

# Khomeini's Theory of Islamic State and the Making of the Iranian Revolution <sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

The Iranian Revolution is one of the most influential events of the late twentieth century, with far-reaching consequences that still echo through the rise of Islamic state. Drawing from both primary (interviews, autobiographies, documents, and data) and secondary sources, the paper shows that Khomeini's the doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist played a decisive role in the making of the Iranian Revolution by changing the goals and strategies of the religious opposition from reforming government policies to establishing an Islamic state. Khomeini's doctrine was first published in 1970 in his treatise, *Islamic State*. The paper argues that Khomeini's ideological innovation can account for the sharp contrast between the outcomes of widespread protests in the early 1960s and the late 1970s: they both shook the Pahlavi regime, but the former protests dissipated, while the latter culminated in the Iranian Revolution. Expanding the scope beyond Iran and Islam, the paper explores the role of ideological innovations in the Russian and American Revolutions, and discusses the potentially critical role of ideological innovations in democracy movements in Islamic countries.

The revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people;  
a change in their religious sentiments, of their duties and obligations...  
This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections  
of the people was the real American Revolution.

—John Adams

Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.

—Lenin

## 1 Introduction

Imagine a world where the Iranian Revolution never happened. Iran would either remain an authoritarian regime or maybe, with a little more luck and a little less foreign coup, it would even become democratic.<sup>1</sup> Most likely in such a world, there would be no hostage crisis to ruin Carter’s reputation, no Iran-Iraq war to claim more than a million victims, no Hezbollah, and no U.S. embassy bombings. Given the military might of the Pahlavi regime, Saddam would likely not attack Kuwait, and there would be no need to storm that desert. If there was an Al-Qaeda, it would be far easier to dismantle it by the direct help of an American-trusted Iranian regime. Syria would likely take a more reasonable path, and if there would ever be an ISIS, there was the Iranian military and intelligence services in the region to deal with it. These are but a few, very direct consequences of the absence of the revolution that was to be. The Islamic Republic emerged from the lava and the ashes of that unthinkable volcano of 1979 which shook Iran, that “island of stability in one of the most troubled areas of the world.” If the 1979 Nicaraguan revolution and Sandinista regime were of limited consequence for world politics in the grand scheme of things, the Iranian Revolution and Islamic Republic were harbingers for the rise of the Islamic state and religious terrorism—those strangest of phenomena that neither political negotiations and economic sanctions nor wars have managed to quell. Thus, every time we go through the trouble of passing through airport security, must we not ask ourselves: When did it all begin?

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<sup>1</sup>Given the Pahlavi regime’s effective repression of the left, Iran would not become communist.

Like all historical events, the 1979 Iranian Revolution had many origins; politics, economics, social structures, personality traits, foreign events, contingencies and accidents all contributed to the making of the revolution. Many books and articles have been written on its different aspects, detailing the course of events and claiming causes of the revolution, some based on evidence, some based on conjectures and assertions. Royalists who survived, revolutionaries who became prominent in the Islamic Republic and those who were excluded and punished, foreign journalists, American officials, and perhaps most starkly, those dissidents with leftist tendencies who left the Islamic Republic's repression and became academics in the U.S. and Europe, all have their own narratives of what happened and why. Royalists find the key cause in Carter's pressure and Shah's indecision, the left or ex-left Iranian academics have a more balanced view, but tend to emphasize the role of the left and even liberals and nationalists and dilute the contribution of the clergy and the Islamic opposition. They often claim that the regime was lenient on the clergy, and somehow Khomeini's nonsense and deceiving lies mesmerized the people and made a large coalition possible. And then there is the Islamic Republic-sponsored research that attributes the cause almost exclusively to Khomeini and his clerical followers, and to no less than God's intervention that made them the instrument of his will.

A comparison of these different views would be a great topic of research for the sociology of knowledge, and developing a more evidence-based historical account of the revolution would be a monumental task with tremendous value. The goal of this paper is a far humbler one: It aims to establish a key role of Khomeini's ideological innovation in the making of the Iranian Revolution. As with most such inquiries, this exercise will have many methodological caveats, but the paper strives for clarity in the methodology and assumptions that underlie its conclusion.

This paper investigates the role of Khomeini's ideological innovation in the Iranian Revolution by comparing the only two periods of the post-coup Pahlavi regime that witnessed widespread popular uprisings: the first occurring in the early 1960s and the second in the late 1970s. While the former uprising dissipated, the latter led to a revolution. Contrasting these periods, the paper shows that the structural and agency-free process factors underwent the same dynamic in both periods and hence do not sufficiently explain the variation in outcome. The paper then argues that accounting for Khomeini's ideological innovation, his theory of

Islamic state, is critical in explaining this variation. The paper augments this comparative method approach with an investigation of the role of the new Islamic ideology in the Islamic opposition's decision-making processes. Within this methodological framework, the paper uses both primary sources (interviews, autobiographies, documents, and data) and secondary sources to support its claims. Overall, the paper neither claims to have the final word on the role of Khomeini's theory, nor does it provide a broad explanation for the Iranian revolution. Rather, it offers a perspective on a key role of Khomeini's ideological innovation and on the methodology of historical investigation that takes the middle ground between historical accounts, analytical narratives, and process tracing on the one hand, and comparative historical method on the other.

Shia political ideology underwent a significant transformation in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Khomeini, who later became the leader of the Islamic Revolution, reinterpreted the Shia political thought and proposed a novel Islamic theory of state: The Guardianship of the Jurist. Khomeini argued that Islamic law outlines an Islamic state in which the clergy supervise the execution of Islamic laws. He explicitly declared that the institution of monarchy was inconsistent with Islam and emphasized the necessity of establishing an Islamic state as a religious duty. This paper argues that this "ideological innovation" changed the goals and strategies of the religious opposition from correcting state policies to replacing the monarchy with an Islamic state. In both the early 1960s and the late 1970s, factors such as economic problems and U.S. pressure for liberalization created the potential for social unrest, and in both periods protests did take place. However, in the late 1970s, due to the change in their goals and strategies, the Islamic opposition was both willing and more prepared to push and transform, to use Kuran's (1989) terminology, the sparks of protest into a full prairie fire.

However, structural and agency-free process theories contend socioeconomic and political factors are *sufficient* to explain the occurrence of revolutions. Their proponents present two arguments to refute the role of ideology: (a) "Revolutions are not made, they come," and hence there is no room for agency and ideology (e.g., Skocpol 1979); (b) Ideology is merely the rationalization of actions that are determined by structural factors (e.g., Roemer 1988).

I group the theories of revolution into three categories: (1) grievance-based theories, (2)

political process theories, and (3) state-centered theories. The first group emphasizes grievance as the cause of revolution. The class conflict approach falls into this category and inequality, economic hardship, and adverse economic policies are the main causes of revolution according to these theories (Buechler 2004; Davies 1962; Gurr 1968, 1970; Useem 1998). The second group, political process theories, contend that revolutionary movements start when there is an opening in “political opportunities,” and that revolutions follow a “dynamics of contention” (Gamson and Meyer 1990; McAdam 1999; McAdam et al. 2001; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 2002; Tilly 1978, 1986, 1996). Among the main factors that shape these dynamics are the interaction between the state and dissidents (Opp and Roehl 1990; Opp et al. 1995) and the opposition’s organizational resources and networks (Diani and McAdam 2003; Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Zald and McCarthy 2003). According to political process theories, the structure of political opportunities, state response to dissent, the opposition’s organizational resources, and coordination among the opposition groups are critical factors in social movements and revolutions. The third group, state-centered theories, argue that the structure and resources of the state explain the occurrence of revolutions. According to these theories, state breakdown, state infrastructural power, and the exclusive nature of the state are among the variables that explain revolutions (Goodwin 2001; Parsa 2000; Skocpol 1979).

In light of these theories, in sections 3 to 6, I compare the dynamics of the following variables in the early 1960s with their dynamics in the late 1970s: state liberalization and Iran-U.S. relations;<sup>2</sup> the structure and resources of the state and the state’s response to opposition; the opposition’s organizations and resources and coordination among opposition groups; and the economic conditions and policies in Iran at the time. In these sections, the paper discusses the above variables in detail to show that they all followed the same pattern in the early 1960s and the late 1970s. Using the logic of the comparative method (e.g., Ragin 1987), this demonstrates the inadequacy of structural and agent-free process theories to explain the Iranian Revolution.

Having established the inadequacy of structural and agent-free processes, the paper argues that Khomeini’s ideological innovation—the Guardianship of the Jurist—accounts for the *dif-*

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<sup>2</sup>Iran-U.S. relations relate to state liberalization and political opportunity theory. It has been argued that in the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration forced the Pahlavi regime to implement economic and sociopolitical reforms that made the regime vulnerable to opposition forces. A similar argument has been made about the Carter administration’s human rights campaign in the late 1970s.

*ference* in the outcomes of the uprisings of the early 1960s and late 1970s. The paper then augments this comparative method by proposing a key mechanism for the role of ideology in revolutions: an ideological innovation like the Guardianship of the Jurist provides a new alternative that individuals can compare and contrast with the status quo. Like technological innovations that increase production possibilities and tactical innovations that increase the repertoires of contentious actions and change the pace of insurgency (McAdam 1983), ideological innovations increase the set of alternatives to the status quo and change the individuals' goals and strategies. To support this mechanism, the paper investigates the influence of Khomeini's ideological innovation on the opposition's decision-making processes, offering evidence that it changed the goal of the Islamic opposition from reforming the state to replacing it with an Islamic state.

The paper then moves beyond Iran and Islam, and briefly discusses the role of ideological innovations in the Russian and American revolutions, as well as the French revolutions of 1830 and 1848 and a few contemporary movements. Just as Khomeini's theory of Islamic state was critical for the Iranian Revolution, Lenin's ideological innovations (summarized in his *April Theses*) played a key role in bringing about the October Revolution. Lenin's radical and elaborate interpretation of Marxism goes a long way to explain why the relatively weak and outnumbered Bolsheviks attempted to take over the state, while the strong and numerous Mensheviks decided to leave it with the "bourgeois" liberals. In the Russian and Iranian revolutions, a few intellectual elite developed ideologies that radically broke from the past. In contrast, as if expecting the democratic nature of the new order to come, the ideology of the American Revolution was developed by many from a variety of occupations who innovated on the margins of the existing European political thought. The radicalism of these revolutionary colonists was in assembling these marginally modified, and yet familiar ideas into a coherent republican ideology (summarized in Paine's *Common Sense* and Jefferson's Declaration of Independence) that fueled their long and violent Revolutionary War.

Before we proceed, I want to emphasize that the critical role that I attribute to Khomeini's ideological innovation in the making of the Iranian Revolution must not be interpreted as a glorification of Khomeini and his followers. The atrocities committed in the post-revolutionary era were "unprecedented in Iranian history—unprecedented in form, content, and intensity"

(Abrahamian 1999, 209-10). Khomeini's doctrine was an ideological innovation within the Shia jurisprudence and theology in much the same way that Lenin's April Theses was an ideological innovation within the Marxist framework. Neither could withstand serious logical scrutinies as they were based on faulty assumptions and flawed epistemological methods. Many American-educated Iranian revolutionaries who supported Khomeini (e.g., Ebrahim Yazdi and many other members of LMI-abroad) knew Khomeini's doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist, and yet ignored its consequences. By underestimating the force of Khomeini's theory of Islamic state, they helped create a Leviathan whose tentacles have appeared as far as Europe (e.g., Mykonos restaurant assassination) and Latin America (e.g., bombings in Argentina). I hope that this paper contributes to our understanding of the critical role of ideological innovations in revolutions, and helps prevent the pathological paths they can take.

Section 2 analyzes the role of Khomeini's theory of Islamic state in the Iranian Revolution. As discussed above, sections 3 to 6 compare the dynamic of several theoretically relevant structural variables in the early 1960s and late 1970s. In the last section, the paper takes a broader perspective and briefly discusses the role of ideological innovations in revolutions in Russia, France, and America, as well as a few contemporary movements. A discussion of the methodology is presented in the Online Appendix.

## **2 Khomeini's Ideological Innovation and the Iranian Revolution**

**What Is Ideology?** Analyzing the concept of ideology in *American Political Science Review* articles from 1906 to 2006, Knight (2006) argues that scholars agree on a core definition of ideology as a "coherent and relatively stable set of beliefs or values." In his definitional analysis of ideology, Gerring (1997) argues that "it is indeed useful to limit the purview of ideology to explicitly *political* subject matter, for only in this way can its definition be distinguished from world view, belief system, value system, cultural-system, and other like terms" (p. 982; see also Minar 1961; Putnam 1971; Sainsbury 1986; and Sartori 1969).

Skocpol (1997) defines ideology as "idea systems deployed as self-conscious political arguments by identifiable political actors. Ideologies...are developed and deployed by particular groups or alliances engaged in temporary specific political conflicts or attempts to justify the



use of state power” (p. 204). She distinguishes ideologies from “cultural idioms” thusly: “the choice and uses of available idioms —and the particular potentials within them that are elaborated— will be influenced by the social and political situations of the acting groups, and the tasks they need to accomplish in relation to one another” (p. 204). The set of “cultural idioms” is like a toolbox that contains a number of elements that can be employed by political entrepreneurs. However, these elements are open to a wide range of different and even contradictory interpretations. Therefore, cultural idioms usually do not increase our explanatory power because actors select the idioms that serve their objectives as determined by structural factors.<sup>3</sup>Building on this literature, I adopt Skocpol’s (1997) definition, with an emphasis on the coherency and stability requirement suggested in Knight’s (2006) analysis mentioned above.

It is also important to distinguish between ideology and interest. Ideologies are belief systems that might inform interests, but do not fully determine interests or are determined by interests. As Butterfield (1959) aptly puts it, “human beings are the carriers of ideas as well as the repositories of vested interests” (p. 209). This distinction resembles Slater’s (2009) distinction between material interests and collective identities.

## 2.1 The New Islamic Ideology

Shia political ideology underwent a significant transformation in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.<sup>4</sup> This new ideology interpreted Islamic social and political structure around the axes

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<sup>3</sup>The repertoire of cultural idioms may restrict the choice of actors and favor one set of interpretations over another. However, for a given country, these interpretations remains the same for a period of time that is usually longer than the span of a study. Cultural idioms might partly explain the differences *between* countries. Part of Sewell’s (1997) criticism of Skocpol speaks to this fact. That communist ideas were available prior to the Russian revolution but absent in eighteenth century France might explain some key differences between the processes and outcomes of these two revolutions.

<sup>4</sup>The goals and the ideology of nationalists did not change significantly. Leftist ideologies revived in the early 1970s, but were mainly restricted to militant revolutionaries who used violent tactics and were brutally repressed by the time of the revolution (Abrahamian 1989; Jafarian 1386 [2007]). Just as “a few outbreaks of hooliganism and scattered milk-spillings did not a revolution make” (Kennedy 2001, p. 198) in the countrysides of democratic America of the Great Depression, a few incidents of sorry armed attacks and assassinations could hardly shake the autocratic Pahlavi regime with its oil-fed goosed-up security services. Thus, as their Islamic fundamentalist brothers in *Fadāyān-i Islām* met their maker in front of firing squads in the 1950s, these action-hungry, philosophizing, jittery idealists were shot in street fights, or died heroically in torture chambers and against the walls of prison courtyards. The whole episode was a tragedy that testified yet again to the truism that in the unfair match between a militarized state and a few dozen scattered, ill-trained, resource-deprived urban guerillas with rusty weapons, ideals and convictions are no shield against the penetrating bullets of oiled machine guns.

of social justice and anti-imperialism, the two main issues of contention in the preceding few decades. Islam was reinterpreted as a political religion and “Shia, [as] a Total Political Party” (Shariati 1976 [1355]) with viable solutions to sociopolitical problems. This “mutant ideology” had an important advantage over the competition. It was an Islamic ideology in a dominantly Muslim country, and it was advocated by a group of high-ranking clerical authorities that included a *marjaʿ*,<sup>5</sup> Khomeini.

Khomeini’s doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist (*Vilāyat-i Faqīh*) set a specific goal for the Islamic opposition: a religious duty to topple the Pahlavi regime and to replace it with an Islamic state. Shia clergy’s belief that the state was illegitimate was not new (Algar 1969, 1983; Dabashi 1988); however, “Imam [Khomeini] was the first Shia jurist who used the term ‘Islamic state’ in a book on Islamic jurisprudence (*Katāb al-Bayʿ*)” (Kadivar (1377) 1378 [(1998) 1999], p. 167-8). “The great political acts of mullahs [before Khomeini] such as Mirza Shirazi [during the Tobacco Movement] were reactive, not initiatory; steps—often steps against some measure of the government—were taken by the great juriconsults [*marjaʿ*s] only when an emerging unity of opinion had identified a threat” (Mottahedeh 1985, p. 223). Khomeini’s theory was “an ideological revolution in that it directly challenged the legitimacy of monarchy and advocated rule by qualified Islamic jurists” (Foran 1993, p. 368; see also Ghamari-Tabrizi 2014, p. 225). Without an alternative for state structure, the illegitimacy of the current state could hardly inspire any revolutionary action among religious groups; nevertheless, when this illegitimacy was combined with a legitimate Islamic alternative and an interpretation of Islam that required action against injustice, then illegitimacy called for active opposition, martyrdom, and revolution. The new ideology set a new goal with revolutionary implications: Creating an Islamic state.

**The Guardianship of the Jurist (*Vilāyat-i Faqīh*).**<sup>6</sup> Khomeini’s argument seemed simple. Islam has laws for every aspect of private and public life. These laws are for all times and places and must not be ignored. The nature of many Islamic laws requires enforcement by a state. Therefore, the devout must struggle to establish an Islamic state. Moreover, those

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<sup>5</sup>In Shia theology, every Shia who cannot infer the Islamic laws from sources must choose a qualified clergy who can infer the laws of Islam and defer to him. A clergyman with such qualification is called a *marjaʿ*. *Marjaʿ*s are the highest religious authorities in Shia (see, e.g., Khalaji 2006).

<sup>6</sup>See Dabashi (1988, 1993) and Martin (2000) for analyses of the evolution of Khomeini’s political thought.

at the top of the Islamic state hierarchy must know the Islamic law in order to enforce it. They also must be just and fair for otherwise they manipulate the law and lead the country to tyranny. Those who know the Islamic laws are the jurists (*fuqahā*). Therefore, the Islamic state should be controlled by just jurists. I emphasize that Khomeini's theory of the Islamic state was *not* simply the common idea that Muslim societies should live under governments that respect Islamic laws. Khomeini's ideological innovation was that Islamic law dictates that a Muslim society must be governed by just jurists, and that it is the duty of the devout to establish such a state. Such a state did not exist since the times of Mohammad and the first Shia imam. It was unconventional through and through.

Khomeini introduced his doctrine of the Islamic state during 13 lectures as a part of his course on advanced Islamic jurisprudence in 1970 in Najaf, Iraq. He spent the majority of these lectures developing complex jurisprudential arguments to “prove” to his advanced theology students that his doctrine was inferred from Quran and Sunnah (the traditions and narrations concerning the words and deeds of prophet Muhammad and the twelve Shia Imams). The thoroughness of his jurisprudential and theological arguments suggest that they were not covers or rationalizations for actions he intended to take. Khomeini's doctrine was so unconventional that he was sure to receive a backlash among the highly traditional high-ranking Shia clergy. Moreover, given his limited followers, his old age, and the stability of the Pahlavi regime, it is highly unlikely that he expected his ideological innovation to bear fruits in his lifetime.

Working within a theological discipline where tradition is extremely valued, Khomeini had to address why his theory was not already part of the mainstream Shia jurisprudence. Khomeini argued: “Colonizers made us think that Islam does not have a [plan for] state; does not have state organizations. Suppose [Islam] has some laws, it does not have an enforcer. And, in summary, Islam only legislates [, but does not enforce]. It is obvious that this propaganda is part of the colonizers' plan to prevent Muslims from politics and governance” (Khomeini 1348 [1970], p. 20). After establishing his theory of the Islamic state, Khomeini went on to offer a program of struggle to create it (Khomeini 1348 [1970], p. 127-53):

We are required [by Islamic law] to struggle for establishing the Islamic state....

Our [religious] duty from right now is to work to establish a righteous Islamic

state.... You should introduce yourselves, your Islam, examples of Islamic leadership and government, to the people of the world. Particularly, the university class and educated class. You should tell what kind of state we want; and who should be the ruler and [who should be] those in charge of the government.... Build devotees and fighters for Islam.... Make Islam...available to people so that they correct their beliefs and manners accordingly, and become a fighting force, topple this colonizing and tyrant political system and establish the Islamic state.... What is necessary for keeping the national freedom and independence is what the jurist has. It is the jurist who is not influenced by foreigners, and sacrifices his life to defend the people's rights and freedom and independence and the boundaries of the country....The program of the state and administration and its necessary laws are ready.... It is our duty to implement and execute Islam's plan for the state.

## **2.2 The Role of Khomeini's Ideological Innovation**

“Ideology is thought.... The basic problem is the identification of the linkage between thought and action” (Minar 1961). This paper focuses on the aspects of ideological innovations that offer a new theory of state. I argue that a new theory of state changes the dissidents' calculus of protest by providing a new choice that individuals compare and contrast with the status quo. Sometimes, this alternative is not appealing compared with the status quo and other alternatives, in which case the new ideology does not affect behavior. However, when it is appealing, it switches individuals' goals and strategies to the implementation of the new ideology and its prescribed political structure. Analogous to technological innovations that expand production possibilities, and to tactical innovations that expand the repertoires of actions (McAdam 1983), ideological innovations expand the set of alternatives to the status quo structure of the society.<sup>7</sup>

A new ideology is not created in a vacuum. It is built on an existing belief system and

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<sup>7</sup>Ideologies also serve other functions such as establishing identity and solidarity (relational function), reducing uncertainty and complexity (epistemic function), and providing self-esteem, security, and meaning in life (existential function) (Jost et al. 2009). I abstract from these functions because I investigate the role of a new ideology compared to an old one, not an ideology to a “non-ideology”. See also Dabashi (1993, p. 503-5) and Goldstone (2001, p. 93).

is consistent with that belief system. The existing belief and cultural systems constitute the raw material, or the “repertoire of common symbolics” (Dabashi 1993, p. 504) for the new ideology and constrain how the material can be interpreted. In the case of the Iranian Revolution, the Islamic opposition to the Pahlavi regime were interested in implementing Islamic laws. But before Khomeini introduced his theory of Islamic state, the Islamic opposition had limited options. They could have tried to replace one ruler with another, but there was no guarantee that a new ruler would have been better than the old one. Or they could have tried to establish democracy, but the Mossadeq era had convinced a large segment of the religious opposition that the freedom accompanying democracy was a threat to Islam. So they took the non-revolutionary route of opposing specific state policies that were non-Islamic.

Given the prevalence of Shia symbols and rituals in the course of the Iranian Revolution, it is not surprising that all scholars of the Iranian Revolution have argued that some aspects of Shia culture played a role in the revolution. Even Skocpol (1982) argues that Shia culture provided symbols and rituals that facilitated sustained mobilization.<sup>8</sup> Moaddel (1992) defines ideology as “a *discourse* consisting of a set of general principles, concepts, symbols, and rituals used by actors to address problems in a particular historical episode”, where “discourse is the method by which people construct their strategies of action” (p. 359). This definition is so broad that it encompasses almost all aspects of culture, including cultural idioms that do not vary over short time periods (see “What is Ideology?” above). He asserts that “when the public became dissatisfied with the Shah and gradually joined the Islamic opposition, their dissatisfaction was transcended and expressed in terms of Islamic discourse. Given that revolutionary Islam negated the ideology of the monarchy, the actions of the discontented took a revolutionary direction” (p. 366). Moreover, the mechanism that he identifies for the role of ideology is very different from the one in this paper. Finally, Moaddel (1992) is silent about the method of inquiry that leads him to his conclusion from the scattered evidence that he provides.

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<sup>8</sup>Skocpol (1982) contends that “if a historical conjuncture arises in which a vulnerable state faces oppositionally inclined social groups possessing solidarity, autonomy, and independent economic resources, then the sort of moral symbols and forms of social communication offered by Shi’a Islam can sustain self-conscious making of a revolution” (p. 275; Skocpol 1997, p. 250). However, she does not attribute significance to the Shia ideology as she argues elsewhere that “cultural idioms” are selectively used by political actors depending on their “social and political situations”, and hence social scientists “are not well served by supposing that sets of ideas...are ‘constitutive of social order’ ” (Skocpol 1997, p. 204).

Did Khomeini's ideological innovation have a causal impact on making of the Iranian Revolution? As mentioned earlier, Khomeini's work on the Shia political theory was originally introduced during 13 lectures as a part of his course on advanced Islamic jurisprudence in January, 1970, in Najaf, Iraq, where he was in exile. The lectures were edited and published in 1971 and smuggled into Iran (Jafarian 1386 [2007], p. 274-5; Rahnema 2014, p. 88-80; Ruhani 1381 [2002], p. 712). Khomeini's lectures are a natural experiment showing the causal impact of ideological innovations on the political goals and strategies of the Islamic opposition. A comprehensive examination of Khomeini's declarations, speeches, and writings shows that Khomeini did not call for overthrowing the Pahlavi regime before 1970 but he did make such calls from the early 1970s on. In the former period, he opposed specific policies of the state, but in the latter, in addition to such oppositions, he called for overthrowing the regime and establishing an Islamic state. For example, in his declaration after the Qom protests in January 1978, Khomeini says: "Muhammad-Reza is a traitor and thief and necessarily is dropped from the position of monarchy.... I predict success for the Iranian nation, a success coming with...the destruction of the system of exploitation and the end of the Pahlavi dynasty" (Davani 1358 [1979/1980], vol. 7, p. 50-2). Similar declarations can be found *before* any sign of unrest was observed. For example, in his declaration to condemn the celebration of the 2500 years of monarchy, Khomeini says in October 1971 (Algar 1981, p. 200-2):

Tradition related that the Prophet...said that the title of King of Kings, which is borne by the monarchs of Iran, is the most hated of all titles in the sight of God. Islam is fundamentally opposed to the whole notion of monarchy. Anyone who studies the manner in which the Prophet established the government of Islam will realize that Islam came in order to destroy these palaces of tyranny.

Hamid Ruhani, a cleric who followed Khomeini in exile and attended his lectures on Islamic jurisprudence in Iraq, has a telling story about the effect of Khomeini's lectures (Ruhani 1363, p. 745):<sup>9</sup>

Up to that day, the final goal of Imam [Khomeini] was not completely clear to them [Khomeini's followers], and they didn't know...how far Imam wanted to go.... What

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<sup>9</sup>See also Ruhani (1363, p. 730-63), Hosseiniyan (1383, p. 603-34), and Jafarian (1386, p. 274-7).

program he wanted to implement was not clear.... Many essentially didn't know what goal Imam was seeking in his opposition.... With the plan of the Islamic state, the final goal was determined; everyone realized what goal they should follow and how far they should go, how much they should expand the scope of the movement, and how much they should enhance the degree of resistance and persistence.

The effect of Khomeini's theory of the Islamic state on the Islamic opposition also has been sketched in reports prepared by the Shah's regime intelligence agency, SAVAK:

The plan of the Islamic state: Ruhollah Khomeini, parallel to expressing his oppositions to Iran's social reforms and the existing regime in the Iranian society, presented the plan of the so-called Islamic state...the naive people who always consider the face-value of his statements, employed these ideas as a goal in their propaganda, and some of the religious groups that aim to topple [the regime], too, have made achieving it [,the Islamic state,] a priority. After a few years, it is observed now that religious fanatics, in their books and notes that they publish, compare a hypothetical Islamic state with different social systems and enumerate its characteristics and advantages (Fallahi 2006, p. 210-11).

To further confirm the effect of ideology, we can employ the variation in the attitude of other prominent *marja's* toward the state and revolution. At the time, there were a few prominent *marja's* besides Khomeini: In Qom, Sharīʿt-Madārī, Gulpāyagānī, and Marʿshī-Najafī, and in Iraq, Khuyī and Ḥakīm (until his death in 1971). The clergy did not uniformly agree with Khomeini. Although they condemned the regime's policies both in the early 1960s and the late 1970s, none called for any revolutionary action. In particular, Sharīʿt-Madārī is famous for his "compromise": Even during the heydays of the revolution, Sharīʿt-Madārī's political goal was to return to the constitution. This variation in the political goals between Khomeini and the "moderate" section of the high-ranking clergy further confirms the causal effect of ideology on the goals and strategies of the opposition. Those who did not believe in the doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist (as interpreted by Khomeini) as an Islamic theory of state did not have an alternative to the monarchy that, in their opinion, was worth

pursuing.<sup>10</sup> In Sharīʿt-Madārī’s words (Ruhani 1363, p. 359):

There is no doubt that some rulers oppose Islamic laws, but do you think you have such power [to overthrow those rulers]? Can you create your desired government after overthrowing a corrupt state? After the end of your job [i.e., overthrowing the state], won’t a ruler come to power who is worse than the first? And bother you even more?.... In my opinion, it is better that you educate people who are pious and who know religious matters, and place them into the state system so that, God willing, good results follow in the future.

## 2.3 Etiology and Growth

**The Etiology of Ideological Innovations.** What causes the emergence of a new ideology? Why did Khomeini, Lenin, Marx, and Luther come up with fundamentally new ideas when they did, and not someone else a few decades before or after them? In the Marxist tradition that it is the individuals’ “social existence that determines their consciousness,” Roemer (1988) claims that ideological change can be explained by socioeconomic and political factors and by taking into account the strategic environment. In his view, actions that seem to stem from ideologies are merely the best responses to a change in the structure of the society. This “rationalization of ideology” implies that structure can explain the outcome without taking into account ideology. Another type of explanation attributes ideological change to socioeconomic transformations (Fukuyama 1992; Moaddel 1992),<sup>11</sup> and yet other explanations introduce past struggles and political experience as underlying causes of ideological change (Enayat 1983; Farhi 1990). For example, Enayat (1983) contends that the new Shia ideology was the result of the learning experience of the clergy from several instances of clergy-state contention in the preceding decades.<sup>12</sup> The Tobacco Movement of the 1890s, the 1905-7 Con-

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<sup>10</sup>There is evidence suggesting that Gulpāyagānī and Marʿashī-Najafī did believe in Khomeini’s theory (Rahnema 2014, 105-6), which can explain their more radical stand in comparison to Sharīʿt-Madārī and Khuyī.

<sup>11</sup>For example, Fukuyama (1992) considers Khomeini’s “fundamentalism” “a nostalgic effort to recover a form of pre-industrial society” (p. 363). Similarly, Moaddel (1992) asserts that “the broad environmental conditions causing the growth of revolutionary Islam were characterized by the decline of secular discourse, the ideology of the Pahlavi state, and the antistate alliance between classes constituting the historical bases of the ulama in Iran” (p. 361). See also Moaddel (1993) and Dabashi (1993, p. 499-503).

<sup>12</sup>Farhi (1990) adopts Enayat’s (1983) view, but integrates the effect of the state ideology into her theory, claiming that once the state adopts a particular ideology, it is not a viable ideology for the opposition.



stitutional Revolution, the oil nationalization movement of the 1950s, and finally the 1963 uprising revised the clergy's goals and strategies and lead to a full-fledged ideological change. These theories might explain parts of ideological change, but for a large part, they are ex-post rationalizations. How many defeats were needed before the clergy developed a new ideology? How intense and persistent must a social change be before a new ideology is developed? Had Enayat been theorizing in the 1950s or the early 1960s, using his methodology, would he not have to argue that the clergy took a very non-political stand as a result of the same political experience? Indeed, following the execution of Nouri (a high-ranking clergy) by the clergy-backed revolutionaries in the Constitutional Revolution and the rise of Reza Shah, the clergy shied away from politics as is abundantly clear from the passive political attitude of Boroujerdi—the most knowledgeable (and arguably the sole) *marja'* in the Shia world from the mid-1940s to his death in 1961 (Mottahedeh 1985).

Perhaps the most ambitious (it even tries to explain the timing) and the least convincing argument is Mahdavi's (2014) who asks: "Why and how did Khomeini the constitutionalist become a revolutionary? Why did this change occur in the 1970s?" Then, asserts an answer: "Ayatollah Khomeini remained in close contact with events in Iran during his years in exile, and was deeply influenced by the new ideas and radical trends in the country. For instance, it is very likely that he read Jalal Al-e Ahmad's (1923-1969) influential pamphlet "Gharbzadegi" ("Westoxification"), given that he frequently used the term in the late 1970s. Moreover, new waves of radical Islam reached Khomeini via young militant clerics influenced by Iran's People's Mojahedin Organization. In addition, Iranian students associations in Europe and North America that were impressed by Ali Shariati's ideas further drove Khomeini toward radicalism" (p. 58). Indeed, some researchers attempt to establish the influence of *irfan* (gnosis) and philosophy on Khomeini's political thoughts by attempting to trace back his ideas to *Ibn 'Arabī*, *Farabī*, and *Ibn Sīna* (Adib-Moghaddam 2014; Reda 2012 cited in Adib-Moghaddam (2014, p. 12, ft. 36)) or *Ibn Rushd* and even Plato (Martin 1996). Clearly, Khomeini, like everyone else, must have been influenced by his environment and education. Although tracing the lineage of ideas is a valuable exercise, such ex-post explanations do not ex-ante predict how environment and education can affect an individual. Thousands of Shia

jurists and theologians read about the philosopher-king in Plato's Republic and did not come up with the Khomeini's doctrine.

I argue that an ideological innovation requires novel interpretation and theorizing that involve unpredictable and complex processes of the human mind. How long does it take for scientists to come up with a new experiment, or for a writer to come up with an idea for her next novel, or until research creates a technological innovation? We cannot predict. We know that preconditions such as research investments increase the likelihood of technological innovation; however, it has remained impossible to predict exactly when a discovery will occur. This unique feature of the human mind allows human agency to play a significant role in determining the course of actions in the historical stage that constrains, but does not determine what can be done.

A similar approach has been taken in the social movements literature to explain variations in the intensity of protests and in the economics literature to explain the variations in economic growth. For example, McAdam (1983) attributes short-term variations in the civil rights protests to the "tactical innovations" of the civil rights activists and the "tactical adaptations" of their opponents. Was it inevitable or could it be predicted that someone would come up with the idea of sit-ins or freedom rides that "set in motion a dramatic expansion in protest activity" (p. 742)? No. Similarly, in economics, the theory of real business cycles attributes the ups and downs of economic growth to the changes in the rate of technological innovations. Like tactical and technological innovations, ideological innovations are the result of the unpredictable and complex processes of the human mind that bring human agency to the center of the historical stage.

**The Growth of Ideological Innovations.** Once an ideology is created, it needs to spread among groups in order to have any influence. Why do some ideas spread and grow while others do not? To what extent did Khomeini's theory of Islamic state spread among the participants of the Iranian Revolution? No general theory of the growth of ideas exist, and attempts to explain the rise of specific belief systems (e.g., Collinson 1982; Hunt 1983; Thomas 1971) are rich narratives and thick explanations that typically focus on *how* beliefs spread (e.g., migration) and offer plausible reasons for why they spread. Their focus is not on estimating what percent-

age of a certain population in a volatile (short) time period believed in a certain idea. They rely on “logical colligation” as a method of inquiry in which the author assumes that one idea or action logically (according to a logic that the author ascribes to actors) must have lead to another (Roberts 1996, p. 238, p. 214-39)—not necessarily based on direct evidence (e.g., diaries) or indirect evidence (e.g., comparative method), but based on logical “thought experiments.”

Focusing on the Iranian Revolution, we have a variety of evidence and accounts of *how* Khomeini’s ideas spread, including the details of how his lectures were edited and re-edited, translated to Arabic, distributed during Islamic pilgrimage month in Mecca and among the pilgrims of Shia shrines in Iraq; how they were smuggled to Iran under different titles and false covers, transcribed by hand to avoid using traceable publication houses, and so on (Jafarian 1386 [2007], p. 274-5; Rahnema 2014, p. 88-80; Ruhani 1381 [2002], p. 712). However, understanding the exact reasons for the acceptance of Islamic revolutionary ideology and the extent of its acceptance in the general population is a far more difficult task. Research and opinions on these topics have been more speculative than rigorous. Moaddel (1992) claims that ideological mobilization took place through symbols and rituals of Shia, and “the broad environmental conditions causing the growth of revolutionary Islam were characterized by the decline of secular discourse, the ideology of the Pahlavi state, and the antistate alliance between classes constituting the historical bases of the ulama in Iran” (p. 361). Indeed, all these reasons and more likely contributed to the spread of some form of Islamic revolutionary ideology or attitude in Iran. However, the extent of the spread and acceptance of some form Islamic revolutionary ideology in the general population has remained unknown, let alone the extent of a specific variation and interpretation. There were more religious financial contributions and more publication of religious texts in the preceding years of the Revolution. However, neither of these indicate a growing interests in the Islamic revolutionary ideologies: the country was becoming far richer with the windfall of oil, and more publication of Quran by no means indicate interest in revolutionary Islam. Indeed, one can argue that participants in the revolution who shouted slogans supporting an “Islamic state” had a variety of even contradictory visions of the post-revolutionary state which were very different from the vision of Khomeini and his followers (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2008).

Discovering ways to better estimate the extent of different opposition beliefs among the Iranian populations would be a remarkable task that is yet to be done. However, the arguments of this paper do not hinge on the spread of ideological innovations among the general population. Instead, I focus on the opposition groups, arguing that the ideology of opposition activists plays a critical role in revolutions because these activists play an essential role in sustaining the movement by mobilizing, coordinating, and leading the masses. In particular, this paper does not argue that Khomeini's theory of Islamic state was accepted by a large fraction of the population, or even by a majority of the participants in the demonstrations leading to the Iranian Revolution. Rather, the focus is on the effect of Khomeini's ideological innovations on the Islamic opposition.

I argue that Khomeini's ideological innovation changed the goals and strategies of many (not all) of the Islamic opposition activists who found Khomeini's arguments convincing or followed him due to his high-ranking position in the Shia clerical establishment as a prominent *marja'* by the early 1970s. Despite state repression, these activists mobilized and coordinated protests in the first few months of 1978 before there was any sign that the regime would collapse. The June 1963 uprising was by far more serious than the uprising of January 1978. However, in 1978, unlike 1963, the Islamic opposition had a new goal: to overthrow the monarchy and establish a new Islamic state. Once the sparks of popular protest started, the Islamic opposition activated their large network of religious organizations to mobilize masses, coordinate protests, and communicate Khomeini's messages to people. But their ability to activate this network was endogenous to their ideology: they could utilize this network because, since Khomeini's theory of Islamic state, they had been preparing for its establishment. This network also existed in the 1960s (see section 5), but was not fully utilized because the goal was not to overthrow the regime. These activists' preparation and determination to sustain the protests were critical in turning the sparks into a prairie fire in the late 1970s. By the Fall of 1978, oppositions of all ideological pursuits were accepting the leadership of Khomeini, and in February 1979 the regime collapsed.

### 3 Iran-U.S. Relations

In this section, I compare the U.S. policy toward Iran in the early 1960s and the second half of the 1970s. The literature suggests that the Pahlavi regime liberalized in response to the pressure from the Carter administration. This “window of opportunity” allowed the opposition to mobilize and lead to the Iranian Revolution (Abrahamian 1982, p. 500; Foran 1994; Milani 1994; Parsa 2000; Zabih 1979). In contrast, Kurzman (2004) argues that liberalization was not important because the state had closed down again by late 1977.

From the early 1970s there was a publicized series of criticisms against repression in Iran led by student opposition abroad and a few international human rights organizations. In 1974, the secretary general of Amnesty International stated that “no country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran.” In 1976, the International Commission of Jurists, an apolitical human rights watch organization, published a report stating that “there can be no doubt that torture has been systematically practiced over a number of years” (Bill 1988, p. 187). The United Nations Human Rights Commission reviewed the violation of human rights in Iran following the documents presented by the Iranian students abroad (Alexander and Nanes 1980, p. 431). The International Red Cross, Amnesty International, and the International Commission of Jurists visited Iran in 1977 after being invited by the Iranian regime to investigate human rights conditions (Alexander and Nanes 1980, p. 222).

The U.S. House of Representative Subcommittee on International Organizations held hearings on Iran in 1976. This was followed by a State Department report regarding human rights in Iran sent to the House committee. The testimonies and the State Department’s reports were sympathetic to the Iranian regime, however, Bill (1988) claims that “these sessions produced alarming evidence of torture and repression” (p. 211). Carter’s campaign of human rights also seemed to have certain implications for U.S.-Iran relations. The U.S. ambassador Helms was recalled in December 1976 and his replacement did not arrive until June 1977. However, the new ambassador was William Sullivan, a military man with intelligence background. In the context of the cold war, the appointment was not a signal that the U.S. would pressure Iran to watch human rights. Secretary of State Vance visited Iran in May 1977 and in his meeting with the Shah, “Vance only mentioned the issue of human rights to the Shah; there

were many more important issues to be discussed” (Bill 1988, p. 227). The Shah visited the U.S. in November 1977, during which human rights issues came up briefly, but “Carter did not push for his argument” (p. 233). Finally, any illusion that the U.S. would pressure the Shah to stop repression disappeared in Carter’s visit to Iran in December 1977, when he stated that “Iran under the great leadership of the Shah is an island of stability in one of the more 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” (p. 233). Moreover, the relentless efforts of the Carter administration to get the Congressional approval for arms sales to Iran was, in Vance’s words, “a major test in convincing the Shah that the president was serious about continuing special security relationship with him” (Bill 1988, p. 229).

The U.S. was much more supportive of the Shah in the late 1970s under Carter than it was in the early 1960s under Kennedy. Following the 1953 coup, U.S. gave large amounts of economic and military aid to Iran. Despite extensive appropriation of the funds by Iranian officials, which led to some investigations by the U.S. legislature, the aid continued without significant interruption. However, this pattern of unconditional aid changed in the early 1960s. The change was first signaled in Eisenhower’s public statement to the Iran’s *Majlis* (the lower house of the parliament) during his visit to Iran in December 1959, when he stated that “military strength alone will not bring about peace and justice” (Bill 1988, p. 120). In the early 1960s, the Shah promised a free election for the next *Majlis*, in which individual candidates could run for election. However, the election was rigged and followed by demonstrations that protested its fraudulence. Deputies resigned upon the Shah’s request, prime minister Iqbāl was replaced by Sharīf-Imāmī, and a new election was scheduled for January 1961. The second election was also fraudulent and led to protests and strikes. It was in this political context that the Kennedy administration set policy toward Iran.

As more protests erupted in Iran, “President Kennedy and some of his advisors made no secret of their belief that Amīnī would be the ideal individual to carry out a meaningful and badly needed reform program” (Sick 1986, p. 11). An inter-agency task force had been established to analyze the situation in Iran and inform the president. The decision to make the aid conditional on the Amīnī appointment was because “the committee was faced with

the knowledge that the ‘Shah’s de facto dictatorship’ had inexorably moved Iran toward a ‘growing chance of domestic strife leading to chaos or coup by rightist or leftist cliques, or Soviet-managed subversion’ ” (Milani 2000, p. 147). Finally, internal unrest and U.S. pressure made the Shah replace Sharīf-Imāmī by Amīnī (Abrahamian 1982, p. 422). Years later, the Shah stated that “he regarded Kennedy’s message as more or less an American coup directed against him” (Bill 1988, p. 137).

The Shah was so concerned about whether he had the support of the new administration that he warned against the communist threat in his interview with *U.S. News and World Report*: “I am somewhat worried about that the new United States administration may not have a proper appreciation of this [threat].... We hope you in the United States don’t forget who your friends are” (p. 137) (See also Milani 2011, p. 249-50). The Shah’s concerns were well-founded. In fact, the task force committee was divided between those who advocated removing the Shah and those who suggested a more conciliatory approach. The final report to the president suggested policy shifts, including “withdrawal of the Shah from an exposed position of public responsibility” and “progressive delegation, by the Shah to a capable prime minister, of authority formerly yielded directly by him” (Milani 2000, p. 148).

Dissatisfaction with the Shah’s rule was not limited to the Kennedy administration. The Senate Committee on International Relations expressed its immediate and deep concerns with the Shah’s way of rule. The committee met on June 15, 1961, to discuss the political situation in Iran. Referring to the Shah and his ruling circle, Senator Hubert Humphrey said: “they are dead...I don’t care what revolution it is. They are out.... There is a limit to the amount of money that this country can give to those people who are unwilling to do what they ought to do.... They ought to just get out before it is too late” (Bill 1988, p. 136-37).

With the new American-approved Amīnī government and major reforms underway, the Shah visited the U.S. in April 1962. The tension was still there as the “shah pressed hard for military assistance while Kennedy and his advisors recommended economic and social reform instead” (Bill 1988, p. 139). Indeed, the idea of the Shah’s abdication came up even after the Shah’s visit to U.S. In fact, “regency had already been selected” (p. 150; see also Milani 2011, Ch. 13-15). Kennedy’s stand was confirmed during Vice President Lyndon Johnson’s visit

to Iran the following August. In his departure speech, Johnson stated that “we all have seen that the status quo alone provides no safeguard for freedom.” He then quoted Kennedy: “If a free society cannot help the many who are poor it cannot save the few who are rich” (p. 141).

## 4 State Response to Opposition

Parsa (2000) argues that when a state plays a comprehensive role in the economy, it becomes the target of grievances during economic downturns because citizens blame it for the economic hardship. Goodwin (2001) argues that exclusive or repressive states with weak infrastructure are vulnerable to revolutionary movements, and if they are also patrimonial or clientelist, they are more likely to be overthrown by revolution. Finally, Foran (2005) contends that “exclusionary personalist *or* colonial state *or* open polity” are vulnerable to revolution. Can these theories explain the variation in the outcome of the uprisings in the early 60s and the late 70s? The Iranian state was far more powerful in the 1970s than in the 1960s by all measures introduced by Goodwin (2001, p. 250-53). And in both periods, the state was personalistic and exclusive. However, the state’s intervention in the economy increased from the 1960s to the 1970s: as oil revenues increased dramatically, the state implemented extensive development plans. However, how much intervention is too much intervention?<sup>13</sup> More importantly, in Iran, the opposition targeted the state both in the early 1960s and the late 1970s, and considered the state responsible for undesired outcomes and policies.

Some scholars attribute the Iranian Revolution to an indecisive state response to the opposition. They claim the state did not take sufficiently repressive measures to deter revolution and that reforms came “too little, too late” for a peaceful compromise. The regime’s vacillation between repression and concession during the course of the revolution facilitated the collapse of the Pahlavi regime.

Milani (1994) argues that “what proved most detrimental to the government was the Shah’s indecision. On the one hand, he continued with his liberalization.... On the other hand, he took strong action to suppress the growing revolutionary movement” (p. 114). “He either

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<sup>13</sup>Parsa argues that in Nicaragua, state intervention was not as high as it was in Iran, but it was high enough to provoke revolution. In contrast, in the Philippines, although there was some state intervention, its level was not high enough to lead to revolution.



had to crush the growing movement or to relinquish some of his power and strike a deal with the moderate faction of the popular movement. He opted to do neither” (p. 116). Arjomand (1984) claims that “the Shah’s contradictory impulses and policies did much to wreck the state apparatus and sever its bureaucratic and military wings” (p. 114). “Had it not been for the Shah’s mistakes, his debilitating dejection, bungling, and indecisiveness, the collapse of the monarchical regime would not have happened so soon” (p. 117). He attributes this indecisiveness to the Shah’s “psychodynamics”: “The Shah, unlike his father, was a weak person” whose “well-known disposition to *folie de grandeur* understandably turned into paranoia.”

Maybe the Shah’s psychological state had become unstable in the late 1970s, making him indecisive and irresolute, or maybe the Shah did not want to have, as he told General Huyser, “a monarchy based on the blood of the people” (Huyser 1986). The key observation is that the Shah had a very similar attitude in the early 1960s: He was always, in Milani’s (2011) words, a “reluctant monarch.” For example, a report prepared by the British Embassy in the early 1960s describes the Shah as someone who “is inclined to lose his nerves, and some accuse him of cowardice. If he is autocratic, he can also be indecisive and irresolute” (Milani 2011, p. 306). It didn’t take a full-fledged revolution to unnerve the Shah, even during the relatively minor disturbances of May 1961, the Shah “grew anxious and agitated and ‘reportedly extremely upset and ready to flee the country’ ” (p. 252). As Milani (2011) describes the Shah’s character, “while he certainly clung to power tenaciously..., he was also from the beginning a reluctant monarch, ready to give up the throne whenever a serious threat appeared on the horizon” (p. 286). Moreover, the literature on repression and protest offers no answer to when repression prevents and when it provokes further protests (Earl 2011; Francisco 2004; Martin 2007; Siegel 2011; Wood 2003). In fact, in her analysis of weekly Iranian protests from December 1977 to February 1979, Rasler (1996) illustrates that repression provoked protests.

More starkly, some concessions that are assumed to be inconsistent and vacillating were not voluntary concessions. One such concession is the removal of censorship. Arjomand (1984) contends that “the friction between the prime minister [Sharīf-Imāmī] and general [Uvaysī] became especially intense after October 17, when the prime minister won the battle over the removal of censorship.... Day after day following the end of censorship, the newspapers came out

with harrowing reports of the SAVAK's torture chambers as related by released political prisoners. These tales of terror intensified the moral indignation of the new middle class group" (p. 115). According to Milani (1994), among the concessions that "polarized the division between the hawks and the doves within the Shah's small circle of advisors" was that he "lifted censorship of media [and] allowed parliamentary debates to be televised" (p. 117). Among other facts that are usually *assumed* in the literature is that the regime pushed the Iraqi government to further restrain Khomeini's activities to force him out of Iraq (e.g., Kamrava 1990, p. 132).

In sharp contrast to what the literature suggests, historical documents indicate that the regime had much less control over the media by the early fall of 1978 than is usually assumed. The Center for the Documents of the Islamic Revolution has published (1997) the notes of two important meetings of the National Security Council of Iran in September 1978,<sup>14</sup> which reveal that the state *was not able to* control newspapers. The council carefully examined several strategies to solve the "press problem," including co-optation and repression. The owners and editors of *Iṭṭilā'āt* and *Kayhān*, the two main newspapers, were approached *directly by the prime minister* but responded that *they had no control over their employees*.<sup>15</sup> There were groups among the employees who refused to cooperate with the regime. The council considered removing these groups from work, closing down the papers, publishing a new paper, etc. The first solution was dropped because of fear that if the non-cooperative, anti-regime groups were arrested, the rest would go on strike or take destructive measures to impede the publication process. Closing the papers would result in the spread of underground papers over which the state would have even less control. A new pro-regime newspaper would need committed writers and staff, none of which were available. The council *could not* reach a conclusive strategy to deal with the press as indicated in the prime minister's final words to the council on the press problem: "Be disappointed at the newspapers." As for the Khomeini's decision to leave Iraq, no member wanted him to move.

In addition, state response to dissent in the early 1960s was similar to the state response in the late 1970s, at least, if we focus on the period up to October 1978. By October 1978,

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<sup>14</sup>The National Security Council included prime minister (Sharīf-Imāmī), the Chief of SAVAK, the Military Governor of Tehran (General Uvaysī), the Chief of General Staff, and the Minister of the Interior.

<sup>15</sup>Parviz Sabeti's (head of the Internal Security Division of SAVAK) description of regime's control over newspapers even in earlier years is consistent with these documents (Qaneei Fard 2012, p. 354-5).

protests were so widespread that it is not obvious whether there was any way to avoid revolution or civil war. Most likely, the regime made some mistakes during the course of revolution, but state response to dissent in the early 1960s was not flawless either. Every state has certain capacities and procedures to cope with conflict that are never perfect (e.g., Allison and Zelikow 1999). In fact, the capacity of the Pahlavi regime to cope with conflict had increased dramatically since the early 1960s. It is implausible to assume that the state response was less “efficient” in the later 1970s. State bureaucracy, military, and intelligence were incomparably more efficient and organized in the late 1970s than in the early 1960s. As Fardust (1999) explains in length in his memoirs, the regime over that time took significant steps to reorganize its intelligence agencies and to enhance coordination among them.

In his extensive interviews, Sabeti (head of the Internal Security Division of SAVAK) details some of the comprehensive programs of the regime in the 1970s to collect information on, plant agents in, and punish the anti-regime religious organizations and the clergy, as well as SAVAK’s extensive files on the opposition inside and outside of Iran, including 5,000 files on the Iranian students abroad (Qaneei Fard 2012, p. 169-181, p. 195). Surely, in hindsight, the regime could have chosen different and perhaps more effective policies in the late 1970 to maintain the status quo. Maybe Nasiri (the Chief of SAVAK from mid-1960s to mid-1978) was an ineffective yes-man even though clandestine militant organizations were successfully repressed during his tenure; perhaps his successor, Moqaddam, was even worse and took an excessively conciliatory approach toward the opposition as Sabeti insists. However, Pakravan, the chief of SAVAK in the early 1960s was ineffective supposedly for alternative reasons. According to Sabeti, instead of the chief of SAVAK, “Pakravan should have become a university professor or a priest” (Qaneei Fard 2012, p. 320). Under his leadership, not only SAVAK did not predict or prevent unrest in the early 1960s, but Pakravan personally decided to release Khomeini after his first arrest in 1963. Perhaps most starkly, SAVAK under Pakravan’s leadership could not even prevent the assassination of the Iranian prime minister, Mansour, by a religious organization, Fadā’īān-i Islam.

During the June uprising of 1963, the government and security forces panicked. They were not prepared to respond to a widespread uprising. The regime was at the verge of collapse as

the demonstrators in Tehran threatened to attack the government buildings and the Shah's palace. The memoirs of Fardust (1999) and Mobasser (1984) clearly illustrates the incompetence of the security forces, their inefficiencies, and their lack of planning. If they killed more in the June uprising than in the early months of 1978, it was *not* because the regime was more decisive in repressing dissidents. The reason was that in 1963, they did not know how to deal with an internal uprising of such magnitude and panicked. To fire on a popular demonstration might seem an easy response, but it is rarely an optimal one. Such harsh reactions may or may not indicate state strength, but they do indicate the state's failure in managing discontent. Critically, harsh reactions to peaceful protests not only can end any chance of reconciliation with more moderate dissidents, but they can cause protest backlashes far larger than the initial protest, capable to unravel the regime (Earl 2011; Francisco 2004; Martin 2007; Rasley 1996; Shadmehr and Boleslavsky 2015; Siegel 2011; Wood 2003).

## 5 Opposition: Organization and Coordination

There were three major opposition groups in the last two decades of the Pahlavi regime: the clerical opposition, the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI), and the nationalists (the National Front).<sup>16</sup> In this section, I compare the organization and the resources of these opposition groups in the early 1960s and the late 1970s. The regime had effectively suppressed communists after the 1953 coup. There were also several clandestine organizations in the 1960s and 1970s that occasionally engaged in violence (assassination, kidnapping, and planting bombs). The two major ones were Mujāhidīn and Fadā'īān. However, these two organizations had not been formed in the early 1960s, and had been effectively dismantled inside Iran by the mid-1970s as a result of internal divisions and severe repression. They did not play a significant role until the late stages of 1979 revolution (Abrahamian 1982, p. 495; Milani 1994, p. 133).

**The Clerical Opposition.** The clergy were connected through a decentralized network of mosques and seminary schools, and were financed by religious taxes (mainly *khums*) and religious endowments (*awqāf*). Since the early 1960s, the state had systematically tried to limit

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<sup>16</sup>These were the opposition groups associated with religious and nationalist “communal elites” (Slater 2009) who had “symbolic power” (Etzioni 1961) associated with religious and nationalistic sentiments. See Jafarian (1386 [2007]) for a comprehensive study of opposition groups.

the clergy's financial resources (Akhavi 1980, p. 130). In 1964, the state created the Endowment Organization to take over religious endowments. Akhavi (1980) finds that even during the boom of the early 1970s, the Endowment Organization reduced seminary students' state stipend from 331 rials in 1972 to 228 rials in 1973 (p. 142-3). Even in Qom, which was the richest center of religious learning, the seminary students' stipend in real terms decreased from the early 1960s. Available data suggest a downturn trend in the organizational infrastructure of the clergy. According to Akhavi (1980), there were 20,000 mosques in Iran in 1965, but only 9,015 mosques were reported in 1975. In Tehran, 9 out of 32 seminary schools closed down between 1960 and 1975 while only one new school opened (p. 129-30).

There is no available data on *khums* or other financial resources of the clergy. However, the stipends paid to seminary students indicate the clergy's financial resources. Khomeini was hesitant to pay a stipend after Burūjirdī's death because he did not receive much religious taxation (Montazeri 1379 [2000]). But by the mid 1970s, Khomeini and Khuyī, who both resided in Najaf, were paying the highest stipend to Qom seminary students (Fischer 1980, p. 81), indicating an increase in Khomeini's financial resources from 1962 to 1978. However, the state sanctions against Khomeini and his followers were severe (Fischer 1980, p. 135; Qaneei Fard 2012, p. 169-181), aiming to discredit him and stop his activities. Moreover, the state's financial resources increased tremendously during this period so that the difference between the state's and the clergy's financial resources was far greater in the late 1970s than the early 1960s.

**The Nationalist and the Liberation Movement of Iran.** The National Front was an overarching organization formed in 1951 under the Mosaddeq's leadership from nationalist figures and parties. Their goal was to coordinate their opposition against the Shah to establish democracy, and against the British to nationalize the oil industry.

In 1960, when the Shah announced free election, nationalists reorganized and formed the Second National Front (SNF). SNF participated in the parliamentary election, but the election was rigged and no member of the opposition was elected. Protests ensued, and the Shah was forced to ask the deputies to resign and schedule another election in the following January. During this time, there were strong tensions within the SNF between the moderates and the radical groups such as The Student Organization of the SNF. Radicals advocated mass mo-

bilization and bolder actions, while moderates were in favor of negotiations. The differences within the SNF over its ideology and strategies led some members with religious tendencies to form a splinter party based on Islamic ideology. The party was called the Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI). In January 1962, security forces severely beat student demonstrators at Tehran University. The SNF then called for a general strike, but the plan failed. “After that fiasco, National Front was exposed as ineffective, and its most active members, the student leaders, were in prison” (Chehabi 1990, p. 165). Later that year, the Shah announced that he would put his six-point “White Revolution” to referendum. The SNF opposed the referendum and called a demonstration. The government banned the demonstration and arrested most leaders of SNF and LMI. In the spring of 1964, the leadership resigned over a dispute with Mosaddeq, which effectively ended the nationalists activities in the early 1960s.

In 1976, the Shah initiated limited liberalization and the opposition began reorganizing. Nationalists tried to build an umbrella organization to facilitate coordination between all nationalist opposition groups. The Iranian Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (ICDHR) was the major organization through which the nationalists organized their activities, but even ICDHR was dominated by the LMI and religious intellectuals. Nationalists planned to get the signature of all the party leaders on an open letter that would criticize the Shah; however, after a dispute with LMI leaders, the letter was signed only by three figures, indicating the tensions between the nationalists and the religious intellectuals. Overall, the nationalists’ activities during 1978 were negligible relative to the LMI and clerical opposition (Chehabi 1990, p. 227; Kurzman 2004, p. 18; Milani 1994, p. 110; Parsa 1989, p. 309-10). As Parviz Sabeti (head of the Internal Security Division of SAVAK) describes in his interview, from the early 1960s on, “National Front did not have any [significant] organization” (Qaneei Fard 2012, p. 170). They were active, but their relative role in the revolution was minor.

**Coalition and Coordination.** Parsa (1994, p. 151) argues that the absence of industrial workers, white-collar employees, and the peasantry was a major reason for the failure of the June uprising. *However, these groups were also absent from the protests in the first six months of 1978 when the revolution was unfolding.* Workers and white-collar employees’ strikes slowly started in August 1978 and became visible only in October of that year. These groups were

mostly absent in 1977, and more importantly, during the repeated bloody demonstrations of the first months of 1978. For example, describing the social composition of protestors in the demonstrations of December 1978, Bazargan mentions that workers and farmers constituted a very small fraction of the crowd (Bazargan 1363 [1984/1985], p. 39).<sup>17</sup> State repression effectively stopped the June uprising but failed to stop the uprising of January 1978. Despite severe repression, demonstrations continued for months without significant participation of industrial workers or white-collar employees.

One might also argue that the uprising failed partly because there was no effective communication within and between the opposition groups. However, historical accounts of the clerical activities and mobilization of the early 1960s indicate that strong networks and communications did in fact exist (Davani 1358 [1979/1980]). As for coordination between groups, the nationalists did not have close relations with the clerical opposition in the early 1960s except through the LMI, and their contact with Khomeini began during the late stages of the revolution in late 1978. The reason for the limited contact stemmed from their ideological differences. Lebaschi, an active member of the National Front, recalls his conversation with Ṣāliḥ after the uprising of June 1963. Ṣāliḥ told him: “Lebaschi, our file was closed. [They] made this June 6 (15 *Khurdād*) to get the political leadership from the people, from the nationalist groups, [and] give it to the clergy” (Lebaschi 1983, tape 2, p. 12). Evidence indicates that direct and indirect ties and interpersonal networks were available, had these groups wanted to collaborate further. After the death of Burūjirdī in 1961, Sanjābī, a prominent member of the National Front, sent Shanehchi, another active member of the National Front, to Qom to investigate different existing *marjaʿs* to see which one to support. Shanehchi hesitantly suggested Khomeini. But the National Front dropped the issue later because they did not support Khomeini’s traditionalism (Shanehchi 1983, tape 2, p. 10).

**Students and the Clergy.** The LMI had a close connection with the clergy. Tāliqānī, a high-ranking clergy, was among the founding members of the LMI. There were also close contacts between students and the clergy. From their formation in the 1940s, “the MSAs [Muslim Student Associations] organized regular trips to Qum, where members could come together with young

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<sup>17</sup>At the other end of the spectrum were the poor slum-dwellers. But as Kazemi (1980) shows, they had a relatively apolitical attitude in the 1970s.

tullab [seminary students] for discussion and exchange of ideas” (Chehabi 1990, p. 123). These connections were so strong that, in the early 1960s, two prominent *marja's* (Sharīʿt-Madārī and Milānī) sent their delegation to a large congress in Tehran that had brought together MSAs and several other Islamic associations. Karimian (1381 [2002]) mentions three incidents that show the close connections between the students of Tehran University and Khomeini in the 1960s: (1) In Azar 1341 (December 1962/January 1963), a group of students went to Qom and visited Khomeini and other *marja's*; (2) Following the *Fayziyyih* incident in which the security forces attacked seminary students protesting in a madrassah called *Fayziyyih*, a group of about 1500 students demonstrated at Tehran University. Although most of them left shortly after the meeting, 13 student went on hunger strike; (3) In April 30, 1963 (10 Ordibehesht, 1342), a group of students, mainly consisting of the members of the Students’ Islamic Association of Tehran University, visited Khomeini in Qom. Khomeini made a speech in which he clarified his view of the White Revolution and criticized the regime for corruption and the lack of freedom.

Parsa (1994) also claims that during the June 6 uprising the students “remained on campus” and did not widely participate. However, historical documents indicates their widespread participation. The number of arrested students relative to other groups confirms their heavy participation in the 1963 uprising. In fact, the students’ protests continued after the June 6 (15 *Khurdād*) resulting in the cancellation of final exams and the closing of the Tehran University (Arya-Bakhshayesh 1384 [2005]; Ghasempour).

## 6 The Economy and Economic Policy<sup>18</sup>

Many researchers have argued that an economic downturn prior to 1979 contributed to the revolution, but disagree on how the economic recession may have played a role. Abrahamian (1982) argues that “an economic crisis in the form of acute inflation” (p. 497) led the state to launch an anti-profiteering campaign against the economic elite, especially against the bazaar. Then bazaaris, antagonized by the state policy, supported the revolution. Parsa (2000) claims that “combined with mounting economic inequalities, the recession adversely affected the interests of broad segments of the population and contributed to setting the stage

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<sup>18</sup>The data is from the Central Bank of Iran and the Statistical Center of Iran.



for the emergence of social conflict” (p. 80). Milani (1994) takes the “relative deprivation” approach, arguing that “the economic expansion, which increased expectations, followed by a period of economic contraction, intensified discontent among many groups” (p. 100). State policies further antagonized the economic elite, and this “crisis of wealth” together with the “looming political crisis” led to revolution. In contrast, Zabih (1979) argues that even as late as the summer of 1978 “economic grievances were not among the major reasons causing the dissidents’ espousal of radical political goals” (p. 38). Kurzman (2003, 2004) argues that the economic downturn did not contribute to the revolution because the recession of 1977 was not worse than 1975 downturn, which did not lead to any major protest (See also Kamrava 1990).

I argue that the living conditions of an average Iranian did not deteriorate before the revolution started.<sup>19</sup> Despite the drop in GDP in 1977, mainly due to a significant decrease in oil price, real private consumption in urban areas increased by 4.6 percent from 1976 to 1977, even higher than its growth rate of 1976, which was 4.4 percent.<sup>20</sup> Possibly the savings of the preceding huge oil boom helped to stabilize consumption. The inequality, that had been increasing in the early 1970s, marginally decreased in 1976 and significantly decreased in 1977. Figure 1 shows the Gini index and the income ratio of the top 10 percent to the bottom 10 percent rich groups of the society. The recession was mostly obvious in investment rates. Real investment significantly decreased from 1976 to 1977. However, the investment rate was extraordinarily high after the huge oil boom in the mid-1970s, and its decrease did not affect the living conditions of the population, at least, in the short-run.

Moreover, the pattern of inflation rates is not as extreme as is usually assumed. The yearly data shows a sharp increase in inflation rate in 1977. However, scrutinizing the monthly inflation pattern indicates that in the second half of the 1977 inflation was not high at all. Even the relatively sharp increase at the beginning of 1978 was a normal pattern when compared with previous years. The average monthly inflation rate in the second half of 1977 was 0.53 percent, lower than the second-half inflation rate for 1973, 1974, 1976, and 1978. The average monthly inflation rate for the first three months of 1978 was 1.74 percent, and lower than the

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<sup>19</sup>In 1978, Iran witnessed widespread strikes and demonstrations, and in the second half of that year, the chaos of the unfolding revolution significantly damaged the economy. By contrast, Iran was stable in 1977 and protracted political protests in that year did not change the normal flow of economic activity.

<sup>20</sup>The corresponding per capita growth rates are 1.28 percent in 1976 and 1.46 percent in 1977.

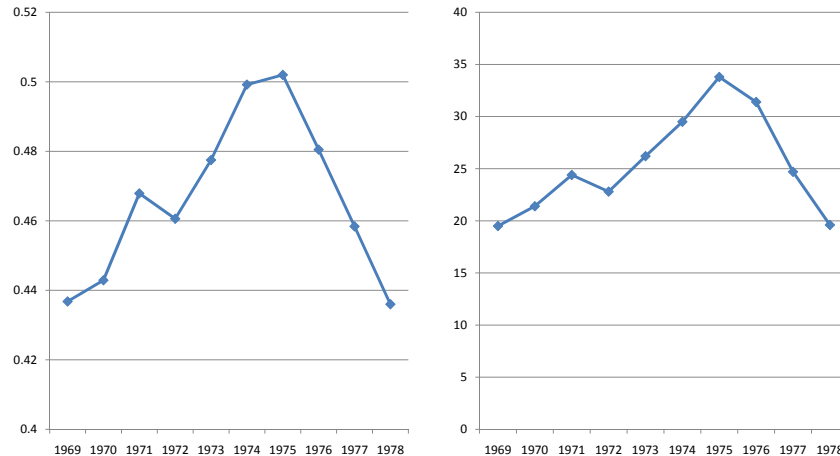


Figure 1: Gini index (left). The income ratio of the top 10 percent rich to the bottom 10 percent poor (right).

same value for 1972, 1975, 1976, and 1977. The unusually high inflation rate assigned to 1977 is related to high inflation in the first half of that year. Inflation was contained months before the protests broke out in January 1978, and remained low throughout 1978 during the early cycles of protests. It is also worthwhile emphasizing that in the first half of 1977, the state had already started political opening and liberalization, and the opposition had the opportunity to mobilize the masses who were argued to be frustrated by the weak economy. But no major protest took place during this period despite an unusually high rate of inflation. In addition, the wages kept up with the cost of living. The industrial wage index increased by about 28 percent in 1977 and 27 percent in 1978, while the inflation rates were about 25 and 10 percent, respectively. This indicates that the wage rate did keep up with inflation even in 1977 when inflation was unusually high.

The general trend of the real GNP per capita growth rate indicates a decrease from 1960 to 1964, and although growth remained positive, the economy was going through a mild recession. Katouzian (1981) states that “the economy was depressed but not stagnant” (p. 229),

whereas Parsa (2004) calls it a “complete stagnation” (p. 138). Real per capita private urban consumption growth rate decreased in 1961, increased mildly in 1962 and 1963, and dropped sharply in 1964. The real per-capita private rural consumption growth rate was negative from 1960 to 1964. Of course, the income per capita in the early 1960s was not nearly as much as the late 1970s, and the government’s real consumption per capita was eight times bigger in the late 1970s than in the early 1960s. Therefore, a decrease in income or government expenditure would have more serious consequences for the economic well-being of people in the early 60s than in the late 70s.

In summary, in the mid-1970s, the economy showed some symptoms of a mild recession, but there was no “crisis of wealth”. The recession was not serious enough to significantly upset the patterns of consumption, or to impose any significant economic hardship on the population in the short-run. Prices increased at a high pace, but wages did keep up. Investment dropped significantly but this would not be visible in the everyday life of the Iranians in the short-run. In the early 1960s, the economy went into a recession in which wages stagnated, but so did prices. **State Economic Policy Toward Bazaar.** Scholars often claim that the anti-bazaar economic policy of the state in the late 1970s pushed the bazaariz to form an alliance with the opposition against the regime. However, they have overlooked that the state took similar policies in the early 1960s that antagonized bazaaris in that period as well.

In the late 1950s, “the government deficit grew to immense proportions, balance-of-payment situation deteriorated, and inflation became rampant” (Milani 1994). The government embarked upon an economic stabilization program prescribed by the IMF. It tightened credit, which reduced loans to bazaaris, and imposed import surcharges and stiff restrictions on certain imports. “The recession and government policies lead to growing bankruptcies among bazaaris” (Parsa 1989, p. 98). In 1961, the government imposed a new tax rate on bazaaris despite the protest of the low-income segments of the bazaaris. When many refused to pay taxes, the government announced, in May 1963, a campaign against those who had not paid their taxes. “Three hundred thousand cases of refusal to pay taxes were uncovered in Tehran alone, most of which involved merchants, small shopkeepers, and artisans” (Parsa 1989, p. 99). Furthermore, in April 1963, the government threatened to start an anti-profiteering campaign,

and imposed price control on bakers and butchers (Parsa 1989).

In the mid-1970s, the state followed similar policies. Parsa (2000) writes that “as lower oil revenues reduced the state’s resources, the government imposed higher taxes on bazaaris while cutting back on bank loans to shopkeepers” (p. 206). The government also imposed a minimum wage for workers. Most importantly, from mid-1975, it embarked upon a widespread anti-profiteering campaign that brought charges against hundreds of thousands of traders and small businessmen (Abrahamian 1982, p. 498).

## 7 Ideology and Revolution Beyond Iran and Islam

“Every revolution was first a thought in one man’s mind,” wrote Emerson (1899 [1841], p. 3) in his influential essay, “History.” His contemporary, Marx, however, did not attribute such a strong role to human thoughts. In *The German Ideology*, Marx writes: “Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics.” These opposing views have persisted over time in our theories of revolution. So much so that in his 1978 influential book, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Tilly emphasizes that “how great an independent weight to attribute to ideological innovation is another recurrent puzzle in the analysis of revolution.” The “puzzle” has remained unresolved: A number of theories deny an independent role for ideology in the making of revolutions (Goldstone 1991, 2001; Goodwin 2001; Skocpol 1979, 1997; Tilly 1996), while others consider ideology an important factor alongside structural elements and political process (Foran 2005; Parsa 2000). This paper focused on the role of Khomeini’s ideological innovation in the making of the Iranian Revolution. I argued that new interpretations of the Shia political ideology in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly Khomeini’s doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist, changed the goal of the religious opposition from the moderate one of reforming the state to the revolutionary one of creating an Islamic state. Although this paper focuses on the role of a particular ideology in a particular revolution, its methods and arguments speak to the broader debate on the role of Ideology in revolutions.

Like technological innovations that expand production possibilities and tactical innovations

that expand the repertoire of contentious actions (McAdam 1983), ideological innovations increase the number of alternatives to the status quo, and hence can change the individuals' goals and strategies. Like other types of innovations, human agency exercises "a significant degree of 'freedom and creativity' " (Tholfsen 1984, p. 11) in ideological innovations that cannot be attributed to structural factors. The human creativity involved in the "mental production" of ideological innovations carries an intrinsic uncertainty that is far beyond the reach of our current theories in psychology, sociology, or other disciplines. Therefore, without integrating ideology as an independent factor, theories of revolution fail to explain revolutions sufficiently.

These arguments are not just theoretical curiosities; They have significant relevance in explaining critical historical events, and as we will discuss, they have practical implications for current events. As this paper illustrates, structural and agency-free process theories of revolution alone cannot explain the variation in the outcome of protests in Iran in the early 1960s, which fizzled, and the late 1970s, which led to the Iranian Revolution. To provide a satisfactory theory for the causes of the Iranian Revolution, the religious opposition's ideological innovations must be integrated into these theories.

Was the Iranian Revolution an exception? Although a satisfactory answer is beyond the scope of this paper, there is evidence suggesting that ideological innovations played a key role in several other historical instances. For example, the difference between the actions of the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks in 1917 was the result of Lenin's ideological innovation summarized in his April Theses. The Mensheviks, like most other Marxists, "propounded the idea of revolution in two stages.... In the first...the autocracy would give way to a democratic republican order, in which all citizens would enjoy full political liberties and civil rights.... In the second stage, that of socialist revolution, the means of production, distribution and exchange would be nationalized, and the political system would be that of proletarian dictatorship" (Keep 1963). Because "the bourgeoisie revolution must precede the socialist revolution" (Tholfsten 1984, p. 95), "the leadership of post-tsarist Russia could only go to the bourgeoisie" (Harding 1996, p. 42).

Because of their ideological belief in the two-stage revolution, the Mensheviks did not even attempt to take power, and neither did the Bolsheviks until Lenin convinced them. "We must

say frankly,' wrote Molotov some years ago, 'the party lacked that clarity and resolution which the revolutionary movement demanded.... The agitation and the whole revolutionary party work in general had no firm foundation, since our thoughts had not yet arrived at bold conclusions in regard to the necessity of an immediate struggle for socialism and the socialist revolution.' The break began only in the second month of the [February] revolution. 'From the time of Lenin's arrival in Russia in April 1917'—so testifies Molotov—'our party felt firm ground under its feet.... Up to that moment the party was only weakly and diffidently groping its way.' Stalin at the end of March had spoken in favour of military defense, of conditional support to the Provisional government and the pacifist manifesto of Sukhanov, and of merging with the party of Tseretelli. 'This mistaken position,' Stalin himself retrospectively acknowledged in 1924, 'I then shared with other party comrades, and I renounced it fully only in the middle of April when I adhered to the theses of Lenin. A new orientation was necessary. Lenin gave the party that new orientation in his celebrated April theses.' " (Trotsky 1932, v.3, p. 142).

Lenin's key ideological innovation, partly captured in his *April Theses*, was that Russia can skip bourgeoisie democracy into a socialist revolution, and hence communists must take the power from the liberals, run the state, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. His theses was based on elaborate and complex Marxist arguments in his book, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and his notes that were later collected in his treatise, *The State and Revolution* (Harding 1996; Keep 1963; Tholfsen 1984; Williams 2000).<sup>21</sup> As Khomeini, a staunch Shia jurist, extracted his doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist from the Shia theological and legal sources, Lenin, a staunch Marxist, extracted his April Theses using Marxist reasoning from Marxist sources and scattered "scientific data." Given the voluminous collected works of these ideologues, researchers sometimes focus on the most seemingly relevant final results, overlooking the intricate and elaborate arguments that they had to make in order to convince themselves and others of their completely unconventional ideological innovations.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Lenin wrote most of *The State and Revolution* in 1917 when he had gone underground to avoid arrest in Russia. Commenting on this seemingly obsessive focus on theory in the midst of a revolution, Trotsky said: "He cannot do otherwise: for him the theory is in actual fact a guide to action" (Trotsky 1932, v.3, p. 125).

<sup>22</sup>Skocpol (1979, p. 94-6) claims that the 1905 Russian Revolution failed because the Russo-Japanese war had not weakened the tsarist state as much as the first world war. One can argue, instead, that in 1905, Lenin "had been restrained by his interpretation of Marxism, which laid down that the coming revolution was to be a bourgeoisie one and, even if proletarian hegemony was accepted, this would mean a coalition government

Comparing the 1830 and 1848 French revolutions offers another telling example of the role of ideas. As Pinkney (1973) argues, “the change of men was probably the most revolutionary aspect of the [1830] revolution” (p. 276). It caused “no fundamental shift in the seat of power and resulted in no mandate for such change” (p. 367). In contrast, the 1848 revolution ended monarchy in France and established the Second Republic. What happened in between was “decisive years in France,” when “suddenly and dramatically the social question exploded, showering the nation with a torrent of ideas” (Pinkney 1986, p. 93, quoted from Johnson’s *Utopian Communism in France*). The radical works of Comte, Fourier, Blanc, Cabet, Proudhon, Marx and Engels all belong to this period. Despite censorship in the July monarchy, republicanism was publicized by republican newspapers, lawyers (in trials), and even some deputies, and by writers and thinkers. A result of this ideological turmoil was a “vision of a new society” (Pinkney 1986, Ch. v). The 1848 revolution was an attempt to materialize that vision. In contrast to the 1830 revolution, republicanism was a viable alternative to monarchy in 1848, and republicans had obtained enough publicity and organization by 1848 that gave them leverage to lead the masses and form a provisional government (Fortescue 2005; Pilbeam 1991). Indeed, the 1848 revolution was fought along “self-conscious political arguments,” and resulted in fundamental changes in France.

Going back to the 18th century, maybe as Skocpol would have us believe, the 1789 French Revolution “was not made, it came” due to structural factors without much help from “self-conscious political arguments by identifiable political actors.” But the same cannot be said of the American Revolution: It was made—the 19th century Whiggish interpretation of the American Revolution notwithstanding.<sup>23</sup> The American Revolution was made by political actors that made extensive use of political arguments to *persuade* (Bailyn 1992) both themselves and others of a “glorious cause” that can be summarized in two words: Republican freedom (Middlekauff 2007). “This cause and the way it was understood—as a providential struggle of good against evil—expressed the values of American culture and armed Americans for war”

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of some sort” (Williams 2000, p. 55). Indeed, there is evidence suggesting that the Marxists could, but did not attempt to take power in 1905 because they interpreted it as a bourgeoisie revolution that was to set the stage for a socialist revolution *in the future* (Ascher 1988; see also Trotsky’s *1905*).

<sup>23</sup>For example, in his *History of the United States*, George Bancroft wrote: “the people of the continent obeyed one general impulse, as the earth in spring listens to the command of nature and without the appearance of effort bursts into life” (quoted from Bailyn (1968, p. 6)).

(Middlekauff 2007, p. 602).

From Enlightenment and theology, from common law and history, the colonists learned the ideas of natural inalienable rights and remembered their divine duty to preserve their English liberties for posterity, so that America, as John Winthrop and his puritan companions envisioned it, “shall be as a city upon a hill.” In the 1760s and 1770s, they merged these ideas with the trickling stream of British radical thoughts from the 17th and 18th centuries. Then, innovating on the margins, they transformed these ideas into a revolutionary ideology that not only dispensed with the English monarchy all together, but also created a republican order where “a new set of folks,” those “unimportant persons,” the common people had as much right to legislate and execute as their betters (Wood 2009). Unlike the Russian and Iranian Revolution, the ideology of the American Revolution was not associated with a single person or a small group of intellectuals or theologians, nor were the ideas themselves fundamentally new: “the arguments, the claims and counter-claims, the fears and apprehensions...had in fact been heard throughout the century” (Bailyn 1992, p. xv). But the marginal innovations were just enough to deliver a sharp break with the past. “No taxation without representation” may seem a direct outcome of ideas of social contract, representation and consent in Locke, Rousseau, and others. But to apply these broad ideas to the American situation, the colonists had to address their challenge to the sovereignty of the English parliament and their “virtual representation.” Thus, they transformed Enlightenment ideas of consent to create a notion of “continuous consent”: “No longer merely an ultimate check on government, they *were* in some sense the government.... government had no separate existence from them... it gained its authority from their continuous consent” (Bailyn 1992, p. 173). Their opponents saw the radical nature of this ideology at once when they lamented, as the Anglican minister Samuel Seabury did in 1774 when he characterized it as “a novel position unsupported by any authoritative record of the British constitutions, ancient or modern. It is republican in its very nature, and tends to the utter subversion of the English monarchy” (p. 174-5).

Drawing on deductive reasoning and histories of governments, this ideology viewed “society as beneficent and government as malevolent” (Wood 2009, p. 10). Despising aristocracy and its organic links to government corruption on the one hand, and eschewing levelers on



the other, the colonists advocated a notion of equality that neither applied to wealth, nor to all races. Still, slavery notwithstanding, it posited that there should not be any inherited status, nor preferential treatment before the law: no one is superior over anyone. Even more, within the set of white men with “reasonable” religious beliefs and a minimal wealth to grant them “independence” from influence, everyone is equal in their right to self-govern—if not to literally be in the government, a point of dispute between the Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans that lasted through the early republic and later expanded and established in Jacksonian Democracy (Wood 1993). Although scattered in pamphlets, sermons, and essays, the ideology of the American Revolution found its concise manifesto in Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence, and its elaboration in Paine’s *Common Sense*. They distinguished the American Revolution from a mere peripheral rebellion. Compared with the ideological innovations of Lenin and Khomeini, the ideology of the American Revolution was selected and compiled by a plethora of lawyers, thinkers, planters, and writers, from a collection of existing ideas, with innovations occurring only at the margins. Yet, just as American manufacturing was soon to find its genius in simplifying and assembling a collection of pieces into remarkable machines with many small innovations, the radicalism of American ideology was in assembling a set of existing ideas into a concise and coherent theory of society and state that created the first and most long-lasting modern republic.

Returning to contemporary history, in the 1989 Tienanmen uprising in China, the dissidents effectively captured Beijing for weeks before security reinforcement reached the capital in June. In these weeks, they abstained from capturing state offices and did not attempt to topple the government because their goal was reform, not revolution. In the Philippines, the ideological decision of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) not to engage in anti-Marcos protests of the mid-1980s (Yellow Revolution) and the subsequent elections resulted in the sharp decline of this once-strong party by the end of the century (Kerkvliet 1996). “At that particular moment in the political history of the Philippines and the revolutionary movement, key people in the CPP leadership could not read the changes outside of the tried-and-true protracted people’s war framework” (Weekley 1996, p. 29).

Returning to Islamic ideology, the critical role that this paper ascribes to Khomeini’s ideo-

logical innovation draws a grim picture of the power of ideas. If Khomeini's theory of Islamic state inspired the Islamic opposition to organize and mobilize the masses to bring about a revolution, it follows axiomatically that once in power, they would attempt to establish a theocracy. That they did; not immediately and not thoroughly, it took a year or two to execute and scare their opposition, and a page or two from the book of democracy to shove it down the throat of the Iranian people. But there is a much brighter flip side to this. If Khomeini's ideology could inspire Islamic opposition by providing an Islamic alternative to their sorry status quo, it follows that the development of an Islamic ideology that shows the consistency of Islam with democracy can encourage many devoted Muslim activists to struggle and sacrifice to establish a democracy; not just as a convenient means to rise into power and implement non-democratic policies (e.g., Muslim Brotherhood and Freedom and Justice Party in Egypt), but as a desired form of government. Although some surveys in the past two decades suggest overwhelming support for democracy among the Muslims in the Arab countries, as Jamal and Tessler (2008) argue "it is unclear whether popular support for democracy can and will actually become transformed into pressure for political reform and democratic openings in the Arab world" (p. 108). Indeed, decades of research on social movements (grouped under resource mobilization, political opportunity, and political process theories) emphasize the critical role of organizations in sustaining a movement in order to change the status quo; The role of Islamic organizations (e.g., Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt) following the Arab Spring further confirms these findings (Khatib and Lust 2014). Moreover, it is crucial to recognize that words such as republic, democracy, and freedom mean very different things to different people. Unless these abstract concepts are gauged in particular contexts, their meanings remain vague. For example, using survey data, Jamal (2006) argues that, "in the case of Egypt, the overlap between high support for democracy and high support for Islamism is close to 70 percent. In Jordan, the overlap is close to 72 percent" (p. 57; see also Jamal 2012). What fraction of those who claim to support both Islamism and democracy believe that people should be allowed to criticize religious leaders or Islam? What fraction of them think of democracy as a means to implement their version of Islam? The critical question remains: When the outcome of democratic process conflicts with their view of Islam, do they abide by democratic

rules or do they attempt to undermine democracy to implement their religious views?

During the 2009 Green Movement in Iran, the opposition leaders (Mousavi and Karroubi) had the support of millions of Iranians who had signaled their resolve by taking the risky action of protesting on streets despite the regime’s warnings and brutal history of repression. However, when the regime resisted the opposition demands for re-election, the opposition did not call for further actions: they did not want a regime change. One can’t help but wonder whether the failure of the Green Movement in Iran was partly because the opposition leaders, who were devoted Muslims, lacked an Islamic alternative to the doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist (*Vilāyat-i Faqīh*) on which the status quo relies (Shadmehr 2010). Indeed, “The Anatomy of Revolution” transcends “The End of History”: “No ideology, no revolution” (Brinton 1938, p. 49).

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## Online Appendix: Methodology and Research Design

I contrast the only two periods under the post-coup Pahlavi regime that witnessed widespread popular uprisings—the early 1960s and the late 1970s. While the uprising of the early 1960s fizzled, that of the late 1970s led to the Iranian Revolution. Applying the comparative method over time, I show that the structural factors alone fail to explain the Iranian Revolution because these factors undergo similar changes in both periods. However, one factor present only in the late 1970s is an Islamic revolutionary ideology. I argue that this ideology played a decisive role in the making of the Iranian Revolution. To establish the link between the new Islamic ideology and the making of the Iranian Revolution, I investigate its effects on the decision-making processes of the relevant groups before the revolution (Collier et al. 2004; George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007; Munck 2004; Roberts 1996). This is not to say that other factors were irrelevant. I rather argue that ideology was a *necessary* condition that along with other factors led to the Iranian Revolution.

Researchers in social sciences apply the comparative method to draw causal inferences from case studies (Brady and Colliers 2004; George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2001, 2007; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Little 1991; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Ragin 1987). In particular, this method has been extensively used to study revolutions (Goldstone 1991; Goodwin 2001; Foran 2005; Parsa 2000; Skocpol 1979). Although the comparative method is usually applied across countries, it is not essential that the unit of analysis be a country. The units to be compared could be different periods of history in one country. Indeed, there could be several instances of a phenomenon in one case, happening over time, each of which could provide an observation (Gerring 2007, p. 19-26 and 222; Haydu 1998).<sup>24</sup>

The application of comparative method over time provides some robustness against the endogeneity problem that arises from unobservable, specific characteristics of each unit that might be causally related to both the explanandum and the explanatory variables. It might be the case that a change in some explanatory variables has a different effect on one unit than on the other because of the specific characteristics of each unit which are unknown to the

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<sup>24</sup>“An ‘observation’ is defined as one measure on one unit for one dependent variable and includes information on the values of the explanatory variables” (King et al. 1994, p. 117).

researcher or hard to measure or conceptualize. For example, some cultural factors specific to a nation might change the way repression prevents or provokes protests. But if the researcher fails to integrate such country-specific characteristics into the analysis, her conclusions might exaggerate or underestimate the effects of these explanatory variables. Focusing on one country mitigates this problem because these unobservable factors remain constant because the comparison occurs within the same unit, increasing homogeneity among observations (King et al. 1994; Gerring 2001). As Lebow (2001) suggests, “intra-case comparison confers a singular benefit: it examines variation within a relatively unchanging political and cultural context, controlling better than inter-case comparison for many factors that may be important but unrecognized” (p. 128).

One problem in applying the comparative method is the uncertainty involved in most social phenomena, which requires researchers to distinguish between the systematic and non-systematic elements of the events (King et al. 1994; Little 1991). However, detailed case studies allow the researcher to distinguish and filter the non-systematic components of the events. This view is particularly useful when the researcher believes that the underlying causal mode between explanatory variables and the explanandum is a necessary and/or sufficient one.

Necessary and sufficient conditions (NSC) are specific modes of causal relations that do not accommodate uncertainty, while alternative modes such as “causal mechanism” and “causal effect” do (King et al. 1994; Little 1991). Little (1991) argues that “the most important defect of the analysis of causal relations in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions is tied to the fact that some causal relations are probabilistic rather than deterministic” (p. 27). However, if one believes that the role of chance is negligible, or if one can filter non-systematic components, NSC should be considered. The decision whether to choose NSC is the counterpart of “model selection” in statistical methods. The problem is that we do not know the “true” underlying mode of causality. Which model is “better” depends on how well it fits empirical facts (Lakatos 1970). Therefore, it is not obvious *a priori* what type of model is superior (Mahoney 2003) among many possible modes of causality (Pierson 2003). For example, “cumulative causes” and “threshold effects” are two mechanisms that might best describe certain types of phenomena. In fact, these mechanisms have been adopted in many case

studies of revolution and social movements. For example, researchers contend that grievances or the opposition's organizational capacities can accumulate over time and that once they reach a "tipping point" (threshold) lead to sociopolitical change. Although these mechanisms are plausible and theoretically appealing, in many contexts it is impossible to assess their empirical implications. How much accumulation is necessary and how can we determine the thresholds for different factors and different cases? Adopting NSC as the mode of causal relation makes the researcher to search for "intermediate variables" that can capture the effect of these underlying processes, while also being easier to conceptualize, measure, or observe.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>I do not challenge the hypothesis that grievances accumulate over time, I rather argue that once they reach a threshold, they might lead to the development of revolutionary ideologies that demand radical sociopolitical change. Focusing on the revolutionary ideology rather than cumulative processes gives us leverage to capture the effect of the invisible mechanism of grievance accumulation through its intermediate effect on an observable factor, i.e., revolutionary ideology, that in turn affects the outcome.

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