

Revolution in Iran: a Contextual Framework



Purpose

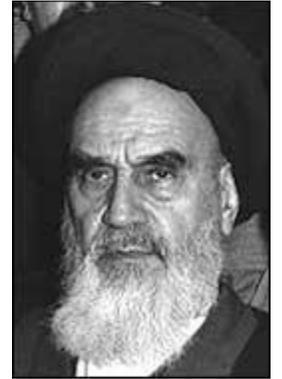
The purpose of this presentation is to present an analysis of the Iranian Revolution by noting theoretical principles and insurgent activities in the immediate years leading to the Shah's removal in 1979.



(Image 1)

Agenda

- Timeline
- Revolutionary Theory
- Insurgent Strategy
- Ideology, Phasing, Timing
- Tactics
- Systemic Influences

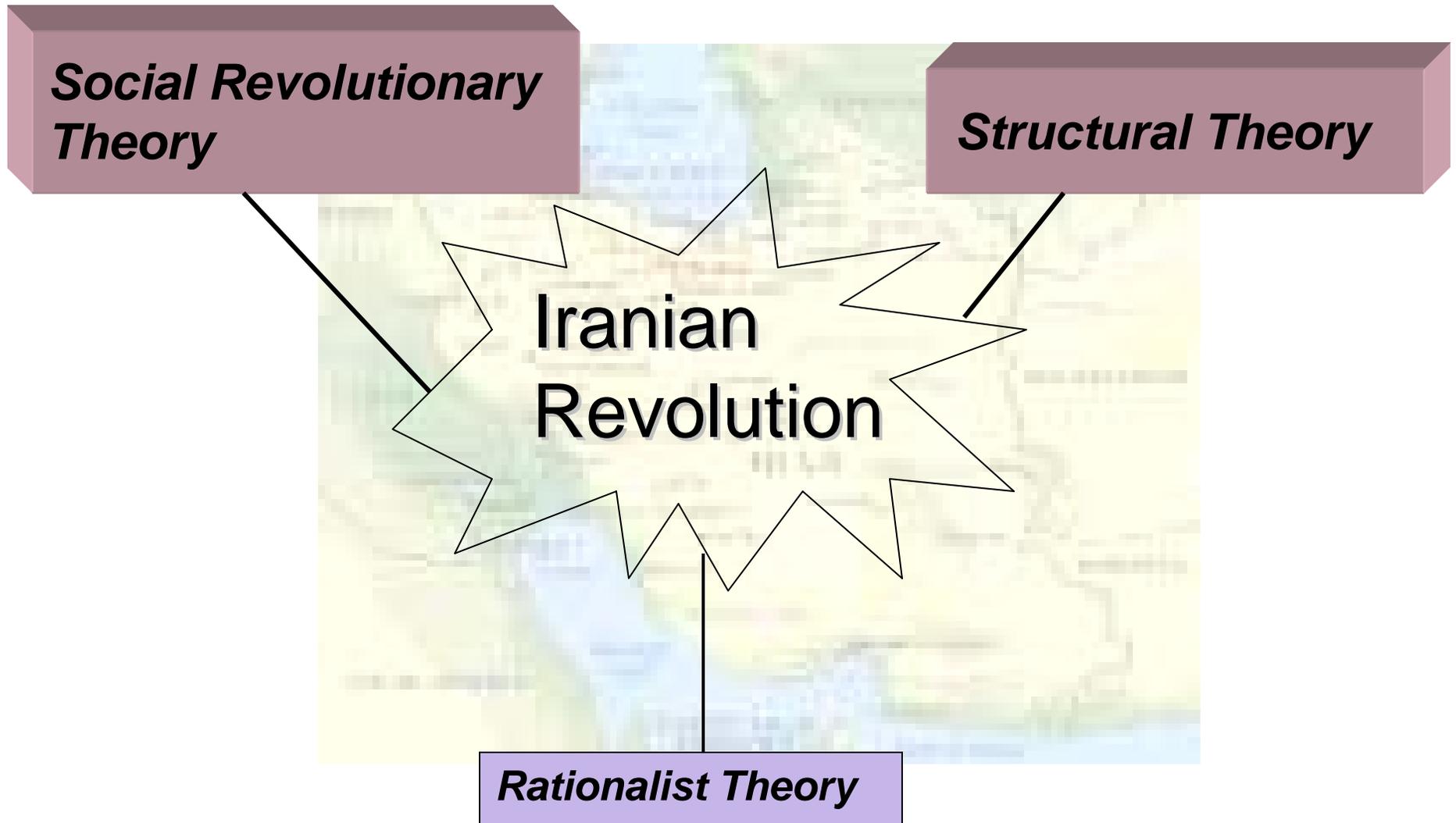


(Image 2)

Timeline

- 1941 – Mohammed Reza Shah Assumes Monarchy
- 1953 – CIA Overthrows Prime Minister
- 1962 – White Revolution, Suffrage Bill Passed in Majlis
- 1963 – Khomeini and other members of *ulema* send letters to Shah, Khomeini Imprisoned, Exiled to Iraq, later Paris
- 1973 – Guerrilla Activity Begins
- 1974 – Economic Slowdown
- 1975 – Khomeini Establishes Effective Propaganda Machine in Paris
- 1976 – Nixon Doctrine Abandoned, Carter Emphasizes Human Rights
- 1977 – New Prime Minister Attempts Reforms
 - Revolutionaries Demanded Abolishing SAVAK, Reelecting Members of Majlis, and Depoliticizing Monarchy into Symbolic Institution
 - Succession of 3 Prime Ministers
 - Ayatollah's Oldest Son Dies in Najaf by Heart Attack, Newspapers Express Condolence Messages
- 1978 – Massive Street Demonstrations and Strikes, Desertion of Soldiers, Bloodshed, Revolutionaries Demand Total Abolition of Monarchy
- 1979
 - 16 Jan – Shah Leaves for “Extended Vacation”, Prime Minister Bakhtiar Placed in Power
 - 1 Feb – Khomeini Arrives in Iran, Military Mutiny Against Prime Minister
 - March - Majlis Elections
 - 11 April 1979 – Islamic Republic of Iran Established

The Roots of the Revolution Were Social and Structural



Social Revolutionary Basis

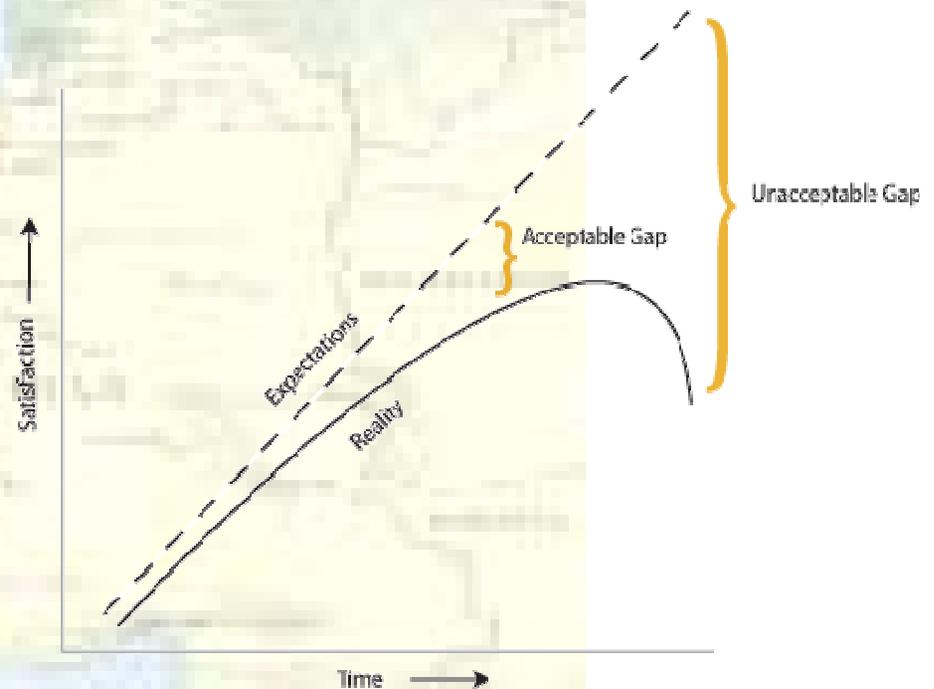
- Political Opportunities
 - of Shi'a Islam
 - Mosques Unregulated under Pahlavi Regime
 - Of Iranian (Persian) Culture
 - Class exploitation similar to Marxist Theories
- Mobilizing Structures
 - Ulema Provided Organizing Framework
 - Khomeini Addresses (Mass Media)
- Framing Processes
 - Poetry
 - Literature
 - History



*Photo by Kaveh Golestan
Printed in Time, January 29,
1979*

Structural Revolutionary Basis

- Political Opportunity
 - Economic Crisis
 - Growing inequalities of income
 - Government deficits
- Mobilizing Structures
 - Worker Organizations (Strikes)
 - Political Parties
- Framing Processes
 - Reduced Power/Authority of the Shah
 - Unacceptable living



Source: http://www.fragileecologies.com/jun27_03.html

The Revolution Followed A High Profile—Inside Out Strategy

“There can be no question, on the face of it. We should distinguish between the momentary “attraction” evoked by a striking display of mass heroism and the steadfast, reasoned convictions that link inseparably the **entire activity of the Party** with the **movement of the masses.**”

-Vladimir Lenin

"**Familiarize the people with the truth** of Islam so that the young generation may not think that the men of religion in the mosques of Qum and al-Najaf believe in the separation of church from state, that they study nothing other than menstruation and childbirth and that they have nothing to do with **politics.**"

-Ayatollah Khomeini

“The Purpose of our lives is **never to cease the struggle.** We are like waves—our calmness is in our fading away”

-A slogan of Iranian college students in the 1970s

Template – 7 Dynamics of an Insurgency

- Leadership
- Ideology
- Objectives
- Environment and Geography
- External Support
- Phasing and Timing



Ideology – Political Islam

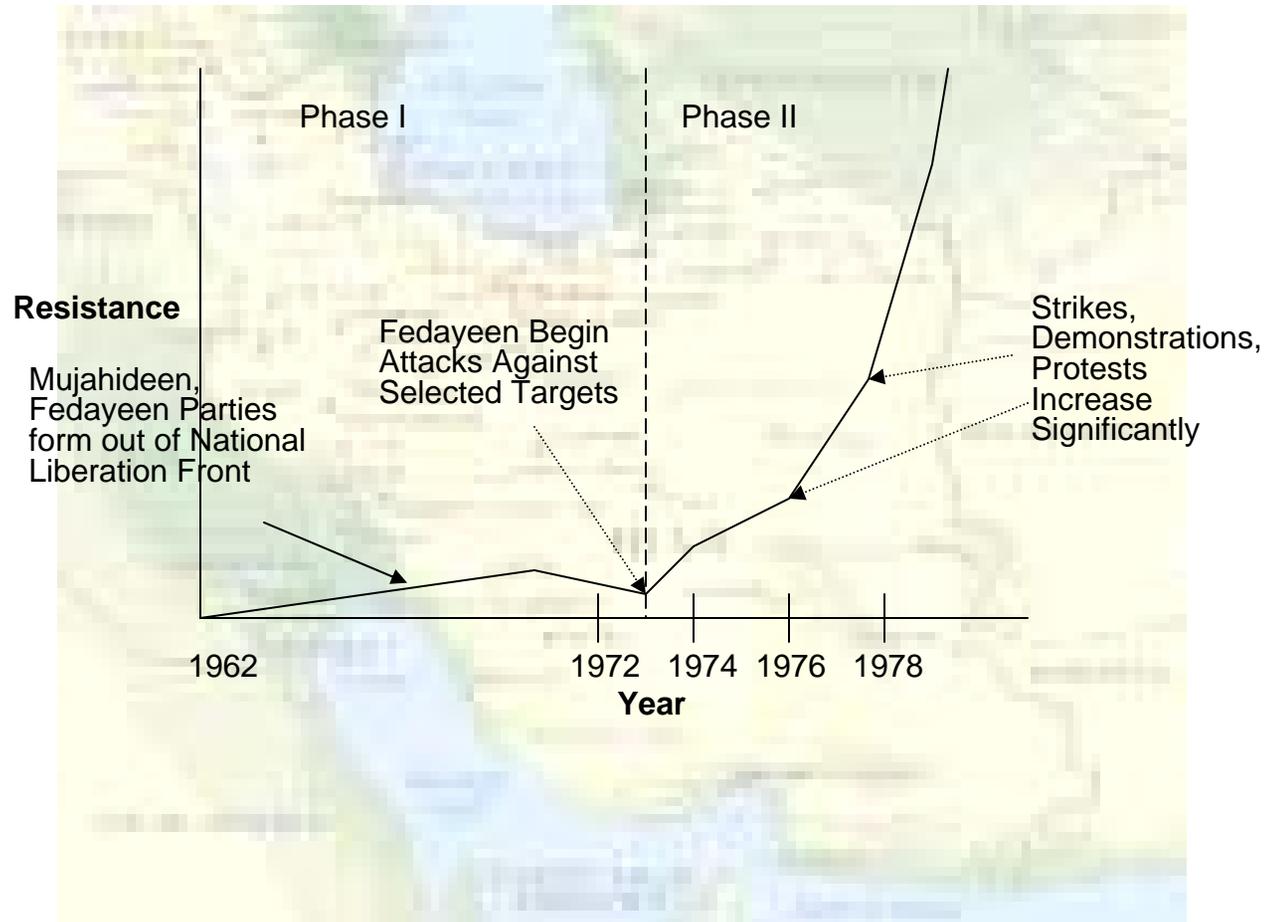
Backlash Against “Westoxication”

- Unified All Segments of Society
 - Working Classes, Rural Population Support Critical
- Most Effectively Communicated by Ayatollah
 - Exile was Greatest Informational Asset
 - Close Group of Insiders in Paris Assisted Ayatollah
 - Financial and Technical Assistance
 - Information – ‘Pulse of the People’

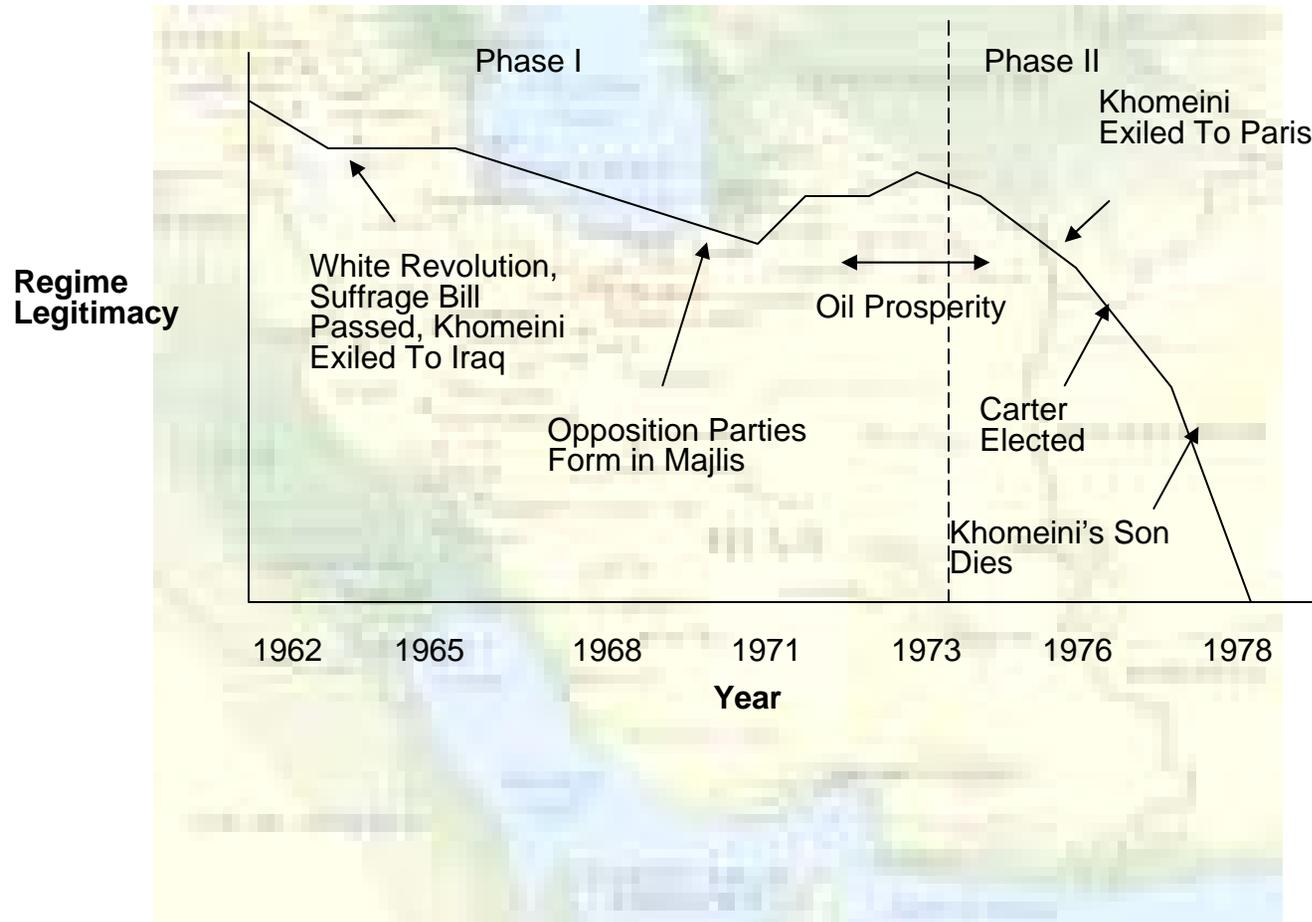
Phasing and Timing

- Urbanization Heightened Social Tensions (1974)
- End of Oil Prosperity Led to Economic Discontent (1974-1975)
- Carter's Emphasis on Human Rights and End to "Nixon Doctrine" Reduced Shah's Credibility (1976)
- Mosques became Unregulated Socializing Agents in Opposition to Regime (1975-1978)
- Reforms Allowed Greater Opportunities for Political Entrepreneurs to Connect with Population (1978)

Phasing and Timing (Continued)



Phasing and Timing (Continued)



High Profile, Inside-Out Tactics

- Mujahideen
 - Religious Revolutionary Party in Majlis
 - Religious Orientation and Ideology
 - Revolution Should Begin in Urban Centers and ‘Naturally’ Spread to Countryside
 - Maneuver BOS: Shatter Police Atmosphere to Demonstrate Vulnerability of Regime
 - Reduced to Gang Activity
 - Conducted Bank Robberies, Assassination of U.S. Military Advisors, Bombing of International Telephone and Telegraph and Israeli Cultural Centers in Tehran

Tactics (Continued)

- Fedayeen
 - Communist Revolutionary Party in Majlis
 - Carried Out ‘Revolutionary Executions’, Explosions, Attacks Against Selected Targets Throughout 1970’s
 - Not an Orchestrated Program
 - Attacks Intended to Demonstrate Regime’s Vulnerability

Tactics (Continued)

- *Military* Guerrilla Tactics Proved Ineffectual
- Khomeini's Informational and Diplomatic Tactics More Effective
 - Charisma and Notoriety Major Selling Point
 - Incited Strikes and Protests
 - Individuals Perceived Regime's Actions/Responses in more Negative Context
 - Unified Iranian Society in Parallel Context of Legitimacy under Political Islamist Ideology
 - Communities Increasingly Connected through Islamic Culture
 - Westernization viewed unfavorably
 - Absence of Traditional Military "War of Movement"

Systemic Influences

- Endogenous Inputs
 - Financial Aid by Bazarri
 - Financed Khomeini
 - Financed Strikes
 - Hiring Youths to Participate in Street Protests
 - Political Parties
 - Intellectuals
 - *Ulema*
 - Propagation of Ideology by Khomeini
- Exogenous Inputs
 - President Carter's Human Rights Emphasis Unintentionally Discredited Shah
 - Economic Downturn Reduced Regime Credibility

Systemic Influences (Continued)

- Conversion Mechanisms
 - Newspapers and Journals
 - Television Footage
 - Mosques
 - Broadcast Infrastructure of Khomeini's Message – Critical Input
 - Outputs
 - Strikes
 - Protests
 - Guerrilla Activity
 - Shah's Abdication
 - Legitimacy Granted to New Political System Devoid of Shah
 - Personified by Ayatollah
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Conclusions

- Shah Completely Underestimated Depth of Revolutionary Commitment
- Almost Complete Unification of Population Against Regime
 - 98.2 % Approval of New Government
- Insurgency Through Culture and Religion
- In Case of Iran, Information and Diplomatic Forms of Maneuver More Effective than Military Guerrilla Tactics

A blurred map of the United States, showing state boundaries and major water bodies. The word "Questions?" is centered over the map in a large, black, sans-serif font.

Questions?

Sources

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