



Gears in Motion Towards the Iranian Revolution

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Abstract

Modern Iran, once an important issue of rivalry between the Great Powers for influences, resources and trade routes, was formed through a sequence of small and larger revolutions. Its geopolitical position had raised the “Persian Question”, as Lord Curzon put it, with the Qājār Dynasty granting commercial and business privileges to England and Russia, as well as concessions of archeological excavations. The aim of the article is to follow the steps taken by the Iranian people against the colonial powers’ exploitation, towards the Revolution; merchants and clerics at first, who gradually transformed the bustling markets into a political arena at the turn of the nineteenth century that Persia’s entry into the world economy made social inequalities more apparent. We will see facts that surround the era, such as the Constitutional Revolution, a parliamentary victory in the Middle East, as well as the coup d’état by Pahlavi and the establishment of his dynasty. As nationalism was an integral part of this dynasty, reflecting the political-military context in which it originated, Pahlavi Dynasty set the interpretations of antiquity at the heart of their paternalistic ideology, banks were erected in the place of amphitheaters where the holy martyrdom of Karbalā used to revive and the ritual Shiite world was silenced. Iran not only was becoming secular but violent as well, while the continuation of concessions and the opulence of state officials and western businessmen gave the people the sense that there is a perpetuation of colonialism. The last uprising will lead to the Iranian Revolution, which will call into question the role of the West.

Keywords: Qajar, Shiite Rituals and Customs, Pahlavi, Poverty, Iranian Revolution.

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İran Devrimi'ne Doğru İşleyen Dışlıler

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Öz

Bir zamanlar Büyük Güçler arasında nüfuz, kaynak ve ticaret yolları için önemli bir rekabet konusu olan modern İran, bir dizi küçük ve büyük devrimler yoluyla şekillendi. Lord Curzon'un belirttiği gibi, Kaçar Hanedanlığı'nın İngiltere ve Rusya'ya iş ve ticari ayrıcalıklar ve ayrıca arkeolojik kazı imtiyazları vermesiyle ülkenin jeopolitik konumu, "Fars Sorununu" gündeme getirmişti. Makalenin amacı ilk başta İran'ın dünya ekonomisine girmesinin toplumsal eşitsizlikleri daha belirgin hale getirdiği on dokuzuncu yüzyılın başında hareketli pazarları yavaş yavaş siyasi bir arenaya dönüştüren tüccarlar ve din adamları olmak üzere; İran halkının sömürgeci güçlerin sömürüsüne karşı devrim yolunda attığı adımları takip etmektir. Ortadoğu'da bir parlamenter zafer olan Meşrutiyet Devrimi ile Pehlevi'nin darbesi ve hanedanının kuruluşu gibi dönemi çevreleyen gerçekleri göreceğiz. Milliyetçilik bu hanedanın ayrılmaz bir parçası olduğu ve ortaya çıktığı siyasi-askeri bağlamı yansıttığı için, Pehlevi Hanedanlığı ataerkil ideolojilerinin merkezine tarihi yorumlarını yerleştirmiş ve Kerbela'nın kutsal şehitliğinin kullanıldığı amfi tiyatroların yerine bankalar dikilerek eskiden canlı olan Şii dünyası ve ritüelleri susturulmuştur. İran sadece sekülerleşmekle kalmıyor, aynı zamanda şiddet de uyguluyordu; imtiyazların devam etmesi ve devlet görevlileri ile batılı iş adamlarının zenginliği halka sömürgeciliğin devam ettiği hissini veriyordu. Son ayaklanma, Batı'nın rolünü sorgulayacak olan İran Devrimi'ne yol açacak.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kaçar, Şii Ritüelleri ve Gelenekleri, Pehlevi, Yoksulluk, İran Devrimi.

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1. Introduction

This research was provoked by the desire to critically study the colonial activities embedded in the international system, as, a variety of circumstances in the era of Imperialism –combined to make the task of imperial preservation– created interventionist and expansionist practices in Persia (later Iran). Thus, as various factors made it ripe for revolution, we will introduce these factors by analyzing data gathered by primary and secondary sources; newspapers, narrations and books by notable historians and political scientists, and by focusing attention on the turbulent events across the nineteenth and twentieth century which “the West” seems to avoid or undervalue, such as: The Great Powers’ imperialist rivalry and the territorial encroachment during the rule of the Qajars and the Pahlavis; the Shi’i popular processions that apart from religious expression were the way to connect the social classes and protect the stability of the communities; the poverty that the daily wages outline; the social basis of a series of upheavals, among them nationalist and constitutionalist movements; the people’s denouncing of the oil exploitation by foreigners and the political underdevelopment; the 1953 coup d’état by American and British intelligence forces that overthrew the popular leader Muḥammad Muṣaddiq, restored the Shāh Pahlavi to power and destroyed political parties; the bloody repression by the Shāh who was expecting Iranians to adopt the Western principles or ways of life and his fail to obtain social base, up to the time the Iranians answered with the epoch-making Iranian Revolution. The data emphasize the role of clergy, which formed the first of a chain of events along with the bazaaris, the stronghold of the traditional middle class, as well as of the simple people ranging from the religious right to the secular left, all aligned to the revolution that shocked the world.

2. Class Structure of Nineteenth Century Iran

As the eighteenth century was coming to its end three Iranian provinces, Khorāsān and Āzarbaijān in the northeast and Fārs near the Persian Gulf were of colonial interest to the Great Powers. The fall of Safavids and the tribal chaos had been preceded, as well as the wars over the Caucasus region and the defeat of Loṭf Ali Khān of the Zand dynasty by Āqā Muḥammad Khān (1785-1797), who founded the Qājār dynasty. This dynasty coincided with

the apogee of imperial expansion; the Tzar's intention was to make Russia a maritime power by occupying the Caspian Sea, to get Azerbaijan's oil and to develop routes deeper in Asia, and the industrialized Britain was looking for new, good markets. Āqā Muḥammad Khān crowned himself Shāh and claimed Kayānid descent from the semi-mythical Kayānid princes mentioned in Zoroastrian writings. His successor, Fath 'Alī Shāh Qājār (1797-1834), adopted more pre-Islamic symbols, such as the emblem of Leo and Sun. Despite the Zoroastrian elements, the Safavids (1501-1722), who managed to unify Iran and reformed it from Sunni to Shī'ī Islam, remained the model: Qājār adopted from the Safavids the holy martyrdom of Karbalā and the messianic expectations, and in their palace, Golestān, they received the diplomats to negotiate with.

In the meanwhile, the East India Company, a sovereign power on behalf of the British Crown, promised military support to Shāh in return for his support against Afghanistan and France if they moved towards Iran or India. However, as Russia and Britain became allies against Napoleon, the British didn't support Iran when Russia took Georgia from the Iranian control. Russia fought two major wars with Iran and both ended with its defeat. The first treaty (Gulistān, 1813) forced Qājār to cede to Russia Georgia and Baku and to set low duties to Russian imports-exports. The Shāh in order to produce the same income for central and local rulers doubled the taxes to about one-fifth of the harvest, near where it remained throughout most of the Qājār period. After the second war, Qājār entailed to Russia (Turkmanchāi Treaty, 1828) the regions north of Aras River (Armenia, Āzarbaijān), the payment of a war indemnity of about £3,000,000 and navigation in Caspian Sea was restricted to Russia (Keddie, 1966, p. 38-39; Foran, 1989, p. 10, 12). It was in this context that an angry crowd, men and women, protesting the signing of the Treaty of Turkmanchāi through which Persia ceded the Caucasus territories to Russia, flooded the Russian embassy in Tehran in February 1829, and killed almost all Russians, including the diplomatic writer Alexander Griboyedov, who had been sent to advance Russia's expansionist agenda and ratify the Treaty that ended the war on humiliating terms.

Qājār princes held most of the provincial governorships; ministers, accountants, revenues collectors, writers, secretaries in various administrations. However, public works as the building and repair of roads

and caravansarais were seldom undertaken; robberies made the long road through the mountains dangerous for the travelers and the merchants, and even muleteers were reluctant to cross them. The communal works, such as schools and health centers, were undertaken by the religious leaders, collectors of religious dues and gifts; this network sustained their religious establishment allowing them to remain independent of the central government which later resulted in their ability to present a viable opposition to the ruling regime (Avery et al., 2008, p. 176; Floor, 1976, p. 102-104). Both the government officials and the clerics levied harsh taxes on artisans and merchants of small property in return for relatively few services, some refused to pay and the ‘ulamā employed seminary students and street gangs to collect from the recalcitrant (Cole, 1999, p. 125). Occasionally, people came across villages in revolt against exploitation and high taxation, however, despite the social stratification, the “class” in the western meaning didn’t exist; social inequalities were created by God. Yet they produced antagonisms, children in the streets teased the sons of the rich for dressing like dandies, and shopkeepers, who avoided overcharging the poor, did their best to cheat the rich. And as a Protestant missionary recalls, at the funeral of a landlord the Nestorians (Assyrians) villagers were assembled before his door to tender their condolences to his family. As the family didn’t understand the Nestorian language, they cried “the wicked oppressor is dead, and we are glad, and may his whole household soon follow him” (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 34-35).

Iran had a mixture of languages, Iranian (Farsi, Kurdish, Bakhtiari etc.), Semitic (Arabic, Assyrian, Hebrew etc.), Turkish group of languages (Azeris, Turkmen, Afsarid etc.); ethnic groups which the capitalist division of labor transformed into national minorities. There were communal conflicts also, linked to endemic problems, such as the bad-watered areas and the claim of underground springs. The major landlords came to possess entire villages and the Qājārs systematically fomented tensions within and between landlords, tribal chiefs (Khāns) and communities, to ensure their own safety in central power. Many of the villages and towns were isolated and economically self-contained; women were milking, making butter and cheese, weaving carpets and coarse white floats (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 11-13, 42). British officials traveling in the country on official business reported that the soil and the climate of central and southern Iran were well suited to the cultivation of opium and cotton in order to expand

their Persian Gulf trade –British forces had left India in 1856 and occupied Būshehr and Khārg Island in the Gulf after the Iranians, encouraged by the Russians, captured the Afghan Herāt which Britain wanted “independent” zone between Russia and India. Indeed, the 1860s saw a considerable increase of opium production and a great concentration of wealth among the landowners and the government officials. However, the declined production and supply of cereals and vegetables after their replacement by cotton and poppy crops, and the draught, caused shortages and a very sharp rise in grain prices contributing to the great famine of 1870-1871; even corpses were disinterred from graveyards to be eaten. As the authorities even during the famine didn’t stop the grain exports at Būshehr by British dealers, the only measure the Shāh took, after bread riots in Tehran got out of hand –Tehran housed the Polytechnic College (Dar al-Funin) and secular elementary and high schools also began opening from 1887 (Cole, 1999, p. 124)– was to give instructions for the release of grain stocks (Okazaki, 1986, p. 183-184, 187, 191).

3. The Holy Martyrdom of Karbalā, the Corporate Dealings, the National Awakening

Nāṣir al-Din Shāh (1848-1896) evaluated the Qājārs from a tribal group of shepherds-warriors with forts in northern Iran into a dynasty with characteristics of an Irano-Islamic monarchy. He upgraded the Muhārram rituals by financing the construction of 54 takaya, amphitheater-shaped outdoor with arches and minarets. Āshūrā, on the 10th day of Muhārram, marks the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the Prophet’s grandson whom Umayyad soldiers beheaded in 680 at Karbalā and massacred his companions. Thousands of men were attending this religious ceremony expressing their grief on their death by cutting and whipping themselves to emulate Imam Hussein’s bloody wounds. The rituals, which consolidated the patronage of the Qājār royalty, were dependent upon the patronage of rich rulers, merchants, landowners, wholesalers, goldsmiths; the poor also participated by serving and preparing food. Actors were hired to revive the hard way of the great martyr Imam to Al Kūfah; an actor from a well-known theatrical family of Iṣfahān was paid 400 gold tūmāns, a huge amount given that an Iranian lived on one pound a month equal to two tūmāns and that in 1877 a merchant with a fortune of 5,000 tūmāns was

considered rich. Since Britain, Austria, France and U.S. had established consulates in Iran, the Shāh invited foreigners to the rituals. His travels in Europe and his deals secured the cost of the huge large arena-like Tekyeh Dowlat southeast of the Golestān palace; its construction has been estimated 150,000-300,000 tūmāns. However, its completion in 1873 coincided with the massive concessions to Baron Julius de Reuter and a period of hostile to the imperialist nations, thus it was dangerous for foreigners to watch the flagellations and for missionaries to proselytize among Muslims (Aghaie, 2004, p. 21-31; Floor, 1976, p. 123).

British and Russian penetration contributed to the country's foreign trade and brought positive results in the technological modernization, however it had negative effects on the balance of payments, on inflation, on the state budget, on the living standards and on disrupting the construction industry in Işfahān, Kāshān, Tabrīz, Yazd, Kermān and Mashhaād; incoming processed goods replaced local products and destroyed Iranian middle social class, while newly built factories went bankrupt due to tzarist dumping practices, impoverishing people. In Gīlān Province, the commercial, distribution, and manufacturing center situated along the Caspian Sea, the winter diet in 1870 was bread, rice, bad cheese and a small quantity of tea, and the summer diet was fruits and vegetables. Meat, eggs and milk were absent. By 1900-1906, when the income of the wholesale capital Shīrāz was 6,000,000 tūmāns, the cost of living had increased to 300%. The subdivision of tūmān was qirān (1/10 of tūmān). In Mashhaād, the holy "Place of Martyrdom" where the Eighth Imam lies, capital of Khorāsān Province and a center of transit trade and carpet industries, the wage was 2-7,5 qirāns for the mason, 3-6 qirāns for the carpenter and 1-5 qirāns for the blacksmith. Workers and unskilled laborers received 1-2 qirāns a day and the same trend is reported in Tabrīz, the main trade emporium (Floor, 1976, p. 124; Foran, 1989, p. 33, 45-47). Schools provided poor children with basic literacy skills. They were taught in separate classes as they would work also in baking and cooking, and it was hard for their families to sew the special school uniform or supply them school lunch (Balslev, 2019, p. 72-73).

In 1872 the Shāh sold to Baron Julius de Reuter the sole right to construct mines, railways, tramways, roads and industrial plants at a price of £40,000 and 60 percent of annual profits. The deal created such a furor in

St Petersburg, and among Iranian pro-Russian courtiers, that it had to be cancelled, yet Reuter retained banking privileges. The Shāh visited Tzar in 1873 and he was impressed by the Cossacks of the Russian Imperial Army. On his return he formatted an Iranian Cossack Brigade that would receive orders from St Petersburg; in their training, soldiers shouted three times a day “Long live to the Russian Emperor, Long life to the Shāh!” The Shāh granted monopolies to Russian companies over the fishing industry in the Caspian Sea and over the insurance of transport in the northern provinces. Moreover, Russians participated in the construction of a nineteen-mile railroad between Tehran and the quarries in ‘Abdul ‘Azim, thus foreign investments increased from almost nothing to over £12 million (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 55-56; Foran, 1989, p. 15). In 1888 the Shāh granted the British firm “Lynch Brothers”, already active in Tigris-Euphrates, a concession for running another steamer line along the Kārūn River up to Ahvāz, the administrative center of Khūzestān Province close to the Gulf. The British established in 1899 the Imperial Bank of Persia in Tehran obtaining monopoly over the printing of banknotes, the right to extend branches into the provinces and to collect tolls on most southern roads. The Russians followed suit with their Banque d’Escompte de Perse. Britain pressed Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh for a life and property decree, and a commercial instrument was designed to protect British investors and fortunes against the possible people’s wrath. Moreover, the Act of Life and Property (1899) established “consular jurisdiction” by the British over their increasing number in Iran. Both banks prevented the indigenous traders and money dealers to establish an independent national banking system, and firmly establish themselves; policies of imperialism used the feudal state to undermine Iranian producers who had to cope with excessive taxation and arbitrary expropriation and confiscation (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 37; Amirahmadhi, 2012, p. 46).

The reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh witnessed also archaeological researches that provoked the rising Iranian bourgeoisie to protest against the looting of their cultural heritage. When the archaeological excavator William Loftus arrived in Shush in 1850-1852, on behalf of the British Museum, the local people protested that the foreigners don’t respect the burial-place of the Prophet Daniel who was acknowledged to be at Susa and was respected by general consent of Jews, Sabaeans, and Muslims; pilgrims from all parts used to flock to the Tomb of the Prophet Daniel to offer

up prayers and bury their dead (Loftus, 1857, p. 317). Marcel and Jean Dieulafoy excavated Susa in 1884-1886 and would grant Shāh 10,000 tūmāns. The amateur archaeologist Marcel Dieulafoy, ignoring the terms of the concession took all the antiquities to France. The annoyed Shāh visited Louvre, viewed its Iranian exhibition and granted the French the right to conduct archaeological excavations in the whole country (Abdi, 2001, p. 54).

The public discontent intensified in 1891-1892 when the Shāh sold to Major Gerald Talbot a monopoly for the sale and export of tobacco in return for a personal gift of £25,000, an annual rent of £15,000 to the state and a 25 percent share of the profits for Iran. The bāzār was the most important platform of social, political and religious activities and merchants considered to be more respectable than any other class; they associated with low-ranking clerics (mollā) and high-ranking community leaders (mojtahed), financed mosques and Shī'ī rituals, built bazaars and caravansarays, and offered food for the poor (Floor, 1976, p. 102-104). As the concession didn't take into consideration how many of them would be left unemployed, copies of a leaflet circulated in mosques and madrasas and the power of the 'ulamā and bazaaris network was first revealed during the Tobacco crisis. The agents who arrived in Shīrāz, a small provincial capital in the southwest of the country and the main tobacco-growing area near the Persian Gulf, found the markets closed. The strike was spread to Tehran, Iṣfahān, Tabrīz, Yazd, Kermān, all over the country people broke their water pipes and even the women in the royal harem refused to consume tobacco or serve it to the Shāh. As the Tzar also opposed in the Tobacco Agreement, the Shāh cancelled it, leaving Iran with a debt of £500,000 which was covered by a loan from Russia.

As the 19th century progressed with humiliating treaties, heavy taxation and poverty, the religious Bābī movement was widespread by the merchant Siyyid 'Alī Muḥammad (1819-1850) who assumed the title of Bāb (=Gate, through which men might attain to knowledge of the to Glorious Lord of the Age, the Twelfth Imam) claiming to be the Mahdī (Messiah). The Qājār ruling class on the whole hated and feared "Babiism". The Bāb's execution in 1850, and the pogroms in response to the failed assassination against the Shāh forced the Bābīs to disperse in different directions. According to diplomat Percy Sykes, who being ordered to open a British consulate

in Kermān remained there for ten years, the punishment inflicted on the conspirators was hard; in the case of two prisoners, lighted candles were stuck into them and after they were hacked asunder with a hatchet (Sykes, 1915, p. 447). The Bahá'í religious movement that followed, of the Báb's follower Mirza Husayn Ali Nur (1817-1892) who was exiled in 1852 to the Ottoman Empire, taught, among others, the unity of the religions and of mankind, and an improved status for women. Both religious movements were considered as a loathsome heresy by the Shī'ī clergy (Cole, 1999, p. 123-124). The government, to quell the anti-Shāh activities, rumored that the Bahá'í religious minority in Tehran and Shīrāz were responsible for the social instability, and although it had few instruments of control still could put the gallows on public display: hundreds of people in Shīrāz were beheaded, hanged and buried alive and the desecration of graves and the exhumation and burning of the remains –a practice prohibited, given that in Shī'ī eschatology cemeteries are the arena of the resurrection– were recurring elements. In May 1896 the Shāh was assassinated in a holy shrine in Tehran (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 73; Abrahamian, 2008, p. 13; Amanat, 2012, p. 259).

Muẓaffar al-Din Shāh (1896-1906) reopened the country in the disastrous loans: the Russian of 22,5 million rubles was 1,5 times larger than the total revenues of Iran in the same year (Amirahmadi, 2012, p. 168). Due to the imposition of Persian tariffs for the huge Russian loan to be repaid, the bazaaris, the 'ulamā and radical young people put forth the idea of a written code of laws to curb the Shāh's arbitrariness and the foreign manipulations. By 1905 this sentiment had grown into a popular movement, denouncing the royal despotism with the Constitutional Revolution. Following a year of demonstrations, strikes, and killing of protestors by Cossacks, Muẓaffar al-Din Shāh (1896-1907) was forced to inaugurate in December 1906 the first session of an elected parliament (Majles). In the meanwhile, he had granted concessions of fisheries and forests' exploitation, such as the monopoly for the exploitation of the northern forests in the Greek firm "Koussis & Theofilaktos" and during Muḥammad Ali Shāh's reign (1907-1909) other foreign firms entered the lumber business, leading to a significant deforestation in the northern region (Amirahmadi, 2012, p. 35). The British negotiated an entente with Romanovs: the emergent Germany and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution threatened to defy their interests in Asia. The agreement divided Iran and the Constitutional

movement in two spheres of influence, the Russian in north and the British in south, where each could exploit oil and mineral resources. The central zone would be controlled by Iran, in fact, by the British interests. The Shāh accepted the partition; the foreign debt was high and the great powers would support him in the restoration of the absolute monarchy. The Tzar encouraged him to repudiate the constitution, and given that most of the insurrectory movements were taking place in the northern regions, Cossacks bombarded Majles and killed hundreds of constitutionals. The Shāh dissolved the Majles, banned public meetings including Passion Plays, and some of the leading figures in the Constitutional movement were imprisoned. However, the Constitutional forces marched to Tehran, deposed the Shāh, re-established the Constitution and enthroned Ahmad Shāh Qājār (1909-1925) (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 96). The last uprising in Tabrīz, despite the divisions within the ranks of the reformers, was spread to more cities. The Russian and British interventions failed to persuade the fighters to stop moving in against Tehran. Russian forces were sent and executed *en masse* revolutionaries and civilians.

Up to the beginning of the century, Iran was a consumer of oil. Russian oil had been brought into the country by ship across the Caspian, and Nobel Brothers built storage tanks in Anzalī ant Rasht, capital of Gīlān Province, and a 16 kilometers kerosene pipeline. Until the British subject William Knox D'Arcy received permission to prospect for oil in Iran. After the large commercial quantities found in Khūzestān in 1908, the products of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which was formed in 1911, took over an increasing share of the market completely driving out Russian oil by the end of the 1920s (Avery et al., 2008, p. 605-606). In 1914 the British government purchased 51 percent of the Company, and from then on behaved increasingly like a sovereign power in southwestern Iran. Coal was still the dominant fuel but as during the War the oil was sold at discount rates to the British Navy, Britain converted its battleships to oil power making them operational efficient. With the collapse of the tzarist government in 1917 Britain was determined to establish herself as the only major Power in Iran; after all, couldn't rely on U.S. oil production for its estimated needs of 100 million barrels per annum. The Anglo-Iranian Agreement of the ruling elite, that would allow British to supply Iran military advisers, arms and ammunition turning it into a British protectorate, was opposed from the Majles (McBeth, 1985, p. 35-37).

4. Military to Fortify Monarchy

The Qājār government never recovered from the hard hit they took by the Constitutional Revolution and in 1921 colonel Rezā Khān staged a coup d'état against them. Three journals expressed his general aspirations; Shāh's worship, national unity, anti-Arabism, secularism, Voltaire's anticlericalism, Gobineau's racism (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 123-124). The ruling class crowned him Shāh, he established his dynasty under the surname "Pahlavi" which recalled the pre-Muslim period, committed scholars highlighted the "linear" continuity of the Achaemenid, Sassanid and Islamic world, the official ideology interpreted archaeology as a pseudoscience to glorify despotism (Abdi, 2001, p. 70), and spent Iran's economic resources in monuments and military establishments. His "modernization" benefited the courtiers and the landlords: any village in their possession for thirty years became their private property, thus they owned 80% of the land while 95-98% of the peasants were landless. The regime's policy favored large entrepreneurs at the expense of small traditional shopkeepers, and the establishment of light industry had no labour legislation: low-wage workers who worked up to 12 hours daily and a large percentage of 6-12 years old workers. Despite the growth of the education it remained largely underfunded (4% of the budget; the military and security took 1/3 of the national budget) and a privilege of the wealthy and the newly formed middle class, thus almost nonexistent in rural areas. The abandoned peasants and the growing wave of the industrial workers kept trusting 'ulamā as doctors, and family and business advisers. In 1924 a minor uprising had occurred in Iṣfahān led by two 'ulamā, occasioned by government attempts to turn opium cultivation into a state monopoly, and four years later another 'ulamā-led movement of protest against compulsory military service took place in Tabrīz. The Shāh signed new commercial treaties with western nations raising tariffs on many goods, and in 1933 he renegotiated the D'Arcy Oil Concession. The agreement was to plague Anglo-Iranian relations for the next two decades, contributing further to prevailing mood of dislike for the Westerners (Keddie, 1966, p. 90-92, 96; Abrahamian, 2008, p. 69; Avery et al., 2008, p. 231-238, 742).

Rezā Shāh restricted the ceremonies connected with the commemoration of Imam Hussain's martyrdom at Karbalā, ordered the first demolitions of takaya, the clericals lost their parliamentary seats and all adult males

were obliged to wear the western-styled dress. Iran not only was becoming secular but violent as well. The regime crushed the freedom movement, destroyed political parties, outlawed strikes, closed down independent newspapers, and exiled, killed or imprisoned a number of trade unionist. Farsi language became obligatory in schools imposing restrictions in the provinces where other languages were spoken, the literacy in non-Persian language decreased and the few community schools and printing presses were closed down (Abrahamiam, 1982, p. 138-142). He insisted on the substitution of *Iran* (=land of the Arians) from *Persia*, as the country's official name: the "Aryan race" linked Iran and Germany, Rezā Shāh was an admirer of Adolf Hitler, the Nazi Party had a branch in Tehran since 1933, Josef Goebel's Ministry of Propaganda published the illustrated fascist magazine *Īrān-i bāstān* (Jenkins, 2016, p. 727-728) and many feudal and rich Iranians were drawn to fascism and tightened their hold over non-Farsi speaking provinces. Nazis took full advantage of Shāh's fascist visions; Germany was claiming a world share and the Iranian ruling class allowed them to enter Iran – which relations with the Soviets, who had abrogated the Anglo-Russian Entente that divided Iran into two zones and had restored the Iranian shipping rights in the Caspian Sea, became strained. The British, already annoyed that Shāh considered the United States the ideal counterweight to Great Britain in oil concessions, wouldn't allow *and* the German firms engaged in Iranian railway and road-building, and afoot to build an iron-foundry and a steel-mill (Avery et al., 2008, p. 240-242). Following operation Barbarossa, British and Soviets invaded Iran.

Rezā Shāh went into exile ensuring the succession of his son, Muḥammad Shāh Pahlavi, who tried to connect Iranian antiquity with the western social practices: soap operas, the symbolic demolition of the Tekyeh Dowlat in favour of a bank building, and excursions to Persepolis and Pasargadae. His propaganda didn't persuade the rural Iranians who didn't have access to water, health care and education while he was selling cheaply the oil to the western energy-intensive industries. Disappointment and anger run high as the "seven sisters", the oil company cartel that controlled the world oil trade, flooded the Gulf with tankers.

5. Political Realignment

The elected Prime Minister Muḥammad Muṣaddiq (1880-1967) began to attack the royal prerogatives in July 1952 and nationalized the oil industry (the Anglo-Iranian Company was giving less than 50% of its profits to Iran). An embargo and naval blockade were imposed by the British. The Americans feared that Muṣaddiq's "National Front" and its relations with Tūda, the semi-illegal Iranian Communist Party, would lead Iran towards the Soviets. Muṣaddiq rejected the proposal of Truman and Churchill for the settlement of the dispute; there was also the fear of nationalist dominoes in countries claiming independence from their imperialist intervention. After discussions in Washington concerning the interests in the Middle East and Africa, an amount of \$1,000,000 was sent to the U.S. ambassador in Tehran to organize the propaganda (articles, posters, etc.) while the British press portrayed Muṣaddiq in cartoon as clown in pajamas. Moreover, their Iranian agents approached the religious conscience by electing the pro-Western Tehran Imam as speaker of parliament (Wilber, 1981, p. 143-144; Wilber, 2006, p. 84, 87). In August 1953 a military coup d'état engineered by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) restored the Shāh to power.

He suppressed the National Front and the Tūda party, and he organized with CIA know-how and Mossad's support the secret police Savak (Organization of National Security and Information). He promised that under his reign Iran would become more glorious than the Achaemenid, Sassanid and Parthian empires, and the world's fifth most powerful country after the U.S., Soviet Union, Japan and China –thus justifying the million dollars military expenditures (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 131-132). His "White Revolution's" reforms were limited. At the top were the courtiers (businessmen, government and military officials) who owned more than 85% of banking and construction companies, while the old families transferred the villages they owned to their close relatives and they themselves opened businesses with low-interest loans and tax exemptions. American, European and Japanese corporations were rushing to sell the Iranian government and entrepreneurs whatever they wanted, and the road, rail and port facilities were on the verge of collapse due to the burden of the incoming freight (Avery et al., 2008, p. 288). Thousand Americans were living luxuriously in isolated areas and despite the vast oil revenues the oil

wealth did not appear to be trickling down to the people: between 1967 and 1977 the percentage of urban families living in one room increased to 43. The high-paid foreigners were considered responsible for the high city rents and Tehran had no proper sewage system and public transportation system. The middle class was separated to the modern of college graduates, and the traditional bazaaris. The lower income was by the majority of landless who worked in the fields or as shepherds, and although Shāh's "White Revolution" did provide some farmers with tractors and fertilizers, most villages didn't have electricity, schools, roads, piped water. The neglect of the agricultural sector drew unemployed young people into cities lacking housing and social services, who became vulnerable to alcoholism, crime, prostitution and suicide (Abrahamian, 2008, p. 131-142; Rieffer-Flanagan, 2013, p. 33-34).

Rūh-Allāh Khumainī comes to the fore when the mass production of consumption goods (shoes, drinks, electronics, and cars) and the agricultural stagnation turned the country into a massive importer of foodstuffs with rapid and sharp increase in their costs. The British academic Michael Axworthy (1962-2019) who lived in Tehran being a son of a banker wrote about Khumainī's strong sense of duty as 'ālim and as teacher of Sufi philosophy and Islamic jurisprudence at the famous Faiziyeḥ madreseh in Qom. Thus, he became a mojtahed very young by comparison with others and Āyatullāh after his teacher died. In a public speech he attacked the regime for living off corruption, neglecting the economic needs of merchants, workers and peasants, and granting capitulations to foreigners in ally with Israel against the Arab world, causing the upheavals of June 1963. Shopkeepers and students poured into the streets and paratroopers sacked the Faiziyeḥ and killed several people. The revolts of 1963-64 made Khumainī the leading figure opposed to the Shāh; he was imprisoned and exiled (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 425-426; Avery et al., 2008, p. 281-282; Axworthy, 2013, p. 134-136). From exile he worked out a program tied to Islamic principles; Ummah would replace the western political model that creates social inequalities which eventually led to crime. As the Shāh was a strategic partner of U.S. during the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 and the Vietnam War, Islamic and Marxist guerrilla clandestine organizations were formed; any open protest was subject to censorship by Savak and detention and tortures were common.

In 1971 the Shāh held the 2,500-year-old institution of the monarchy, the “Show of Shows” according to *Time* magazine. Representatives from 69 states, Kings, Queens, Princes, Princesses, Presidents, Premiers, Vice Presidents, Governor Generals, Foreign Ministers, sheiks and sultans joined the ceremony, with food from Maxim of Paris, Limoges porcelains, tents decorated by Jansen of Paris—the firm that helped Jacqueline Kennedy redo the White House—furnished with Baccarat crystal, and spectacles of sound and light with quadrigas, shield-bearing soldiers, cavalry soldiers and archers under the melody “Persepolis” by the Greek composer Yannis Xenakis. Although some Iranians were impressed, the majority didn’t approve that the government spent \$50,000 on 50 Lanvin-designed uniforms for the royal court, each requiring one mile of gold thread (“Iran: The Show of Shows”, 1971).

The regime received massive criticism given that the public was aware of the Shāh’s economic scandals and his collaboration with U.S. to undermine Islam; that Iran, the net exporter of food in 1960s, was spending in 1970s about \$1 billion a year importing agricultural products, and that much of the sharp rise in oil income in 1973 was spent on military equipment while parts of Iran were suffering from famine. The American President Jimmy Carter visited Tehran praising Shāh in the New Year’s Eve 1978 as a “great leader”, and Iran as “an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world”. A week later the government-controlled newspaper *Ettela’at* accused Khumainī in cahoots with imperialists and communists. The seminaries and the bazaar in Qom closed down and thousands of people clashed with the police. Day after day the opposition movement, an organizational structure of Shī‘ī Islam attracted million people ranging from the religious right to the secular left, all met in the context of Islam under which they were interpreted. The demonstrators rarely indulged in physical attacks on persons, they were interested more in making a political point. In Tabrīz, center of the leftist revolutionary movement, the protesters attacked to police stations, large banks—which didn’t lose a penny from their tills, as a European eyewitness reported—, luxury hotels, liquor stores, cinemas specialized in porno films; however, human life was spared although the government had rushed in military reinforcements and hundreds of activists were killed. The killing of people by the security forces served only in fueling the martyrdom in a country where it was a fundamental religious expression; on the 40th day of the death of the protesters public mourning was held in many cities across Iran

along with the closure of bazaars. Despite the signals CIA concluded that Iran “is not even in pre-revolutionary situation” and only in November 1978 Washington became aware that the regime in Tehran was faltering (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 506-7; Abrahamian, 2008, p. 158; Donovan, 1997, p. 143). The Shāh fled Iran due to the growing threat and a nationwide referendum in March 1979 resulted in a vote in favor of an Islamic Republic. Upon seizing power Āyatullāh Khumainī, as commander of the Revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic, he formed the Revolutionary Guards, sustained the activist organization *Hizbu'llāh*, converted the Israeli embassy building into an office of the PLO and throughout the country named streets, squares and districts in honor of Palestine.

6. Conclusion

Much of the end of the monarchical Iran was due to the sympathetic view of Pahlavi towards a westernized secular program, while the gross social inequalities and the financial scandals played also a crucial role in the undermining of a political establishment whose capitalist “solutions” mainly and mostly benefited the elite. Although the imperialist competition and the global strategies of the era had led to the development of the oil industry in Iran and the discovery of vast oil reserves, the regime’s concept of modernization did not create an integrated social and economic development in the country, since the Shāh, despite the oil revenues, failed to create a social stability. The assertive elements of society remained connected with large landowners, large entrepreneurs and high-ranking civilian bureaucrats while the regime allied with Israel against the Arab world and granted commercial privileges to the American advisors. Moreover, to the majority of people, which was excluded from political participation, the Shāh was offering Iran’s ancient glory and greatness as a substitute for the satisfaction of their material and social needs.

The Iranian Revolution, a challenge paradigm for the study of revolutions due to its massive popular participation and the intentional rejection of violence by the revolutionaries, shaped the world event and turned Iran into one of the most powerful states in the Middle East. Moreover, as there has been an abundant pressure and dramatically expansion on the exploitation of Iranian oil by agreements in favor of the Western companies, the new government redrew the map of the political landscape and alliances, and the nationalization of the oil sector excluded the West.

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Beyan

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