulation of essays and letters that criticized the shah for his despotic style of rule, and "urged application of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Seliktar 2000:62; Foran 1993a; Keddie 1983b).

Over the course of the next few months Iranian activists continued to test the waters of the shah's liberalization process. During this period, groups such as the National Front and the Freedom Movement of Iran reemerged from their involuntary hiatus, and by summer these organization were joined by "professional associations and pressure groups," such as the Iranian Writers' Association and the Association of Iranian Jurists. These groups' "very existence implied an enormous change in the political environment, and they provided important foci for the articulation of grievances and the beginnings of expression of public opinion" (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994:99).

Perhaps even more telling was the sudden creation of new political groups focusing specifically on human rights (Amjad 1989).

> The most important of these organizations was the committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedom, often called simply, 'The Committee for Human Rights.' It included among its leaders representatives from the Liberation Movement (Mehdi Bazargan) and the National Front (Karim Sanjabi)… Formally organized in December 1977, the Committee for Human Rights coordinated the documentation of civil rights violations… By midsummer 1978 the committee had compiled over 200 case histories of human and civil rights violations during the Shah's regime. It also worked with organizations abroad, including the International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International. (Stempel 1981:56)

More than simply a "leader," Bazargan was a founding member of the group. Recognizing the political opportunity represented by Carter's policies,

> he made every effort to tie opposition activities in Iran to the human rights banner and in so doing to explore fully any potential there still might be in showing some attempts to adhere to Carter's human rights program as a means of gaining American political encouragement. The Iranian Committee for Human Rights and Liberty was formed and affiliated itself with the International League for Human Rights. *Effectively it was the central committee of the revolutionary leadership, and Bazargan was its functional, though not formal, leader* [emphasis added]. (Cottam 1988:167-8).

The fact that Bazargan and his associates early on set the pace for a revolution that was later hijacked by Khomeini's faction of the opposition becomes important when we consider that the tactics and strategies that would eventually characterize the religious opposition were indeed the same methods of struggle that the political movement had adopted at the beginning of the revolution.

On December 29, 1977, twenty-nine prominent activists wrote an open letter to the U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim. A copy of the letter was also sent to President Carter who was scheduled to visit the shah at the end of the month and

celebrate New Year's Eve with him. In what Stempel (1981), refers to as a "planned campaign," the Iranian opposition kept pushing the human rights agenda back onto Carter. Collaborating with its homeland counterparts, "opposition supporters in the United States encouraged the President to recognize that the Iranian dissidents were seeking the same human rights goals the President had been proclaiming" (89). It therefore seems to be beyond doubt that the Iranian revolutionaries deliberately sought to involve the United States in their conflict with the shah. At the same time, the revolutionaries realized that the U.S. had enough invested in the shah to prevent a complete abandonment of its trusted ally. Thus, as one scholar puts it, "by 1978 efforts were directed more toward producing American neutrality rather than enlisting positive American support for fundamental reform" (Cottam 1988:162). The opposition realized that U.S. neutrality was a sufficient and infinitely more achievable goal, as it would prevent the shah from receiving the American backing he had relied on in the past. Emphasizing the human rights context turned out to be a most fruitful way of accomplishing that objective.

The Revolution[126]

Because of Carter's campaign rhetoric and the efforts of the abroad-based opposition's efforts, the Iranian Revolution occurred against the backdrop of a global human rights discussion on Iran. Following the letter writing campaigns of early and mid-

[126] For a chronology of the revolution, see Semkus (1979).

1977, the revolution advanced through four somewhat distinct phases: the secular challenge against the regime in the fall of 1977, the mourning processions of the first six months of 1978, a brief interlude of relative calm followed by a few crucial events in the summer of that year, and finally the enormous strikes and massive demonstrations that brought down the regime in the fall and early winter of 1978-1979. In the next four sections I briefly discuss each phase of the revolution and the strategies and tactics used to challenge the shah's government.

The Secular Challenge: Responses to Liberalization (Fall 1977)

The letter writing campaigns that resulted from the shah's liberalization measures in response to Carter's human rights agenda were eventually transformed into a more concrete confrontation between the secular opposition and the shah's regime in the fall of that year. The most significant event of this period was organized by the Writers' Association, one of many new or reemerging groups pressing the regime for human rights concessions, which arranged a series of sixteen nights of poetry readings. At these events, poets sympathetic to the opposition delivered their poems in front of large crowds that would memorize and subsequently share them with friends and family. On the tenth night of the series, famous poet Saeed Soltanpour was scheduled to give a lecture and recite some of his work. The organizers had reportedly sent out 2,000 invitations, but a crowd in excess of 10,000 showed up for the event. Tehran police prevented the vast majority from entering the amphitheater where Soltanpour was to perform, resulting in unrest at

the entrances to the theater and the arrest of 50 student activists. When the poet was informed of the situation "he refused to give his scheduled speech on art and its influence on society and instead read one of his most revolutionary poems, written while he was incarcerated in a Savak jail" (Parsa 1989:178). The audacity of Soltanpour's act of defiance inspired those gathered, both in the theater and outside, and a spontaneous sit-in was organized to last throughout the night. When the activists left the theater in the morning and formed a street demonstration, they clashed with security forces which cost several students their lives. In response to the killings, students called for a national day of mourning three days after the clashes, with new demonstrations resulting in more deaths and the shutdown of the Tehran bazaar, "an event unheard of in more than a decade" (Parsa 1989:179). A few months later the religious opposition would mimic the students' "mourning day strategy" and organize mourning processions of their own. As for the Writers' Association, the tenth poetry night marked its last significant contribution to the revolution. Although the organization survived with a more radical leadership and continued to issue anti-government statements, it was unable to organize events similar to its 1977 poetry nights. Thus, while ineffective during the remainder of the revolution, "the Writers Association played a crucial role by attacking the government in the initial stage of the conflict when it appeared unassailable" (Parsa 1989:179).

Hijacking the Revolution: The Religious Turn (Winter and Spring 1978)

Following the poetry nights, the regime once again shrunk the political space available to the opposition. The shah himself had recently visited Carter in Washington, and despite clashes between anti- and pro-shah demonstrators in Washington DC he had left America feeling confident of U.S. support.[127] The shah's sense that his relationship with the United States was not in doubt was reinforced on the last day of 1977 when the President and Mrs. Carter rang in the New Year in Tehran as the king's guests. On this occasion Carter delivered a toast, proclaiming that

> Iran under the great leadership of the Shah is an island of stability in one of the most troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, your majesty, and to your leadership, and to the respect, admiration, and love which your people give to you. (Amjad, 1989:119)

Although Carter may have intended to flatter the shah, it seems more likely that the President and his staff actually believed the shah to be popular among Iranians. I will return to the U.S. role in the revolution below.

Perhaps as a result of Carter's words, his own newly rejuvenated confidence, and the apparent success of the liberalization program, the shah seemingly decided to test the opposition the way it had tested him in the previous months. Thus, on January 7, 1978, the *Ittila'at*, one of Iran's largest newspapers, slandered Khomeini as both a British agent and a homosexual of Indian origins. The article was written by the government, although

[127] The regime had reportedly paid airfare, expenses, and $300 to anyone willing to come to the U.S. capital and demonstrate in favor of him. However, Matin-asgari (2002) reports that this strategy might not always have had the intended results, as one flown in "supporter" is quoted saying "I'll take this money and demonstrate against [the shah]. To hell with him" (158-9).

the identity of its author has remained somewhat of a mystery. What was not a mystery, however, was Khomeini's supporters' response to the article: On the following day, 4,000 radical Islamic teachers and students demonstrated in Qom and the city's bazaar shut down in solidarity with the demonstrators. Government forces clashed with the demonstrators and 70 activists lost their lives while 400 were injured (Amjad 1989:120).[128] This incident marked the beginning of the 40-day mourning cycles that would become a central element of the opposition's resistance to the regime in the first half of 1978.

The martyrs of the January 8 demonstrations were commemorated at mourning processions on February 18 in sixteen cities around Iran. The demonstrations were peaceful in all but one of the cities, the exception being Tabriz in the northwestern part of the country, where demonstrators clashed with security forces. Some commentators suggest that the protests turned into riots when a radical student activist, twenty-year old Mohammad Tajala, threw the first stone at the police and was in turn shot dead (Kurzman 2004:46). Others, however, point to police attacks on protesters outside a mosque where one man was shot in the leg by the security forces as the incident that sparked 36 hours of rioting in the city (Parsa 1989:111-2).

Regardless of who initiated the violence, the Tabriz riots constitutes the exception to the rule of peaceful protesting during the first six months of 1978, although Keddie (2003) has argued that "this protest-to-riot pattern was to be repeated later in Iran's main

[128] As with all casualty figures, this one is debatable. Abrahamian (1985) reports that the official number of casualties released by the government was only two.

cities" (229). Thirteen people died in the Tabriz unrest, almost all of whom were opposition activists. It is important to note that although demonstrators in Tabriz rioted, the riots were deliberate and in fact largely nonviolent. Banks, liquor stores, and cinemas playing Western and pornographic films were all attacked, but "human life was spared, even of those considered enemies" (Keddie 2003:226). Furthermore, the banks attacked, symbols of Iran's westernization, were vandalized, but none of them were raided for money. In other words, opposition violence targeted symbols of the shah's unpopular regime, and was thus used to make "a political point," rather than economically enrich the movement or its participants (Abrahamian 1982:506-7). To illustrate that violence was not a crucial element of even the most violent episode of the early revolutionary period, Parsa (1989) describes an alternative tactic used "in the heat of the demonstration," as

> it was reported that some twenty dogs, each wrapped in a white cloth, were turned loose in the central city. On each was affixed the name of one of the members of the royal family. The dogs ran widely about, evading capture, making mockery of the royal family. The significance of this event was unmistakable. In a single dramatic act, the people of Tabriz symbolically eliminated the entire royal family. (112)

The 40-day protest cycle was repeated twice more, on March 28-30 and May 8-10. In the late March edition, protests occurred in 55 cities and towns. Among them was Yazd in the central part of the country, where up to a hundred people were killed. The Yazd clashes were tape-recorded, and the opposition quickly spread copies of the tape around the country in an apparent PR-coup against the government (Foran 1994b:176). Following the May 10 mourning processions the revolutionary leadership cancelled plans

for a fourth round of protests that would have taken place on June 17. According to Kurzman (2004), the decision to halt the 40-day mourning cycles was made as a result of pragmatic considerations of the government's suspected plans to violently repress the next round of protests that would have coincided with the 15th anniversary of the 1963 Muharram uprising. Unwilling to face the regime in an all-out confrontation, the opposition instead called for a one-day strike to take place on June 17.

Thus, after six months of sustained and regular opposition to the shah's government, the protest movement came to a temporary end in mid-June. Although it had not overthrown the government, which at this point in time was only the objective of Khomeini's faction of the opposition, the movement had reaped the benefits of the protest-cycles and undergone at least one fundamental transformation: The protest activities during the first six months of 1978 helped establish the radical Islamists, and Khomeini in particular, as the de facto leaders of the movement. Before the unfortunate publication of the Khomeini-slandering article, opposition protests "were led by the intelligentsia and the middle classes, took the form of written declarations, and were organized around professional groups and universities," but once the government had made its most significant blunder in decades, demonstrations were now led by the *ulama*, "organized around mosques and religious events, and drew for support on the urban masses" (Bakhash 1990:15). By virtue of its own actions then, the government had helped the revolutionary *ulama* hijack the leadership of the movement at the expense of the liberal, reform-minded secular opposition.

Beside this elemental shift in the movement's character away from moderate secularism towards populist Islam, the hundred or so demonstrations that made up the mourning processions gave both movement leaders and participants valuable training and practical experience in how to confront the government's forces (M. Fischer 1987; Keddie 2003; Seliktar 2000; Stempel 1981). Furthermore, Parsa (1989) has argued that the combination of

> the forty-day cycles of mourning ceremonies and the existence of mosque networks enabled bazaaris to broadcast and confront each successive brutality by the government. Without the means of publicizing the regime's repressive nature, the opposition movement would soon have been snuffed out. (113)

In short then, the religiously camouflaged protest activities of early 1978 represent the instrumental second phase of the Iranian Revolution. Most importantly perhaps, it was during the long spring of 1978 that Khomeini and his lieutenants secured a firm grip of the revolutionary leadership.

Interlude and Government Blunders (Summer 1978)

The summer of 1978 passed surprisingly quietly until another insane decision by the government once again galvanized the population. On August 19, exactly 25 years after the CIA's Operation Ajax ousted Mossadeq, the Rex Cinema in Abadan, an oil city in the southwestern part of the country, was set ablaze. The fire, the responsibility for which the government placed on the religious opposition, claimed the lives of about 400 individuals and was surrounded by suspicious details. For example, it has been reported

that the entrance doors to the cinema were locked from the outside, and that police prevented bystanders from helping those inside the theatre. Furthermore, it took the fire brigades an exceptionally long time to arrive at the scene (Amjad 1989; Kurzman 2004).

The opposition used these facts to blame the government and the SAVAK for the arson. Oppositionists pointed out that the cinema had been attacked during the day and without prior warning, both of which violated the opposition's normal code of conduct (Algar 1983; Amjad 1989). Also, the Rex was not a pornographic theater, and at the time of the incident was playing an anti-government film called *Deers*. Finally, the shah had delivered a speech just the previous night warning the nation of the opposition's desire to invoke "great terror" (Amjad, 1989: 123-4). Although the identity of the arsonists may never be known, the people of Iran definitely favored the logic of the opposition's theory and condemned the government for its barbaric actions. Thus, the accuracy of some commentators' allegation that the opposition did indeed sacrifice 400 of its own followers to score a propaganda victory against the SAVAK is inconsequential. The Rex Cinema fire restarted the anti-government movement and was further fueled by events 3 weeks later on September 8.

The sudden escalation in anti-regime sentiment that followed the Rex Cinema fire shook the very foundations of the shah's world. A week after the incident Prime Minister Amouzegar was dismissed and replaced by Ja'afar Sharif Emami, a politician known to be more acceptable to the religious opposition. Sharif-Emami immediately resumed liberalization by restoring the traditional Muslim calendar (the shah, to the *ulama*'s outrage, had replaced it with a Persian one), closing all casinos and gambling

houses, banning all publications deemed to be "contrary to Islamic belief," including pornography, releasing religious leaders in external exile, and removed most press restrictions (Menashri 1990:39-41). Sharif-Emami also granted all political organization, except communist ones, the right to organize, reinstated expelled students, and promised to prosecute those responsible for violence against protesters (Parsa 1989:55).The shah's opponents, on the other hand, took advantage of the regime's vacillating strategy and on the final day of Ramadan, *Eid-e Fetr*, organized a massive "religious" gathering in Tehran that eventually turned into an anti-shah demonstration. Similar demonstrations were arranged in the following days until the government finally had enough and declared martial law in the early morning of Friday, September 8 (Kurzman 2004).

Unaware that martial law had been announced just hours earlier, thus prohibiting public gatherings, activist congregated as planned in Tehran's Jaleh Square later that morning. Protesters went about their business, continuing the streak of peaceful demonstrations that had been permitted in the previous days, but this time the government's response would be different. Foran (1993a) vividly captures the horrific course of events:

> When ordered to disperse people sat down and bared their chests. Soldiers fired first into the air, then directly into the crowd in a massacre. Shooting continued during the day, including aerial attacks from helicopters on the southern slums. Officially, eighty-six people were killed; bodies in the Tehran morgue were assigned numbers which reached over 3,000. The event came to be known as Black Friday, and it marked the declaration of open war between the government and the population. (381)

In contrast to the government's already high official death toll, Stempel (1981) suggests that "estimates of 300 to 400 dead are reasonable" (117), while Keddie (2003) suspects

that the Black Friday casualties "probably numbered from 500 to 900" (232). A French journalist at the scene of the massacre interpreted the government's actions in the following way: "[The regime] aim[s] to frighten them, dissuade them, have to hit hard. Once as a lesson" (Kurzman 2004:74). Worded differently, it appears the government hoped to end the challenge to its rule by striking hard at the opposition once and for all. Instead, as so often in the history of government attempts at repression throughout the world, the Black Friday massacre marked the Iranian Revolution's point of no return, as "compromise with the Shah became extremely difficult if not impossible after this date" (Bakhash 1990:17). In part due to the massacre, then, the few remaining moderates of the revolutionary coalition's leadership were forced to irrevocably concede their positions of prominence in favor of the hardliners who argued that revolutionary overthrow of the shah's government was now the only option. This dynamic, which has been referred to by scholars of nonviolent social change as either "the paradox of repression" (Kurtz & Smithey 1999; Schock 2005) or "political jiu-jitsu" (Sharp 1973; 2005), suggests that government repression often lead to the radicalization of a movement, which is indeed what happened in Iran. By repressing the opposition the shah only contributed to the marginalization of the moderates, which in turn made his position a lot more difficult. Compromise with the radicals was not an option.

Making the Revolution: Strikes and Demonstration (Fall and Winter 1978-79)

Following Black Friday the demonstrations continued and were combined with an ever-growing number of strikes in every part of the economy. As Kurzman (2004) points out, "strikes were not unknown in Pahlavi Iran," as every year between 1973 and 1977 saw between fifteen and twenty-seven strikes take place (77). Furthermore, strikes had been used successfully during the Constitutional Revolution and were commonplace in the time period immediately following the coup against Mossadeq (Afary 1994; Amjad 1989). Nonetheless, strikes had never been used on such a massive scale as would be the case in the fall of 1978.

In September 1978, *bazaaris* and private sector workers were the first to strike, and by October Iran witnessed its first strikes in the public sector.[129] While private sector strikes were economically disruptive, the strikes in the public sector caused even severer problems for the regime as they coupled economic demands with political ones. The heavy emphasis on political demands set by Iranian workers have been duly noted by many commentators (Kurzman 2004; Parsa 1989; Parsons 1984; Stempel 1981).[130] For example, strikers demanded "the unconditional release of all political prisoners, dissolution of martial law, and expulsion of foreigners of the respective sectors" (Parsa 1989:151), the "Iranianization of the oil industry" (Kurzman 2004:78), and "the return of Khomeini" (Amjad, 1989: 125).

[129] On the role of the workers in the revolution, see Assef Bayat (1987)
[130] It should however be noted that some of these scholars, notably Parsa (1989) and Parsons (1984), have suggested that political demands only materialized later in the striking process.

Partly because of their political nature and partly due to their large size, "it was the public sector strikes that paralyzed the economy" (Bakhash 1984:189). Also, most workers were employed by the state, "which increased the potential for politicization of conflicts" (Parsa 1989:151) Amuzegar (1991) has succinctly traced the development of isolated public sector strikes into what eventually became a debilitating general strike the government proved unable to cope with.

> With meticulous and methodical organization and direction, rarely if ever seen in Iran's public administration, the first critical strike began in the oil fields, causing both a drastic drop in oil exports and exchange earnings and a shortage of domestic fuel. Thereafter, one by one, the other strategic centers of the economy – the ministry of water and power, the customs administration, the treasury, the central bank, and Iran Air – joined the antigovernment protesters. While the *final* cause of the regime's downfall may still be a matter of speculation, there is no doubt that the economic paralysis caused by the public employees' strikes was a most, if not the most, crucial factor [emphasis in original]. (Amuzegar 1991:284)[131]

As workers from a wide variety of industries and sectors struck simultaneously the government was at a loss for meaningful responses. Total repression was not an option as the shah knew that he could ill afford to further infuriate the nation's skilled workers, especially those in the oilfields who literally provided his regime with the fuel it needed to operate. In addition to the apparent economic damage, imprisoning these workers could potentially expose them to "the subversive ideas of the political prisoners," which would likely only serve to amplify their alienation from the state (Amjad 1989:113).

As the shah refused to confront the strikers head on, and instead preferred to remain faithful to his tactic of mixing repression with concessions, the number of strikes

[131] Amuzegar's evaluation of the centrality of strikes for the success of the Iranian Revolution has been echoed by others. See for example Amjad (1989), Bakhash (1984), Keddie (2003), Parsa (1989), Parsons (1984), and Stempel (1981).

increased drastically throughout the fall. On October 7, almost 30 new groups joined the strikes and the next day another 65 new work stops were reported. On October 9 another 110 strikes were added to the list and on the 12th yet another 125 new strikes went into effect. At this point employees at several of the government's news outlets joined the striking nation in what can only be described as a general strike (Parsa 1989:146).

The sheer number of strikes overwhelmed the state's repressive machinery which simply could not coerce the entire nation back to work simultaneously, or, as the shah himself noted in October 1978, "You can't crack down on one block and make the people on the next block behave" (Kurzman 2004:113-4). An additional problem for the government surrounding the strikes was that even though some industries of the economy did not strike, many such workplaces remained idle because of strikes in other sectors. For example, when custom officials struck and ink could not be delivered to the central bank, the Iranian economy experienced a physical shortage of money as no new bills were being printed, resulting in industries closing down since the lack of money meant they could no longer pay their workers (Kurzman 2004). In addition to the overwhelming nature of the general strike, the government lacked a meaningful institutional protocol for dealing with public sector strikers as "there was no provision in law for withholding pay from rebellious workers. Thus, for example, when Iran Air pilots or the Central Bank tellers refused to show up, they continued to be paid" (Stempel 1981:121). For those Iranians who nevertheless had their salaries withheld (which mainly occurred in the private sector), wealthy *bazaaris* often stepped in and personally compensated striking

workers.[132]

Throughout the general strikes, the shah, under indirect pressure from the United States and international human rights organizations, continued his process of liberalization. As media restrictions had been eased, workers could now learn about strikes in other parts of the country which increased their sense of solidarity with others. Perhaps even more importantly, "by knowing that other large groups were on strike at the same time, strikers realized that the regime was vulnerable and that the cost of repression could not be very high, for pressure on any single group was reduced" (Parsa 1989:151). In summary, the Iranian state, like most states, was for structural reasons poorly equipped to handle the type of massive general strike that swept the country in October. Although the strikes do not seem to have been initially coordinated by the revolutionary leadership, Khomeini, who by now thanks to his longstanding uncompromising stance towards the shah was firmly in control of the movement, soon realized the strikes' utility. Thus, in late November, while still in Parisian exile, he called upon the Iranian people "to go on perpetual strike until the criminal Shah was deposed" (Stempel 1981:143). When opposition politician Shapour Bakhtiar was named prime minister by the shah in a last desperate attempt to save his throne, Khomeini responded by once again calling "for more strikes and demonstrations" (Abrahamian 1982:525). The effectiveness of the strikes had not been lost on Iranians, and Khomeini was certainly no exception to that rule.

[132] See Skocpol (1982)

Unlike mindless rioting that have accompanied revolutions in the past, the Iranian Revolution, despite witnessing some instances of seemingly irrational collective behavior, was on the whole a highly deliberate and strategic manifestation. Foran (1993a) has captured the purposive nature of the general strike by noting that it served

> two purposes: It weakened the shah's regime, delegitimating it internally and making it difficult to repress the movement… And it convinced the West, led by the United States, that the shah could no longer guarantee the flow of Iranian oil, let alone provide a stable outlet for investment capital. It was thus absolutely central to the success of the revolution; Khumaini could not have taken power (or would have had an unimaginably more difficult task doing so) without the working class general strike. (387)

The general strikes were indeed highly disruptive and debilitating for the regime. But despite the incredible pressure the strikes put on the shah he never fully released the might of his military against the Iranian population. To understand the success of the Iranian Revolution, which was never a foregone conclusion, it is necessary to explore the reasons why one of the most powerful militaries of the world turned out to be powerless in the face of the nonviolent opposition.

Explaining the Lack of Repression: The Role of Structure

Strikes and demonstrations have been used by activists in many revolutionary struggles, as well as by Iranian activists throughout the 20th century, but not always with the overwhelming success evidenced by events in Iran in the fall of 1978. As scholars have noted, a necessary factor in explaining nonviolent success is understanding the lack, or failure, of state repression (Nepstad forthcoming). The shah had two potential sources

of repression, his armed forces and U.S. intervention. This section explores the structural reasons that may explain the absence of military and American repression respectively.

The Absence of Military Repression

Some have argued that the shah was not prone to violence, and that he in fact "genuinely abhorred bloodshed" (Amuzegar 1991:286), but such testimonies tend to come from either commentators sympathetic, or even apologetic, to the shah, or from friends and past members of his administrations.[133] The shah had used significant violence in the past, for example when suppressing the largely nonviolent upheaval of 1963, and decisively crushing the Iranian guerrillas in the early 1970s. Although Amuzegar (1991) suggests that the shah did not personally order the military to attack the crowds in June 1963 – that order supposedly came from Prime Minister Alam – other commentators frequently disagree. According to Bill (1988a), "the shah approved a brutal military attack on unarmed demonstrating students" in January 1962 (146), and, more relevantly, in the face of stirring unrest in early 1978 "initially gave orders à la 1963 to put down the disturbances with as much as force as necessary" (236). Bill proceeds to paint the shah as a butcher-like statesman, arguing that in the bloody first months of the revolution "troops fired on funeral processions… directly into unarmed crowds of men, women, and children" (Bill 1988a:236).

[133] Amuzegar, for example, served in several cabinet positions under the shah.

While the shah almost certainly did order his troops to initially deal with opposition activities violently, the reality of his actions probably falls somewhere in between Amuzegar's and Bill's evaluations: the shah did not abhor violence, but neither was he willing to fully deploy his military against the Iranian people. But if this reluctance did not stem from the shah's personality we must look for other plausible explanations for the relative lack of violent repression of the strikes.

Several scholars have suggested that the shah's indecisiveness in dealing with his opponents stemmed from the fact that he was dying from cancer. "Reduced repression," Parsa (1988) writes, "was contrary to the Shah's historical policies and was due in part… to the Shah's cancer and the listlessness that resulted from his chemotherapy" (46). Similarly, Stempel (1981) adds that "even if the impact of the illness and treatments was not a factor until 1977, it severely reduced the Shah's ability to cope with an evolving problem that went to the very roots of his regime" (34). Although it is possible that the shah's struggle with cancer did have some effect on his ability to deal with the mounting pressure he was experiencing in 1978, it seems improbable that the cancer so fundamentally changed his mind set as to make him a pacifist ruler. Instead it seems prudent to follow Ansari's (2003) advice "not to exaggerate the implications of [the shah's] illness (196).

Some of the most convincing evidence of the irrelevance of the shah's cancer, and likewise his willingness to consider violence is provided by a group of scholars that have argued that the shah did not seek to avoid repressive violence per se, but rather the responsibility for it. Amuzegar (1991), now somewhat contradicting his previous point

about the shah's natural avoidance of violence, states that the shah "preferred [violent repression of the opposition] to be carried out by the military forces on their own without his prior approval," because the shah "was fearful of a failed attempt (and a bloodbath) for which he would have to bear responsibility. He wanted his generals to make the hard decisions" (301). This plan might have succeeded, as some generals and other military commanders were itching to strike down on demonstrators and strikers, had it not been for the organizational structure the shah had imposed on the armed forces.

In order to prevent his military commanders from uniting against him, and "to assure the loyalty of the army to his person," the shah had organized the armed forces according to a "neo-patrimonial command structure" that served "to maximize rivalry and mutual resentment among the generals, and placed personal enemies alternately in the chain of command whenever possible" (Arjomand 1988:124). The consequence of this royal security measure was that "no one had the right to give any orders without the Shah's permission" (Afshar 1985b:188). Officers acting in ways that attracted the shah's displeasure could wave goodbye to the post-retirement incentives the king used to secure the support of his military commanders. For example, Stempel (1981) reports that "successful career officers," that is those retiring with the shah's approval, could look forward to appointments "to a state corporation like the National Iranian Oil Company or to Senate, where the Shah could name 30 choices" (30). Thus, similarly to many other elements of the shah's state organization, "the armed forces were wholly dependent upon the leadership of the monarch in order to act effectively" (Stempel 1981:31). While this arrangement served the shah well in periods of political stability, it became thoroughly

problematic in times of uncertainty. Consequently, without an efficient chain of command, and with officers programmed not to act without his blessing, the king's hope that the generals would themselves order crackdowns on the opposition remained a pipedream.[134]

Explaining the Absence of American Intervention

With his generals unwilling to make the decisive calls, and knowing that "other countries would look with horror at mass violations of civil rights" (Stempel 1981:136), the only other possibility for the shah to use violence against the unarmed protesters would have been with the United States' explicit approval. As his most important ally, the shah hoped that the U.S. would consider him essential enough to its interests to do whatever necessary to keep him on the throne. Thus, throughout the unrests of 1978 the shah looked for signs that the U.S. would endorse an "iron fist" strategy. However, the Carter administration, trapped in the ICL, never provided such an endorsement. Instead, Carter (1982) recalls,

> Personally and through the State Department I continued to express my support for the Shah, but at the same time we were pressing him to act forcefully on his own to resolve with his political opponents as many of the disputes as possible. (442)

[134] For more on the Iranian military, see Zabih (1988).

This response to mounting political unrest in Iran throughout the course of the revolution has aptly been described as "a masterpiece of double-talk, and the epitome of the ignorance of the policy makers about the unfolding crisis" (Milani 1988:217).

Beginning with the latter, several commentators have echoed Milani's evaluation and argued that U.S. policy towards pre-revolutionary Iran was clueless at best (Amuzegar 1991; Arjomand 1988; Cottam 1988; Dorman & Farhang 1987). Citing a report from the U.S. Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), which concludes that "we see a basic unresolvable conflict between the Shah's liberalization program and the need to limit violent opposition," Cottam (1988) draws his own stinging conclusion:

> The mainstream of the revolution was nonviolent and expressed itself increasingly in public demonstrations. Long denied any access to the opposition, the U.S. bureaucracy concerned with Iran had no real picture of it. It follows that without even a rudimentary understanding of the force with which they must deal, any strategy and associated tactics that might have been devised would have missed the mark. (173)

Only slightly less critical of U.S. ignorance when it came to its Middle Eastern ally, Arjomand (1988) posits that "in retrospect, the United States was doing *better* when there was no high-level discussion on Iran [emphasis in original]" (128).[135] Arjomand refers to the fact that once the U.S. realized that the shah was in trouble, which it did not do until the late fall of 1978, it attempted to carefully intervene by expressing its support for the shah. Contrary to its intended purpose, that intervention caused some to conclude that the U.S. had indeed decided to abandon the shah:

[135] On U.S. policy related to the Iranian Revolution, see also Ioannides (1984), Koury and McDonald (1981) Ledeen and Lewis (1981), and Teicher and Teicher (1993).

> When I read all these reports I called a well-placed American friend and asked him, "Have you really made up your mind to get rid of the Shah?" He was taken aback, and asked what I meant. "You couldn't find a better way to overthrow him than stepping up your expressions of support. As far as Iranians are concerned, he is already an agent of yours." In fact ever since the spring the demonstrators had been calling him a "puppet in the hands of the American imperialists." (Hoveyda 1980:169)

The shah would probably have been willing to be seen as an American puppet had that label been accompanied by solid American support. What he received instead were increasingly contradictory signals from the Carter administration (Farhi 1990; Milani 1988; Pahlavi 1980; Sick 1985; Stempel 1981; Zonis 1991).

Throughout 1978 the shah continued to receive confusing messages from the White House. It is important to keep in mind that the king as late as New Year's Eve of 1977 remained confident of U.S. backing. However, in the aftermath of the tumultuous events of August and September of 1978, the shah's belief in the U.S.'s commitment to him decreased rapidly. The first action by President Carter to sow seeds of anxiety in the shah's mind was the former's phone call of "support" two days after the Black Friday massacre. During a five minute phone conversation, and in a manner that was to become typical of the Carter administration's approach to the shah's difficult situation that fall, the President "wished the shah the best in resolving these problems and in his efforts to introduce reform" (Sick 1985:51). This type of double-talk became the standard discourse through which the Carter administration expressed its support for the shah's regime. The king, who religiously followed what was reported in Western media, was forced to read comments such as Secretary of State Vance's evaluation on November 3, that "the continuing violence and the strikes in Iran are a serious problem for the government, *and*

we fully support the efforts of the shah to restore order while continuing his program of liberalization [emphasis added]" (Alexander & Nanes 1980:461). Similarly, during a press conference on December 7, Carter responded to a question about the shah's chances of surviving the revolution in the following manner:

> I don't know, I hope so. This is something in the hands of the people of Iran... We have never had any intention of trying to intercede in the internal political affairs of Iran. We primarily want an absence of violence and bloodshed, and stability. We personally prefer the Shah maintain a major role in the government, but that is a decision for the Iranian people to make. (Zonis 1991:257)

Needless to say this response must have come as a severe blow to the shah, and apparently somebody within the Carter administration realized this, because the president retracted his statement five days later and stated firmly that his "support for the shah remained unchanged" (Hoveyda 1980:84).

The president's reversal was intended to give the shah the confidence he needed to deal forcefully with the opposition. However, Carter's tacit approval of tough actions was never deciphered by the king. In his autobiography, published in the year after the revolution and shortly before his death, the shah complains that official statements of support were never confirmed by Ambassador Sullivan, who would repeatedly reply to the shah's desperate pleas for guidance by saying that "he had received 'no instructions' and therefore could not comment" (Pahlavi 1980:161). Further blaming the U.S. for his downfall, the shah grumbles that "the messages I received from the United States as all this was going on [the mounting crisis of November 1978] continued to be confusing and contradictory." Specifically, "Secretary of State Vance issued a statement endorsing my efforts to restore calm and encouraging the liberalization program. *Such Herculean*

fantasies left me stunned [emphasis added]" (Pahlavi 1980:164-5). Clearly, in the shah's mind the strategy of concurrent repression and liberalization was untenable, but since no direct instruction arrived from Washington to clamp down on the protesters, the shah did not dare to make such a decision on his own.

After several months of contradictory advise from the Americans, the shah eventually broke down on December 26 and directly asked the American ambassador "point blank whether [the administration] would support a policy of brutal repression (Seliktar 2000:116). Sullivan's response to shah's desperate request was probably the worst possibly answer he could have given the king, as the ambassador avoidingly concluded that "You're the shah," and that the decision was the king's to make (Zonis 1991:257). In the next few days the White House considered endorsing a violent response by the regime, but by the time the cable was sent, Secretary Vance had convinced the president to remove any "strong elements" from it (Seliktar 2000:116).

The Shah's Compromise: Disguised Violence and Restrained Troops

The fact that the shah wanted either his generals or the United States to take responsibility for the use of violence suggests that he was not inherently opposed to the application of brutal force against his own people. Rather, the shah worried that using violence would alienate the United States and thus leave him with no other ally besides the armed forces, which by December was losing an estimated 1,000 troops each day due to defections (Kurzman 2004). Further evidence that the shah only refused to unleash the

military due to fear of international repercussions is suggested by the fact that he resorted to what the British Ambassador at the time, Sir Anthony Parsons, describes as "thinly disguised state violence," namely hooligans and agents provocateurs (Parsons 1984:53).

"In the last few months of its rule," Parsa (1988) writes, "the regime added a new type of attack to the repertoire of repression; namely, hooligan attacks on property" (118). *Bazaaris* were the primary targets of such attacks and scholars have documented a long list of incidents that can be credited to government-organized bands of vandals.[136] According to Amjad (1989), the SAVAK in coordination with the Rastakhiz Party created two terrorist groups in the fall of 1977, called the "Underground Committee of Revenge" and the "Resistance Corps," which "attacked several political meetings and demonstrations held by the National Front, students, and the Writers' Association" (120). Although its frequency increased during the last stage of the revolution, the tactic itself was not novel. One of the first reported hooligan attacks occurred on November 22, 1977, when 200 bussed in thugs beat up 100 meeting participants in Tehran (Stempel 1981:88).

These tactics gained in popularity, and throughout the fall of 1978 they became central to the regime's efforts to combat the revolutionaries. Parsa (1989) reports that "in the first week of November 1978, hooligans had attacked more than forty cities, in many cases burning and looting shops" (116). Through the use of hooligans and agents provocateurs, it seems the regime sought to either provokes a violent response from the opposition that would justify military action against unarmed demonstrators, or alternatively suggests to the U.S. that these hooligans were opposition activists that had

[136] Parsons (1984) sarcastically refers to these groups as "spontaneous patriotic elements" (53).

to be confronted. Either way the regimes strategy failed as protesters continued to strike and demonstrate.

Throughout the revolution, but especially in its last months, the shah's main problem was that it became increasingly difficult to justify the application of armed force against nonviolent demonstrators. The use of hooligans and agents provocateurs did not provide a consistent enough source of repression to cause the demise of the revolutionary movement. However, without being able to rely on his armed forces and American allies, "the shah himself determined that violent tactics were doomed to fail" (Bill 1988b:30).

Explaining the Lack of Repression: The Role of Strategy

The structural composition of the armed forces and the Carter administration's incomplete understanding of the Iranian situation provide two plausible explanations of the relative lack of government repression in the face of the opposition's challenge. However, to these structural causes we must add the opposition's strategy as an additional source of the government's restraint. Since the military and the U.S. in the minds of the revolutionary leaders remained the most serious threats to the movement's success, this section explores how the opposition sought to further minimize the likelihood of either military or American intervention in the revolution.

Defeating the Shah I: Demilitarizing the Military

The fact that neither the U.S. nor the Iranian generals were willing to assume responsibility for repression of the movement resulted in the shah issuing his military "impossible orders." Soldiers were prohibited from opening fire on civilians unless violently attacked. Once activists realized that the armed forces had been instructed to exercise restraint, they would test the waters of this restraint by seeing how far they could push the soldiers without drawing fire. Although this tactic of playing cat and mouse games with the armed forces proved somewhat successful for the opposition as it severely frustrated the military, its main strategy was not to antagonize the troops but rather to win them over.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, Khomeini informed his followers "that under no circumstances were they to clash with the armed forces" (Heikal 1982:145). While the ayatollah's pleas sometimes fell on deaf ears, most demonstrators embraced his call to "talk to the soldiers, have a dialogue with them" (Heikal 1982:155). It is worth repeating that Khomeini's nonviolent approach to the military should not be confused with an idealist commitment to pacifist principles. Instead, Khomeini, like most of the senior revolutionary leadership, still recalled the army's successful repression of the Muharram uprising in 1963. As Stempel (1981) explains,

> The extensive program to propagandize the military was undertaken because the older mullahs remembered how the army had ended unrest in 1963 by shooting down the demonstrating mobs. The Liberation Movement agreed that the army, and labor union members and small businessmen as well, should be neutralized or won over. Throughout the summer and fall, the Liberation Movement and the

> religious dissidents worked together very closely. Their goals were identical: to undermine the Shah through the army and thereby destroy his support. (110)

In other words, the decision to "demilitarize the military" (Satha-Anand 1999:170) was based exclusively on strategic concerns.

As far I can tell, the first instance of mass appeal to the armed forces coincided with demonstrations marking the end of Ramadan on September 4. In an apparent effort to follow the revolutionary leadership's advice, and "far from being violent, the demonstrators made a special effort to establish rapport with the soldiers who lined the demonstration area" (Cottam 1988:175). Two French reporters vividly describe the events unfolding before them:

> Two trucks full of soldiers, with a machine-gun battery, are at their posts. The procession, which has grown, it appears, roars and dances in the sun: "Soldier, my brother, why do you shoot your brothers?" A spray of flowers falls on the machine-gun barrel, the crowd touches the tarpaulins and the poles of the trucks. Emboldened, it shakes the hands of the soldiers, kisses them, covers them with bouquets. In a whirlwind of shouts, the first guns have been conquered, the soldiers are in a state of shock, bewildered. Some of them cry, their machine-guns henceforth useless. The officers of the convoy speak up: "We belong to the people, but we are in the service, do not commit any violence, we do not want to shoot." (Kurzman 2004:63)[137]

Although the two journalists may have embellished the scene to which they became witnesses, their account reveals both the revolutionaries' strategy and its outcome. That presenting soldiers with flowers, which was to become a tactical mainstay of the revolution, was indeed a coordinated and deliberate scheme is evidenced by the fact that "florists gave the demonstrators bunches of flowers" (Cottam 1988:175). It is

[137] For other accounts of the same event, see Cottam (1988:175), Foran (1993a:381), and Moaddel (1994:160).

difficult to see what other uses for the flowers the florists might have had in mind for the demonstrators.[138]

For the armed forces, the situation quickly became untenable: at the height of the revolution the soldiers were faced, on a near-daily basis, with demonstrators who urged them to join the people. Unauthorized to attack, the conscripts were forced to listen to the crowds' pleas to its "Moslem brothers" to lay down their weapons (Amuzegar 1991; Heikal 1982, Kurzman 2004). The eventual result of this popular pressure was that military morale plummeted, and "commanders began doubting the unquestioned loyalty of draftees and enlisted men" (Amuzegar, 1991: 286).[139] In the face of these conditions, officers urged the shah to either unleash the military on the people or withdraw the soldiers to the barracks. The shah refused to accept either proposal, and the soldiers remained on the streets where they were battered with opposition propaganda (Hoveyda 1980; Kurzman 2004).

The combined tactics of general strikes on the one hand, which required the army to step in and do the work of some economic sectors (Kurzman 2004), and demonstrations that nonviolently propagandized the military on the other, proved too much for the armed forces to handle. By the time millions of Iranians, on December 9 and 10, participated in "impressive, superbly organized, and massive" nonviolent demonstrations throughout Iran to celebrate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain on Tasu'a

[138] According to Abrahamian, "florists distributed carnations so that demonstrators could hand them out to soldiers" (Abrahamian 2009:170)

[139] Part of the problem was that "more than 90 percent of the four hundred thousand army personnel were conscripts who served for only eighteen months; they remained closely tied to the civilian population and became unreliable instruments during periods of massive conflicts" (Parsa 1989:247).

and ‘Ashura (the ninth and tenth day of Muharram) the army’s utility had since long been exhausted (Milani 1988:216). In Tehran alone, the two days’ demonstrations are estimated to have attracted as many as three million marchers. On ‘Ashura alone approximately five million Iranians – out of total population of less than 40 million – protested against the government, numbers that quite possibly represented the largest protest in world history at the time.[140] Several scholars (M. Fischer 2003; Kurzman 2004; Stempel 1981) have expressed their amazement over the peaceful nature of the massive protests that “marked the end of the Shah” (Arjomand 1988:121).

If the military had been an inefficient tool in dealing with the revolutionaries throughout 1978, its usefulness deteriorated even further after the Tasu’a and ‘Ashura demonstrations. Meanwhile, the opposition continued its outreach to the soldiers, and desertions rates increased rapidly in December and January (Arjomand 1988; Heikal 1982; Kurzman 2004). On January 15, one day before the shah left Iran for good, a high-ranking commander proposed that soldiers should be kept away from the demonstrators:

> We should round up the units and send them some place where [the demonstrators] won’t have any contact with the soldiers. Because yesterday they came and put a flower in the end of the rifle barrel, and another on the [military] vehicle... The soldiers’ morale just disappears. (Kurzman 1996:164)

It is difficult to imagine more concrete evidence of the success of the revolutionaries’ strategy of nonviolently engaging the military. “Figures from Iranian military intelligence show the desertion rate rose from 3 percent per week to 8 percent in September-

[140] For details about the Tasu’a and ‘Ashura marches, see Abrahamian (1982), Amjad (1989), Arjomand (1988), Fischer (2003), Foran (1993a), Hoveyda (1980), Kurzman (2004), Milani (1988), Seliktar (2000), and Stempel (1981)

December 1978, and by February 1 the rate was up to 20 percent" (Stempel 1981:151). 1979 would not witness a repeat of the military's 1963 defeat over a popular movement.

Defeating the Shah II: Targeting the World and the United States

If the military was the primary target of the opposition's strategy, the world community, and the United States in particular, was its secondary objective. As we have seen, Iranian student groups abroad had employed this tactic for the last two decades, and Khomeini had clearly understood its potential. As early as the fall of 1977, the ayatollah urged his followers that, just like secular oppositionists, they "too should write letters" and "inform the world" of the situation in Iran (Khomeini qtd. in Kurzman 2004:22). It appears that Khomeini's supporters either heeded his advice or had reached a similar conclusion on their own, because following the unrest in Qom in January 1978, it took the opposition only one month to produce press kits about the three days of government repression that were then distributed to visiting foreign correspondents (Stempel 1981:92).

By October 1978, Khomeini was no longer welcome in Iraq, and moved to Neuphle-le-Château in the suburbs of Paris. The Iranian regime had pressured the Iraqis to deport the ayatollah so that he would no longer have access to large Shi'i crowds (Stempel 1981:124). While this decision might have made a lot of sense at the Iranian government's security meetings, it turned out to be yet another policy blunder. Once in Paris, Khomeini found himself surrounded by Western media outlets itching to tell his

story (Ansari 2003; Foran 1993a; Milani 1988; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi 1994; Stempel 1981). With near unlimited access to Western journalists, Khomeini and his aides began their campaign to convince the world that an Islamic Iran would constitute no threat, as it "would become a reliable oil supplier to the West, would not ally with the East, and would be willing to have friendly relations with the United States" (Abrahamian 1982:524).

Khomeini's task was made easier by the fact that "sufficient numbers of the Western intelligentsia were sympathetic to the revolutionary movement" and saw Iran as potential "model for transition from authoritarian rule that could be copied elsewhere" (Ansari 2003:9). Once he had overcome his initial suspicion of the Western media (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994), Khomeini "skillfully exploited the modern communication system to spread his attractive gospel of freedom, independence, and Islamic government in Iran and the rest of the world" (Milani 1988:202). Not wholly unlike Gandhi in the first half of the century, Khomeini, thanks in part to his charisma and asceticism, became a European media darling of sorts, and he fully exploited this opportunity by chastising the shah's regime and pacifying the West's concerns about an Islamic Iran. In his first two months of Parisian exile, Khomeini generated "458 pages of… messages, speeches, and interviews" (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994:134-5).[141]

[141] For more on this point, see Bani-Sadr (1991). For a discussion of Iran's actual post-revolution relationship with the rest of the world, consult for example Ehteshami and Varasteh (1991).

In addition to utilizing the Western press for their revolutionary purposes, Khomeini and his colleagues directly targeted the U.S. with propaganda. To accomplish this objective, Ibrahim Yazdi, the coordinator of the Muslim Students Association in the United States and a close Khomeini collaborator, "was dispatched on a tour to reassure the public and the administration about the reasonableness of his boss" in the late fall of 1978 (Seliktar 2000:63). As Sick (1985) explains,

> [Yazdi's] themes were simple. The revolution was peaceable, employing the techniques of nonviolence against the murderous assaults of the shah's forces. The objectives of an Islamic republic, once the shah was gone, were fully compatible with U.S. ideals of personal freedom and human rights. Iran was in no danger of being taken over by Communist elements, and an Islamic republic would not be interested in aligning itself with the Soviet Union. On the contrary, nothing would prevent the continuation of mutually satisfactory relations with the United States. Since the fall of the shah was now virtually certain, he argued, the United States should give up its fruitless policy of support for his regime and make peace with the new revolutionary leaders who were about to take over. (112)

These carefully weighted words seemingly hit home with the many Americans who were concerned about their country's alliance with a repressive and militarily addicted dictator.[142] The result of Yazdi's PR tour was that "many came away convinced that Khomeini was being unfairly maligned in the West and that the Revolution offered the best hope in fifty years for the triumph of human rights and free political expression in Iran" (Sick 1985:112). At the same time as Yazdi was convincing Americans in the U.S. to not fear an Islamic Iran, opposition politicians employed similar tactics in Iran by lobbying both the American and British ambassadors (Stempel 1981). The revolutionary

[142] For more on the attempts to reach out to the American people, see Albert (1980).

strategy seems clear – drag the West, and the U.S. specifically, into the revolution by offering it a share in the spoils.[143]

A Nonviolent Revolution?

While most scholars tend to agree with Foran (1994b) that the Iranian state collapsed due to "the strategies of general strike and massive, peaceful demonstrations" (162), revolutionary Iran did witness plenty of violence.[144] Zonis (1991) reports that estimates of the number of dead vary from 60,000-70,000 all the way down to 3,000 for the entire course of the revolution (fall 1977-February 1979). Interestingly enough, as the years have passed, the estimated number of casualties has dropped. For example, Kurzman (2004) found that "the Martyr Foundation, established after the revolution to compensate the survivors of fallen revolutionaries, could identify only 744 martyrs in Tehran, where the majority of the casualties were supposed to have occurred" (71). Most recently, Abrahamian (2009) has suggested that according to the "book of martyrs" published by the government right after the revolution, only 578 individuals were identified as having been shot in the streets during the sixteen months of the revolution. While there are obviously other ways to die in a revolution, this relatively low number seems to suggest that the military did practice considerable restraint.

[143] See for example Westad (1992).
[144] For comments about the nonviolent nature of the revolution, see Abrahamian (1982), Amjad (1989), Arjomand (1988), Bakhash (1990), Burns (1996), Cottam (1988), Daneshvar (1996), Dorman & Farhang (1987), Fischer (2003), Foran (1994a), Green (1982), Hoveyda (1980), Keddie (1983b), Kurzman (2004), Milani (1988), Parsa (1989), Parsons (1984), Shivers (1980), Sick (1985), Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994), and Stempel (1981).

However, based on the definition of a nonviolent revolution presented at the beginning of this study, the factor most important for determining nonviolent character of a revolution is not the number of dead, but rather who those dead were. "Aside from isolated instances," two scholars explain, "Iranians did not take up arms against the shah's forces… *The blood spilling was almost entirely one-sided* [emphasis added]" (Dorman & Farhang 1987:156). Further evidence of the one-sidedness of revolutionary violence is offered by Stempel (1981), who suggests that in the 8 years leading up to the revolution, 300 "police, military, and government employees… were gunned down in the streets" (17). Although this figure might appear high, it would constitute merely a dent in the government's repressive machinery, as the army alone consisted of 400,000 troops. This can hardly be framed as the type of consistent terrorism that would frighten the government into submission.

Nevertheless, opposition violence did occur. In the spring of 1978 some militants "were willing to engage the regime with violence, against overwhelming odds," by bringing rocks, knives, and clubs to demonstrations (Kurzman 2004:69), and in August "demonstrators briefly returned the gunfire of the police" in Isfahan (M. Fischer 2003:197). Another example of opposition violence is the unfortunate fate of a retired colonel who ended up in the middle of a demonstration. Infuriated protesters (troops had opened fire and killed two men in the crowd) demanded that the colonel renounce the shah. When he refused to comply, the crowd blinded and killed him (M. Fischer 2003). But more common than violent outbursts of this kind were acts of sabotage, arson of

factories, and destruction of symbols representing the regime, such as government offices and statues of the two Pahlavi shahs (Foran 1993a; Parsa 1989).

Towards the end of the revolution the level of opposition violence increased somewhat. November 5 turned out to be one of the most chaotic days of the entire revolutionary process, when armed guerrillas attacked 17 police stations in Tehran, capturing two of them. Airline offices were trashed while banks were broken into, and according to some reports even looted (Stempel 1981). But these isolated instances of opposition violence and destruction can hardly be deemed central to the revolution's success, and they certainly "played no role in the revolutionary leadership's strategy or tactics (Shivers 1980:76).

The last weekend of the revolution, February 9-11, was characterized by a "mini-civil war" (Milani 1988:231), which begun when a group of air force technicians (*Homafaran*) deserted en masse (Arjomand 1988). The Imperial Guard attempted to prevent the technicians from leaving their posts, resulting in armed skirmishes between the two factions. Soon guerrilla soldiers were rushing to the technicians' aid, triggering a brief armed conflict that ended abruptly on that Sunday afternoon, less than 48 hours after it had been initiated, when the army declared its neutrality (Arjomand 1988; Falk 1980; Milani 1988; Stempel 1981). In engaging the deserting technicians and the guerrillas, Milani (1988) suggests that the Imperial Guard acted without the the knowledge or approval of the shah, who had already departed for Egypt. Assessing the end of the revolution, Milani (1988) acknowledges that the guerrillas did play a part in defeating the Imperial guard, "but the significance of their role and of the entire

confrontation between the Imperial guard and the homa faran should not be exaggerated" (231). Furthermore,

> the declaration of neutrality of the armed forces was the product of weeks of behind-the-scenes negotiations between the CIR (Coucil of the Islamic Revolution) and the armed forces. All evidence indicates that the armed forces would have eventually declared their neutrality. (Milani 1988:231)

While the violent conclusion of the revolution might then have been unnecessary for its eventual success, commentators have speculated that the turn toward violence affected the ultimate outcome of the revolution: had the army been allowed to declare its neutrality without a perceived defeat at the hands of the revolutionaries, they might have been able to play a "moderating role in the postrevolutionary struggle" (Milani 1988:231).[145] In sum, the prevalence of violence in the Iranian Revolution, while real and at times significant, played at most a marginal part in the revolutionary strategy (Shivers 1980), and cannot be posited as contributing to the revolution's success.[146] The Iranian Revolution was indeed a nonviolent one.

Summary

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Iranian Revolution was made possible by an international context that generated a structural condition (the iron cage of liberalism) favorable to the emergence of a nonviolent challenge against the regime. The major puzzle of this chapter was to explain the absence of effective government repression of

[145] See also Falk (1980)
[146] Evidence of this argument is that neither Khomeini nor any other revolutionary leader ordered or endorsed the violence occurring in the last days of the revolution (Stempel 1981).

the revolutionary movement, in other words to empirically show how the ICL prevented the shah from efficiently dealing with his opponents. I have suggested that the shah's two possible sources of repression – his armed forces and an American intervention – were both missing from Iran's revolutionary equation. True, the military did use force to deal with the movement, especially in the spring of 1978, but its actions were never firm enough to prevent movement participants to take part in the demonstrations and strikes. Because the shah had ordered the armed forces to only return violence, never to initiate it, the soldiers were in most cases unable to make their repressive efforts have any type of lasting effect on the psyches of the demonstrators. Instead, the limited nature of repression most likely created a "paradox of repression" (Kurtz & Smithey 1999; Schock 2005), and in turn increased opposition to the shah. As one scholar points out, "the death of one family member radicalized other relatives, who then joined the active opposition; this extended-family phenomenon added to the cumulative nature of the revolution" (Bill 1988b:22). As long as only a "manageable" number of people were killed in each protest event, government violence probably benefitted the cause of the revolutionary leadership.

The central explanation given here to the absence of overwhelming repression is quite straight forward. The shah did not want to assume responsibility for bloodshed and consequently hoped that either his generals or the United States would take that burden off his shoulders. However, neither of them did. The generals failed to act because they had been steeped in a military culture in which the shah was expected to make any and all important decisions. In addition, towards the end of the struggle the morale within the armed forces was so low that even if orders had been given to seriously and violently

engage the protesters it is unclear whether the conscripted soldiers would have obeyed them. The U.S., on the other hand, was rendered incapable to intervene for two reasons. First, the administration's understanding of condition on the Iranian ground was severely misinformed until the last few months of the revolution. By that time there was probably little Carter could have done, even if we assume he had the desire to save the shah's throne. More important though were the effects of the ICL. As suggested in the previous chapter, the shah was not liberalism's only prisoner. Carter's campaign and early presidential rhetoric assured that he could not, in the presence of an internationalized revolutionary movement covered by an efficient mass media, support a blatantly authoritarian ally without seriously damaging his own human rights credentials.

The result of the ICL was disastrous for the shah. Throughout the revolutionary period of 1977-79, the king sought to regain a firm hold of his country while simultaneously advancing a liberalization agenda he felt forced to embrace as a result of Jimmy Carter's election. As Tocqueville (1955) once proclaimed, "the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways" (177), and although the shah hoped the liberalization would reduce opposition to his government, reform was instead seen as evidence of weakness. But is Tocqueville's assertion as inalienably true as it sounds? After all, the shah had undertaken reforms in the past and emerged unscathed and, at times, more powerful than before. To understand why the result of his liberalization scheme of 1977 and beyond had such catastrophic consequence, we must take into account revolutionary strategy.

Strategy, as discussed above, is a concept that has generally been overlooked by revolution and social movement scholars.[147] Only in the literature on nonviolent action has strategy been afforded a consistent place in explanations of collective action.[148] Strategy is a useful term because, in contrast to the more commonly applied concept of agency, it does not grant individuals an exaggerated (and sometimes even unlimited) range of possible actions. Instead, I have suggested that strategy should be thought of as "structurally situated agency," thus limiting actors' choices to those feasible under the current structural conditions.

The U.S.-Iranian ICL did indeed make a nonviolent revolution plausible. In Chapter 5 I showed that the strategic activities of the abroad-based student opposition helped bring about the ICL by lobbying the world for its attention. In this chapter I went a step further and explained how Khomeini, Bazargan, and others capitalized on the political openings presented by the presence of an ICL. By framing their challenge to the shah's regime in terms of universal appeals to liberal values and human rights, and by embracing nonviolent methods that resonated with those values, Khomeini and his collaborators justified their revolution and heightened its international appeal. This in turn decreased the risk of the type of overwhelming government repression that Khomeini knew, based on his 1963 experience, might have jeopardized the entire movement. The result of this form of strategic planning and farsightedness under the favorable social context of an ICL was the nonviolent overthrow of one of the most

[147] One important exception is Jasper's (1997; 2004) work.
[148] See Chapter 2.

powerful dictators of the Third World. Put succinctly, Khomeini involved the world, particularly the U.S., in the struggle by offering the global community a revolution it could live with, and, more importantly, a revolution liberal nations could not oppose without appearing hypocritical due to the presence of the ICL.

7. CONCLUSION

> It is hard to imagine the construction of any valid analysis of long-term structural change that does not connect particular alterations, directly or indirectly, to the two interdependent master processes of the era: the creation of a system of nation states and the formation of a worldwide capitalist system. (Tilly 1984:147)

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine why the Iranian Revolution turned out to be nonviolent. At the outset of the study, my assumption was that the revolution's nonviolent character was its defining and unprecedented quality. In the course of my research that assumption has proven to be only partially correct. At first sight, what made the Iranian Revolution so extraordinary was indeed the fact that a dictator with tremendous repressive capabilities was rendered powerless by unarmed protesters and forced out of his palace. However, the nonviolent nature of the revolution was simply a symptom, an observable fact. The truly groundbreaking aspect of the process, what set it apart from previous revolutions, was its international dimension. It thus follows that my primary conclusion, which is about as parsimonious as conclusions get, is that the Iranian Revolution was nonviolent because it was internationalized.

I am of course not the first student of revolutions to recognize the importance played by the international context. Skocpol's (1979; 1994) work has been referenced throughout this study and as noted above, Tilly (1984) suggests that revolutions, or any "long-term structural change," must be approached from a globalized viewpoint. Nonetheless, my findings are novel in the way they help make sense of *how* the international context impacts contemporary revolutions. Rather than following in the

footsteps of existing scholarship by conceptualizing its role in terms of conflict, hostility, and rivalry, my theoretical framework approaches the international dimension from a perspective that emphasizes amicable inter-state relations. The shah's close relationship with the United States brought about the revolution, but it did not do so by contributing to the breakdown of the Iranian state. Rather, friendly relations with the United States strengthened the shah's government and, quite counter-intuitively, facilitated mobilization against his regime. This study has shown how 40 years of U.S.-Iranian friendship helped make way for the massive revolutionary movement that swept the king from his throne.

The amicable relationship between Iran and the United States has been an important dimension of each chapter of this dissertation and constitutes the central structural element of my analytical framework. By allowing the shah to destroy his political opponents, the U.S.-Iranian relationship cleared the way for the *ulama*-bazaar revolutionary coalition *and* provided the coalition with the means and political openings necessary to overthrow a dictatorial regime. In the next few pages I outline the genesis of a structural-strategic theory of nonviolent revolutions by highlighting how the international context made a revolution feasible and provided its protagonists with the possibility of nonviolent success.

The Consequences of a Special Relationship: An Internationalized Revolution

The first way in which the U.S.-Iranian relationship contributed to the eventual downfall of the shah is characterized by the effects it had on national politics. Following World War II, the U.S. considered Iran an attractive market on which to sell its goods. Moreover, the country's oil and strategic location made it an ideal partner in both trade and policy. Although American officials initially entertained the idea of promoting liberal values in Iran, such considerations were withdrawn when Mossadeq announced his intention to nationalize the country's oil. Washington feared that if successful, other resource rich nations might follow Iran's lead to the demise of America's neo-imperialist aspirations. Therefore, the political window of opportunity that U.S. involvement had provided the Iranian opposition with at the conclusion of the war now had to be closed, and America's half-hearted efforts at advancing democratic ideals in Iran were effectively abandoned. The U.S. had made its choice: the economic and strategic benefits of supporting a dictator trumped America's commitment to individual freedoms and political openness.

The shah initially benefited from U.S. support. Aid and trade allowed him to fill the state's coffer while his reputation as a staunch anti-communist won him many friends in the West. By characterizing his opponents as leftists, the king justified their state-induced destruction and managed to turn Iran into a political wasteland. Without U.S. support such a development would not have been possible. Because of American friendship, the shah felt confident that power sharing with historically influential

domestic groups, such as the political elites, powerful landlords, wealthy merchants, and the Shi'i clergy was unnecessary. In short, backed by Washington the king consolidated power and implicitly declared his autonomy from Iranian society. At first, this independence served him well, but when the revolution came around, autonomy had transformed into isolation as none of the social groups that could perhaps have helped him save the throne rushed to his side. In addition, and perhaps even more detrimental to his prospects, the elimination of the traditional opposition, including the guerrillas, left the opposition stage clear for the *ulama*-bazaar coalition. One of the factors that had historically prevented outright opposition against the shah from the clerics was that they detested the secularist movement even more than they disliked the shah. Once the shah had eliminated their common enemy, little prevented the clergy from opposing the king. In a sense then, by removing one enemy the shah invited an attack from the other. Without U.S. support the shah would arguably not have been able to successfully defeat the political opposition and would consequently not have bared himself to a challenge from the religious movement.

While most Iranians were affected negatively by the close U.S.-Iranian relationship, one group was able to very early take advantage of this new reality.[149] University students flocked to the United States, and to a lesser extent to Europe, as a result of their ruler's acceptance in the West. Seemingly ungrateful for this opportunity, the students, once outside the reach of the shah's repressive machine, began to agitate against their king. After almost 15 years of campaigning and propagandazing, the

[149] The religious opposition only exploited U.S. involvement successfully in the late 1970s.

students managed to make their case to the world community. Their ruler, who the world knew as a benign and Westernized statesman, was in fact a ruthless dictator in the process of inflicting a "political holocaust" on his opponents. By mixing facts with fiction, the students eventually managed to portray the shah as the world's worst offender of human rights, an image endorsed first by human rights groups and later by the international mass media. Now all of the sudden, the shah's close relationship with the United States had caught him in a bind: how does an authoritarian government deal with dissent of this sort if the one tool it cannot use is the repressive capabilities on which it is based? How does a dictator respond when the world calls his democracy bluff?

With Western pressure mounting as a result of the reports and articles published about his human rights record, the shah sought to liberalize society in an attempt to regain credibility and what he feared was diminished American support.[150] However, the liberalization scheme incited resistance at home and with the world's attention fixed on his government, the shah could use repression only with great difficulty. By the mid-1970s, the king had spent the past decade and a half transforming himself into an important ally of the United States. By becoming a dependable Cold War soldier and important trade partner, mainly through oil and arms, the shah had advanced from client to ally. While this transformation initially increased his power, it also resulted in a situation where the shah was expected to behave in a manner appropriate for an

[150] U.S. support for the shah was in fact never in question as the Carter administration early on decided that it was in the United States' best interest for the shah to remain on the throne. However, the shah was never convinced of Carter's support, and, as Thomas (1928) famously explained, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." In other words, the shah responded to a situation that did in "reality" not exist.

ideological soul mate of the United States, the world's beacon of democracy. This became even more the case when Jimmy Carter was elected president in 1976. Having accepted the West's commitment to liberal values, the shah was now trapped in what I have called an iron cage of liberalism: he could not effectively use repression against peaceful demonstrator without becoming guilty of the political charges pressed against him.

Once in place the ICL represented the only political opening the Iranian opposition would ever need, and shrewd strategic planning and execution allowed the revolutionaries to drag the United States and the rest of the world even deeper into the conflict. By relying on nonviolent tactics, the burden of the ICL was exacerbated as the shah struggled to find appropriate ways to deal with the opposition's tactics. Strikes and demonstrations resonated well with Carter's commitment to human rights, and consequently Washington found it difficult to condemn the revolutionaries as long as they acted nonviolently and professed their anti-communist sentiments. Fearing a negative response from Washington, the shah refused to unleash the military on the protesters, and once it became clear that neither his generals nor the Carter administration would take responsibility for violent repression, the shah resorted to the use of hooligans and agents provocateurs. This last ditch effort, however, proved to be an insufficient response, and after little over a year of popular resistance, the shah went into exile, thus bringing the revolution to its effective, albeit informal, conclusion. The internationalization of the revolution, from the creation of a special relationship to the

exploitation of the ICL, had contributed to its success not by breaking down the state, but by facilitating mobilization against it.

Toward a Structural-Strategic Theory of Nonviolent Revolutions

The findings of this study, summarized in the previous paragraphs, suggest the appropriateness of a structural-strategic approach to nonviolent revolutionary social change. To fully understand how internationalization drove the Iranian Revolution, it is necessary to explore the relationship between structure and strategy. The close relationship between the United States and Iran represents the central relevant structure in the Iranian Revolution. Although the faltering economy, corruption, class and gender relations, modernization, and a host of other factors may have contributed to popular discontent in the period leading up to the revolution, it was the special relationship between the two nations that facilitated mobilization and provided the movement with its crucial political opportunity in the shape of an ICL. However, the presence of an ICL did not make a successful revolution a foregone conclusion, as the structural opportunity had to be strategically exploited in order for the movement to triumph.

The focus on the iterative relationship between structure and strategy is perhaps the most important sociological contribution of this study. Traditionally, sociologists have quarreled over which component is the driving one in the structure-agency relationship. Do human actions transform structures, or do structures dictate the range of human actions? I argue that this dichotomy is unhelpful at best and false at worst. Rather

than thinking of structure and agency as opposite and mutually exclusive poles, I suggest we appropriate the concept of strategy, which I have defined as "structurally situated agency," from the nonviolent action literature.

An emphasis on strategy allows more flexibility in our theorizing about large-scale social change. True, social structures limit the options available to actors, but they are not as confining as we might think. Instead, structures might present agents, in this case revolutionaries, with options previously unthinkable. Furthermore, the interaction between structure and strategy is often more organic than the traditional structure-agency divides allows for. For example, the ICL is not strictly a structural construct. Rather, it should be seen as the result of the Iranian students' shrewd exploitation of their nation's close relationship with the United States. In other words, the special relationship between the two nations did not automatically and inevitably result in an ICL. Instead, the ICL was only a *potential* consequence of the special relationship. It is possible that in similar contexts elsewhere ICLs have failed to materialize despite the existence of a special relationship. Only where astute strategists take advantage of structural openings may an ICL materialize and potentially have revolutionary consequences.

But strategy does not only bring about structural openings – it also allows actors to exploit them. Once the students had helped create an ICL by involving human rights groups and the media in their struggle against the state, that opportunity had to be taken advantage of, and this is where nonviolent tactics become essential to the explanation. The iron cage of liberalism is based on a certain logic of contradictions, and only regimes that voluntarily accept the liberal values of the West can be trapped in an ICL. Of course,

accepting the developed world's democratic ideology has certain advantages as it sometimes serves to legitimize an otherwise questionable regime. However, the adoption of the West's value system may eventually have some unintended consequences for a dictator. When the democracy bluff is called by the opposition and the international mass media, the authoritarian government must choose between repression, which "unmasks" it and jeopardizes further foreign support, and concession to the opposition, which tends to aggravate the crisis of the state. Either way the adoption of Western values may eventually backfire and create an ICL that makes a nonviolent challenge against the government highly effective.

It is this link between the structural ICL and the strategic use of nonviolent revolutionary tactics that best illustrates the iterative relationship between structure and strategy. The ICL could perhaps be exploited through an armed uprising, but the cage's constricting qualities would not be as problematic for the state to overcome. In fact, most Western governments have little problem with other states countering popular violence with repression. The reason for this is simple: democratic regimes themselves reserve the right to respond to violence in such a manner, and there is nothing in the liberal-democratic ideology that gives individuals the right to violently attack the state. Nonviolent protest, on the other hand, could be construed as a human right, which is why the ICL can so effectively be exploited by strategists willing to employ peaceful methods. In short, liberalism and nonviolent tactics are symbiotically related which makes nonviolent action effective against the backdrop of an ICL.

A second and more general contribution to sociology that arises out of this study is a reevaluation of the nature of state power. The iron cage of liberalism suggests that the global community might be able to impose restraints on a state's handling of its population. Of course, this type of international oversight is to a considerable extent what the United Nations was designed to provide, although its critics often use the organization's lack of leverage over individual states to suggest its irrelevance. On a philosophical level, part of the problem appears to be that the U.N. is not to the individual state what the state is to individual person, that is, a Leviathan (Hobbes 2002). However, this study indicates that under certain circumstances the global community might be able to force a government to show restraint in dealing with its subjects. In contrast to how we usually think about the role of international third parties in domestic politics, it was not sanctions and isolation that left the shah's government vulnerable to a popular movement, but rather the fact that Iran had been welcomed into the family of nations.[151]

When Iranians' rose up in response to Ahmedinejad's allegedly fraudulent re-election in the summer of 2009, and subsequently came face to face with Iran's security forces, activists, journalists, politicians, and scholars from Iran and around the world called for the global community to assume its responsibility and "do something." Unfortunately, with the exception of an ill-advised military intervention, there was little the world could do. Unlike the situation under the shah, the U.S. and the West had no leverage over the Islamic Republic as 30 years of sanctions and isolation had effectively destroyed any chance of beneficial Western involvement in the Green Revolution. Had it

[151] For more on this innovative approach to deterrence, see Kurtz (1994).

been the West's intention to promote democracy and liberal rights in Iran in 2009, that process should have been commenced in 1979 by befriending Khomeini's government. Thirty years later there was little the world could do except watch an authoritarian state squash its opponents.

And that is the bottom line: Iran's nonviolent revolution occurred and succeeded precisely because it was an internationalized process. From the shah's destruction of the political opposition to the creation and exploitation of the iron cage of liberalism, the movement was viable because it operated on the global stage with the international community participating in the process. There were no sanctions in place and Iran was not an isolated country. Because of this, the world, and the U.S. in particular, had considerable leverage over the shah. Thirty years later a misguided and foolish policy of sanctions against governments that fail to meet certain liberal standards has resulted in an Iranian government unaffected by the concerns of the West. Why should Tehran care about Western opinion? With sanctions already in place the West has played most of its cards and the Iranian hard-liners are at freedom to handle the opposition as it pleases. Liberalization under the shah was not the result of U.S. pressure and hostility. Instead it was the logical consequence of a special relationship, which just as any relationship entailed certain expectations. The shah sought to meet those expectations and in doing so trapped himself in the ICL. Rest assured that it will be a long time before the structural conditions necessary for the emergence of a new ICL appear in Iran.

Future Directions for Research

This dissertation is one of the first projects to examine the emergence of nonviolent revolutions. Not content to simply understand why the revolution succeeded, this study has also identified the factors that allowed a nonviolent revolution to occur in the first place. The internationalization of the opposition's struggle against the shah made nonviolent tactics viable and eventually resulted in a successful overthrow of a dictator. So where to go from here? In this section I propose a few different avenues for future research.

Since the theoretical framework proposed in this study is based solely on research on the Iranian Revolution the findings naturally only apply to that case. While developing the theory, however, I kept other nonviolent revolutions in mind with the hope that future research may suggest that the findings of this study are generalizable to other cases. Only further research can determine whether that is so, and the next logical step on my research agenda is therefore to undertake a comparative study of nonviolent revolutions. Table 7.1. lists some potential cases that could form part of such a study.

Of central interest would be to evaluate the explanatory power of the ICL and the iterative relationship between structure and strategy. Has the ICL appeared elsewhere or is the concept unique to the Iranian Revolution? Is it possible that Marcos of the Philippines and Pinochet of Chile found themselves trapped in ICLs? Did the popular movements that removed those two dictators from power rely on strategic shrewdness to nonviolently exploit structural openings? As for the Eastern European revolutions of

1989, did Gorbachev's reform rhetoric of *glasnost*, *perestroika*, and *demokratizatsiya* become the functional equivalent of Carter's human rights policy?[152] Did it matter to the outcome in South Africa that many foreign corporations left the country at the request of the ongoing anti-apartheid movement? What role, if any, did Russia, the U.S., and the EU play in the popular removals of Milosevic, Shevardnadze, and Yanukovych?

Table 7.1. Nonviolent Revolutions[153]

Country	Year
Iran	1977-79
The Philippines	1983-86
Chile	1983-88
South Korea	1987-88
Poland	1980-89
East Germany	1989
Czechoslovakia	1989
South Africa	1984-1994
Serbia	2000
Georgia	2003
Ukraine	2004

While positive cases, that is, successful nonviolent revolutions, are important to examine, a comparative study could also contain one or two negative cases. The currently failing Green Revolution in Iran would constitute a near-ideal comparison to the Iranian Revolution as the national context is the same, but unfortunately it may be too soon to accurate evaluate the dynamics of that struggle. Another potential negative case is the

[152] For some thoughts on the "Gorbachev factor," see Goodwin (2001:280-1).
[153] Adapted from Zunes (1994:405) and Goodwin (2008:1877).

failed Burmese movement of 1988-89.[154] Did these two cases benefit from the existence of ICLs? If so, why were the movements unable to exploit them? If ICLs were not present, what explains their absence? By combining positive and negative cases it would be possible for me to employ Mill's indirect method of difference, which would be a powerful tool for better understanding nonviolent revolutions.

There is little reason to expect the current trend of nonviolent revolutions to end, because as long as authoritarian regimes remain in place there will be revolutions. This dissertation has begun to examine the causes and dynamics of what promises to be the dominant type of revolution in the foreseeable future. Much research remains to be done, but it seems clear that the nonviolent nature of these momentous processes is closely correlated with their international character. Students of revolutions would be well advised to consider their internationalization, and future revolutionaries may want to be guided by Khomeini's (1980) advice to his followers: "If they hit you in the head, protest!… Argue, denounce, oppose, shout" (4), in short, "inform the world" (Kurzman 2004:22).

[154] Burma's Saffron Revolution, "The Movement of the Monks," may be yet another negative case worth considering, but like the Green Revolution it may be to recent to analyze using a comparative-historical method.

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