

Forum:	Historical Security Council
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“[Shah] embarked on the [path toward] destruction of Islam in Iran.”

- Ayatollah Khomeini

Introduction

Iran, a country of tense history, multiple coups, multiple regime alternations and political instability. Since its establishment Iran, or Persia with its former name, has been mainly characterized with its Shia majority, alongside with an elite minority that possesses financial superiority. In its history, Iran has confronted multiple regime changes and coups which eventually resulted in a switch between Westernization and more Islamic way of ruling. As Islamic way of ruling is broad term, variant regimes have been present in the Iranian history. Such are the Sharia law, leftist Islamism, social democracy and social Islamism. Although all these ideas haven't been satisfactory for every single citizen of Iran, many have been popular among the majority; while the ideology, or the concept, of *Westernization* remained unpopular among the majority.

Despite the resentful response to *Western* regimes in Iran, the elite invariably favoured the regime as it only benefited them. Throughout the Iranian history the more *Western* way of ruling has always gained support from European countries and the United States. However, its consequences like poverty acquired a detrimental nature for the middle class and the proletariat. Beside the internal affairs, the *Western* way of ruling influenced the foreign relations as well. The country became a playground for imperialism. The oil reserves in Iran has always been a conflict of debate as it is a valuable resource for the national economy and a strategy for financial development, while it has been explicitly exploited by United Kingdom and United States of America; albeit, poverty became more and more common for Iranian people.

The revolution was a sign of the religious victory. As the Pahlavi monarchy was ruling before the revolution the replacement by the clergy paved the way for a more Islamic way of ruling. After the revolution, the hostage crisis was an indication of American antipathy in Iran, a remnant of former interventions and exploitation.

The issue at hand is significant in regard to RCIMUN'18's theme: *Political Polarization: Fostering accord in a world of intolerance*. The conflict shows how the theme has been prevalent over the years and remains unresolved.

Definition of Key Terms

SAVAK (Sazeman-i Ettelaat va Amniyat-i Keshvar): Was the national organization for security and Intelligence. It had active role during Pahlavi's term for maintaining the monarch's power in a cruel manner that severely damaged the people. It was formed under the guidance of CIA and Mossad.

Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist): It is a theory arguing that Islam has custodianship over the people. The Shia revolutionist supported the theory during the Iranian revolution.

Shia Islam: It is the majority sect in Iran and has distinct religious practices. As it has different religious practices and theories; therefore, its implementations were present after the Iranian revolution.

White revolution: Unlike the implication from the name, white revolution was a series of social reforms by the Pahlavi monarchy. The reforms weren't favored by the people, as they were contrary to Shia guidelines.

Pahlavi Dynasty: It is the government installed upon the coup executed by CIA and UK. The monarch served the western interest and discontented the people of Iran.

Clergy: The word clergy refers to Shia Ulama in this report. The word denotes the learned ones. In this case it refers to individuals with religious knowledge and education.

General Overview

In order for one to fully comprehend the issue at hand, one shall go back to 1794, when the Qajar Dynasty ruled the Persian Empire. Although 1794 is a time of undeveloped political diplomacy, the presence of foreign interventions has been prevalent since then.

Qajar Dynasty

The Qajar dynasty has a Turkic origin as they constituted the Kara Göz tribe at the time. They mainly ruled as an autocracy. They possessed territory in Caucuses when the dynasty commenced their ruling, yet the loss of territory to Russia at 19th century became an incentive for the Dynasty to rule the country in a manner that is more focused on military force and re-assumption of the lost territories. Therefore, people of Persian Empire under the rule the Qajar dynasty were disabled to take activity in the political aspect of the country, therefore it was ruled as an autocratic country. However, the country had a Shia majority and clergy didn't have any power in the government. At 1813, the Tobacco industry constituted an immense portion of the Persian economy; however, the government monopolized the industry. Therefore, the proletariat (farmers)

didn't profit from their work. The Tobacco protests was a crucial incident that showed clergy's power. Since the protests the government ceased to monopolize the industry and people commenced acquiring financial revenue. At 1911 people of Iran were discontent of the autocracy and requested the establishment of an alternative government and a parliament, which would enable the Shia voice to be heard. They failed to create an alternative government to what was previously opposed (Qajar autocracy) but the parliament was eventually established. Any further rebellious incidents that took place in years before (1905-11) mainly had its origins from the dispute between constitutionalist and Shahs of Persia (now Iran), which had foreign support. Although a parliament was established, the religious voice wasn't as dominant as previously hoped.

Reza Khan and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company

Many of the mentioned constitutional revolutions (like the establishment of the parliament) led to rise of Reza Khan (a Shah and a former general). He executed a coup d'état in February 1921, established monarchy and deposed any remnants of Qajar dynasty, while maintaining the presence of the parliament. He introduced many social, economic and political reforms, which led to public discontent as he had western policies which disregarded the Shia population. His rule caused religious people to be immensely oppressed as they were forced to not wear a hijab and disobey the religious way of living. Under the rule of Reza Shah there wasn't any political rebel by the clergy, although there was a lot of organized seminars and secret movements regarding religious dominance.

On the other hand, from 1901 on Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (Persian, previously; BP at 2018) had the rejoice of selling Iranian oil and monopolizing their national resources. It assumed wealth rapidly, while Iranian people suffered from Poverty. In 1951 Iranian prime minister Mosaddegh promised to revoke the companies influence, reclaim the reserves and re-assure the economic prosperity of people. He then nationalized the company and became a national hero. Henceforth, the Brits were frustrated, and United Nations sent warships to Iran, alongside with a trade embargo. Mosaddegh was insistent on his policies and was persistent with the petroleum reserves in Iran. On the other hand, Winston Churchill, British prime minister of the time, formulate a coup, yet USA didn't assure support and Mosaddegh received intelligence regarding the plans; therefore, he eliminated any risks through shuttering the British embassy, no English government official remained in the Iranian borders.

At 1951-1953 Muhammad Mossadegh served as the prime minister, overthrown by CIA and the UK, he conducted social reforms but tried nationalizing the Iranian oil industry, which was under British control for quite a long time. He was regarded as the epitome of democracy in Iran. CIA and UK wanted a leader that would work for western interests, as a demand of Eisenhower, while Truman refused to help. In an operation named TP-Ajax, CIA and the British government cooperated for overthrowing the Mossadegh government.

Reza Shah Pahlavi Term

Upon the successful coup a new monarch was inserted, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. The new government was secular, anti-communist (unsupportive of nationalizing the oil industry) and pro-Western. In exchange for tremendous foreign aid from US and UK Pahlavi gave 80% of Iran's oil to US and UK. However, many Iranian's resented American intervention in the country and suffered the economic dropdown. The Shah had SAVAK which murdered and tortured thousands of people for maintaining the monarch's power. Iran bought millions of weapons from the US and the people continued suffering from poverty.

White Revolution

Although the incident has the word *revolution* in it, it shall not imply overthrowing a government or regime alteration, it has more relevance with social reforms. The revolution can be characterized with the following concepts: westernization and the personal interest of Pahlavi. Even though, Pahlavi hoped to form ties with the peasants in the country side, the tensions rose drastically, and the leftist proletariat resented to support the Pahlavi regime. The support for and loyalty to clergy remained either constant or increased minorly.

Post White Revolution

In 1963 Ayatollah Khomeini (member of the clergy) came to political prominence as he led the opposition against the White Revolution. He was then arrested and his words before getting imprisoned were, "[Shah] embarked on the [path toward] destruction of Islam in Iran." Riots commenced upon his imprisonment. After eight months he was released, yet his persistence on anti-governmental protest remained. Henceforth, he was arrested again and was exiled for fifteen years.

The Revolution

In 1977 Shah maintained his ideas regarding political liberalization and simultaneously a growing opposition was present and anti-governmental poetry became more and more prevalent in a short period of time. Mostafa Khomeini's death was an initiation of the event chain that will eventually lead to the revolution. He was the son of Ruhollah Khomeini, and the government misinformed the people regarding the cause of his death, while the SAVAK was the actual murderer. Political protest swiftly emerged and opposition towards the monarchy grew. Protest continued over the years, yet the response of government wasn't sufficient. The government resumed with its policies of political liberation and tried protestors in civil courts. Civil servants and government officials were slowly released over time. The SAVAK was then replaced with a less brutal team. Eventually the monarchy collapsed, and Pahlavi went to USA. And Ayatollah Khomeini became the first supreme leader of Islamic Republic of Iran.

Post Revolution

In 1979 Shah (Pahlavi) left Iran alongside his family. He also went to US for medical treatment and was accepted by Jimmy Carter, which frustrated the Iranian people even more than before. Upon Shah's

treatment and acceptance to USA by Jimmy Carter and besides the support of Rockefellers and Henry Kissinger; the hostage crisis was triggered, 3000 Iranian men protesting in front of the US embassy in Tehran took 66 American officials as hostages and held 52 of them for a year. The American government signalled military intervention to Iran for rescuing the hostages and froze billions of dollars of Iranian assets in the United States and refused to buy Iranian oil, although it had an important role in their oil market.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

The United Kingdom

The role played by Great Britain in the Revolution dates back to the 1950s, when British Intelligence brought back the dictatorial reign of a Shah over the democratically appointed Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh. A majority of Iran's oil reserves had been owned by Britain since 1908, with little to no revenue paid to the Iranian government. British oil corporations, along with their American counterparts, possessing a considerable investment in Iranian petroleum reserves, were able to collaborate in order to take action to maintain this presence. Their interests, however, seemed to conflict with those of Mohammed Mossadegh who democratically rose to power in 1951. Mossadegh's nationalist ideals and calls for eliminating foreign presence in Iran's reserves caused the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and British Intelligence to conduct a coup d'état in 1953, also known as Operation Ajax. This coup overthrew Mossadegh and replaced him with Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, who in return for foreign financial aid gave back 80% of Iran's oil reserves to the United States and the United Kingdom. Mossadegh's demand for a larger share of revenue brought in by Britain's Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) deemed him a leader unfit to western interest, initiating the overthrow of a leader selected by a democratic system while reinstating the authority of the Shah regime.

The United States of America

The reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, who came to power with British and American joint assistance, caused great oppression in Iran and the public did not have access to any non-violent outlets to express discontent of this dictatorial regime. Pahlavi acted as a pro-Western asset to the United States and stood to eliminate all traces of the nationalism favoured by Mohammed Mossadegh. The discontent of the public made the Revolution and the Shah's deposition to be inevitable. Once the Shah was forced to flee to Egypt and was replaced by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, his deteriorating medical condition led to him to seek refuge in the United States. The President of the United States at the time, Jimmy Carter, hesitated to aid Pahlavi in fear of arousing conflict in Iran, but later succumbed and had the Shah receive medical care in New York. This, as expected, fuelled great anti-American sentiment in Iran and led to the capture of the hostages in the US Embassy in Tehran. The rise and fall of the authoritarian monarchy established by the United States with the help of the United Kingdom followed by the United States sheltering the former dictator precipitated the attempt to have him brought back to be prosecuted for his crimes, setting a motive for the capture of these hostages.

Iran

After the Shah was exiled on 16 January 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the representative for the Revolution rose to power and replaced the existing authority with exact opposite values, establishing an anti-Western, theocratic-republican constitution. The Iranian government, changing their stance on western powers in the post-Revolution time period, specifically towards the United States, became an Islamic Republic by referendum on 1 April 1979. The new regime brought with it an anti-American sentiment and the Revolution was seen as an escape from American influence over Iran's culture and its interference with the Iranian government, but Jimmy Carter's refusal to return Pahlavi to Iran and under humanitarian principles drove Iranians who had participated in the revolution, particularly the Iranian youth, to initiate what is known as the Iran hostage crisis in retaliation. The state became an entity in complete opposition with any political relations with the West and the hostage takeover also acted as a way to prevent an anticipated coup against the new post-revolutionary government. It is not known for sure whether or not Khomeini had knowledge of the takeover before it occurred but it is evident that he endorsed it.

Timeline of Events

1926	Reza Pahlavi becomes Shah
1935	The country's official name is changed, Persia takes Iran as its new name
1941	The Soviet Union and the United Kingdom occupy Iran and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi rises to power in place of his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi
1951	Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh leads a vote to nationalize Iran's oil industry, which was domineered by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, owned by Britain which later on imposes an embargo on Iran
1953	an American-British Intelligence coup is undertaken and Mohammed Mossadegh is overthrown. The Shah, who had fled the country earlier in 1953, returns
January 16, 1979	Shah Pahlavi flees to Egypt in exile
February 1, 1979	Ayatollah Khomeini rises to power to lead Iran after returning from 14 years of exile
October 22, 1979	The Shah is allowed into American borders to receive cancer treatment
November 4, 1979	Iranian students took over the Tehran U.S. Embassy
November 14, 1979	President Jimmy Carter freezes all Iranian assets in the United States

December 4, 1979	The United Nations Security Council passes Resolution 457
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UN Involvement

The United Nations Security Council passed two resolutions regarding the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979: Resolution 457 and Resolution 46. Resolution 457, which was passed unanimously, calls upon the Government of Iran to release the hostages, “further calls upon the Governments of Iran and of the United States to take steps to resolve peacefully the remaining issues between them” and to “exercise utmost restraint”. Resolution 461 recalls Resolution 457 and additionally “deplores the continued detention of the hostages” and Iran’s noncompliance, yet the attempts of the Security Council proved to be futile. The United Nations’ endeavours to free the hostages would, in fact, require the two opposing sides of the conflict to be willing to cooperate but this was unfortunately not observed in the government of Iran. Another factor that caused the unanimity of the Security Council to be disturbed was the suggestion of the United States to pressure the Iranian government, and a majority of third-world countries opposed this approach. The ostracisation of the Government of Iran by the United Nations may have contributed to Iran be more willing to reach an agreement on the matter.

Relevant UN Documents

The United Nations Security Council passed two resolutions regarding the Iran hostage crisis, those being UNSC Resolution 457 and Resolution 461, both passed in 1979:

Islamic Republic of Iran-USA- Resolution of the United Nations Security Council (4 December 1979, S/RES/457)

Islamic Republic of Iran-USA- Resolution of the United Nations Security Council (31 December 1979, S/RES/461)

Resolution 461 is meant to bring into force Resolution 457, and to elaborate on the original resolution. As explained in the previous section, these two resolutions call on the government to Iran to immediately release the hostages and while Resolution 457 has passed unanimously, the Iranian government did not comply to the urging of the Security Council.

Treaties and Events

A notable treaty pertaining to this issue would be **the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages**, signed on 17 December 1979 (General Assembly resolution 34/146). After hostages had been held in the German Embassy in Sweden, the Federal Republic of Germany proposed that the resolution should be drafted and added as an agenda item in September, 1976. Iran, however, did not sign nor ratify this treaty during or before the hostage crisis. The resolution, which was aimed to

specifically address hostage-taking outside armed conflict, was opened for signature from 18 December 1979 to 31 December 1980.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The taking of the hostages was Iran's solution to an oppressive pro-Western regime and constant American interference to Iran's political affairs. Khomeini, the leader of the revolutionary movement even referred to the takeover as "a second revolution", showing great support for the students who had participated in the act. Although the hostage-taking did seem to serve as an advantage for the Iranian government, their demands were not met by the Carter administration and they only faced retaliation by the States.

A successful attempt at rescuing several hostages occurred on the day of the takeover. Also known as the "Canadian Caper", this event marks the rescue of six prospective American hostages who had escaped the captors' notice. The six diplomats sought refuge in Swedish and Canadian embassies while the Canadian Government and the CIA devised a plan for their removal from Iran. The plan included having the Americans pose as members of a "film crew", since it would only seem natural that a film crew would visit Iran in the midst of a revolution. The Canadian parliament held a covert gathering to issue Canadian passports to these citizens so that they could leave borders and they ultimately evaded capture.

On November 14, 1979, The United States' president Jimmy Carter, after seeing no improvement regarding the release of the hostages, resolved to putting Iran under political and economic strain by freezing all Iranian assets and halting oil imports under Executive Order 12170, ten days after the crisis started. This action, along with ending of diplomatic ties with Iran, made it even more difficult to find middle ground between the United States and the Khomeini administration, therefore it could be stated that it served to even prolong the crisis since Iran had nothing but the hostages as leverage to demand the unfreezing of these funds.

Ambassador Bruce Laingen, who was held hostage in the Iranian Foreign Ministry Office, was one of the 52 American hostages Iran. Through the "Laingen Dispatches", he was able to keep in contact with other foreign ambassadors, such as Canadian ambassador Ken Taylor, who were able to pay visits to the ministry office thus were able to assist Laingen to communicate with Washington. This was an advantage that the United States had acquired to better understand the situation with the other hostages in Tehran. This served to have an informant on the inside, since he was able to relay valuable information in the form of written messages to senior officials in the States and was also relatively informed on the American and also Canadian endeavours to assist the hostages. He was, for example, also informed on the Canadian assistance received to evacuate the six other hostages.

Possible Solutions

The hostages could either be voluntarily released by the Iranian government or taken by force; the latter being a plan more likely to fail and therefore should be very carefully executed. A military excavation operation would be the more hazardous approach and should be resorted to if no diplomatic agreements could be reached. Along with risking the safety of the hostages and having no guarantee of success, this could further damage any diplomatic relations left between the U.S. and Iran as well as jeopardising any possibility of the hostages being freed.

The only way that the government of Iran would willingly release the hostages would be if their demands would be met by the American government, however, this would be unlikely, due to the United States cutting diplomatic ties with Iran. This is why the United States could consult a third party, preferably another UN diplomat from another Member State so that the two governments could find common ground. This said party could intermediate the negotiations between the United States and Iran, relaying Iran's demands and coordinating the release of the hostages. The States could try to accommodate the demands of the Iranian government to a reasonable degree, fulfilling requests such as unfreezing their financial assets, immunity from several international lawsuits and most importantly non-interference with Iran's own political affairs. Solutions that should not be resorted to, however, includes further hostility from the United States with acts such as imposing sanctions or the repetition of other antagonistic acts, such as the freezing of Iranian assets, since this has previously shown no improvement with the condition of the hostages. This could potentially prevent the captors from considering the release of the hostages since they would need leverage to coordinate negotiations with the States to ameliorate any economic or diplomatic damage.

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