Ideology and the Iranian Revolution\textsuperscript{1}

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Abstract

Some theories deny the role of ideology in the making of revolutions, while others grant it an indispensable role. I investigate the role of ideology in the Iranian Revolution by contrasting the two periods of the Pahlavi regime that witnessed popular uprising: the early 1960s and the late 1970s. While the former uprising fizzled, the latter led to the Iranian Revolution. Applying the comparative method over time, I show that structural and non-agency process factors underwent the same changes in both periods and hence fail to explain the variation in outcomes. I propose instead that the change in the opposition’s ideology accounts for this variation. I show that Khomeini’s doctrine of the Islamic state provided a new alternative to the status quo that changed the Islamic opposition’s goal from reforming the existing state to creating a new Islamic state.
“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, quoted from Bailyn 1992, p. 160).

1 Introduction

“How great an independent weight to attribute to ideological innovation is another recurrent puzzle in the analysis of revolution”, wrote Tilly in his 1978 influential book From Mobilization to Revolution. The puzzle has remained unsolved: 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 structure and process (Foran 2005; Parsa 2000). I investigate the role of ideology in the Iranian Revolution by focusing on 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 fizzled, the latter led to a revolution. Contrasting these periods, I show 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. I argue that the change in the ideology of opposition accounts for this variation. To establish causality, I investigate the role of the new ideology in the opposition’s decision-making processes.

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. I show 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, exogenous factors such as economic problems and U.S. pressure for liberalization created the potential for social unrest,
and in both period protests did take place. However, in the late 1970s, due to the change in their goals and strategies, the Islamic opposition was willing and more prepared to push and transform, to use Kuran’s (1989) terminology, the sparks of protest into a full prairie fire.¹

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: (1) “Revolutions are not made, they come”, and hence there is no room for agency and ideology (e.g., Skocpol 1979); (2) 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, Tarrow, and Tilly 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, Voss, and Gern 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, the state response to dissent, the opposition’s organizational resources, and coordination among the opposition groups are

¹The critical role that I attribute to Khomeini’s ideological innovation in the making of the Iranian Revolution may be mistakenly interpreted as a glorification of Khomeini and his followers. Thus, I emphasize that the atrocities committed by Khomeini and many of his followers 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 of Khomeini’s doctrine of the Guardianship of the Jurist, and yet ignored its inevitable consequences. They underestimated the force of Khomeini’s ideological innovation. I hope that this paper helps to bring the critical role of ideological innovations into the theories of revolutions for unless we understand the forces behind revolutions, we can’t prevent the pathological paths they can take.
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; See also Wilkinson 2009).

In light of these theories, in sections 4 to 7, 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; 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 sections 4 to 7, I discuss each of 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, this demonstrates the inadequacy of structural and agent-free process theories to explain the Iranian Revolution.

I propose that, rather than structural and agent-free processes, it is Khomeini’s ideological innovation—the Guardianship of the Jurist—that accounts for the difference in the outcomes of the uprisings of the early 1960s and late 1970s. I suggest that 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. I subsequently investigate the influence of Khomeini’s ideological innovation on the opposition’s decision-making processes and show that it changed the goal of the Islamic opposition from reforming the state to replacing it with an Islamic state.

Section 2 discusses methodology and research design. Section 3 analyzes the role of ideology in the Iranian Revolution. In section 4, I discuss U.S.-Iran relations and state liberalization. Section 5 dissects the structure and resources of the Pahlavi state and its response to op-

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2 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.
position. In section 6, I investigate the organizations and resources of the opposition, and the coordination between the opposition groups. Section 7 analyzes the economy and state economic policies. A Conclusion and Discussion follows.

2 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 causal link between the new Islamic ideology and the making of the Iranian Revolution, I investigate its causal 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).3

The application of comparative method over time provides some robustness against the

3“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).
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 that are unknown to the 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 2001). 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.  

3 Ideology and the Making of 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

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4I 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.
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 contain 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.5

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. This “minimalist definition” of ideology allows researchers to study the interactions between ideology and the elements of culture the definition excludes.6

3.1 The New Islamic Ideology

Shia political ideology underwent a significant transformation in the late 1960s and the early 1970s.7 This new ideology interpreted Islamic social and political structure around the axes of social justice and anti-imperialism, the two main issues of contention in the preceding few decades. Islam was reinterpreted as a social religion and “Shia, [as] a Total Political Party” (Shariati 1976 [1355]) with a specific plan for the structure of the state and fair and 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 endorsed by a group of high-ranking clerical authorities that included a marja;8 Khomeini.

5The 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 the differences between the processes and outcomes of these two revolutions.

6It 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.

7The goals and the ideology of nationalists did not change significantly. Leftist ideologies revived in the early 1970s, but were restricted to militant revolutionaries who were brutally repressed by the time of the revolution (Abrahamian 1989; Jafarian 1386 [2007]). Therefore, I focus on the Islamic ideology.

8In 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 marja. Marjas are the highest religious authorities in Shia. (See Khalaji 2006)
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 illegitimate state 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-Bayr) ” (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 [marja’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). Illegitimacy of the state alone does not require action if there is no alternative; nevertheless, if this illegitimacy is combined with a legitimate Islamic alternative and an interpretation of Islam that requires action against injustice, then illegitimacy calls 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).9 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 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 just the common idea that Muslim societies should live under a government that respects Islamic laws. Khomeini’s ideological innovation was that Islamic law dictates that a Muslim society must be governed by just jurists. 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 to provide 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 intricacies and the length 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 that his ideological innovation bears fruits in his life time.

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. This statement is in contrast with our fundamental beliefs” (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:

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, and what kind of behavior and policies they should conform to.... 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 (Khomeini 1348 [1970], p. 127-53).

3.2 The Causal Role of the New Shia Ideology

“Ideology is thought.... The basic problem is the identification of the linkage between thought and action” (Minar 1961). I argue that a new ideology offers a new theory of state, and hence 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.\(^{10}\)

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

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\(^{10}\)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).
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.\footnote{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).}

In appearance, the closest to this paper is Moaddel (1992) in which he argues that ideology “autonomously contributed” to the making of the Iranian Revolution. 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). Moaddel further 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).

However, this paper differs from Moaddel’s (1992) (and other similar works) in three important ways: (1) Moaddel 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 I have argued do not help to explain or predict revolutions as they do not vary over short periods of time (see “What is Ideology?” above); (2) The mechanism he identifies for the role of ideology is very different from the one in this paper; and most importantly, (3) It is not clear which social scientific or case study methods are employed
in Moaddel (1992), and hence the reader cannot know how he has come to his conclusions.

Did Khomeini’s ideological innovation have a causal impact on making of the Iranian Revolution? 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:

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 (Algar 1981, p. 200-2).

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:

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
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. (Ruhani (1363) 1381 [(1984) 2002], p. 745. See also p. 730-63; Hosseiniyan (1383 [2004], p. 603-34); Jafarian (1386 [2007], p. 274-7)).

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 causal effect of ideology, we can employ the variation in the attitude of other prominent marjas toward the state and revolution. At the time, there were a few prominent marjas besides Khomeini: In Qom, Sharī‘t-Madārī, Gulpāyagānī, and Mar‘shī-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, Sharī‘t-Madārī is famous for his “compromise”: Even during the heydays of the revolution, Sharī‘t-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.\textsuperscript{12} In Sharī‘t-Madārī’s words:

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 (Ruhani (1363) 1381 [(1984) 2002], p. 359).

\textbf{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),\textsuperscript{13} 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.\textsuperscript{14} The Tobacco Movement of the 1890s, the 1905-7 Constitutional

\textsuperscript{12}There is evidence suggesting that Gulpāyagānī and Mar‘ashi-Najafī did believe in Khomeini’s theory (Rahnema 2014, 105-6), which can explain their more radical stand in comparison to Sharī‘t-Madārī and Khuyī.

\textsuperscript{13}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).

\textsuperscript{14}Farhi (1990) adopts Enayat’s (1983) view, but integrates the influence of the state ideology into her
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 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, he would have to argue that the clergy took a very non-political stand as a result of their 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 who was known to be the most knowledgeable (and arguably the sole) marja\(^\text{15}\) in the Shia world from the mid-1940s to his death in 1961 (Mottahedeh 1985).

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.

\(^{15}\)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, answers: “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). 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 \textit{Arabi}, \textit{Farabi}, and Ibn \textit{Sina} (Adib-Moghaddam 2014; Reda 2012 cited in Adib-Moghaddam (2014, p. 12, ft. 36)) or Ibn \textit{Rushd} and even Plato (Martin 1996). I emphasize that I completely agree that Khomeini, like everyone else, was influenced by his environment and education. The key is that we cannot ex-ante predict how someone’s environment and education can affect him/her. Many Shia jurists and theologians read about the philosopher-king in Plato’s Republic and did not come up with the Khomeini’s doctrine.
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 not causal explanations in the sense that I pursue causality in this paper (Roberts 1996, p. 214-39. See “logical colligation” on p. 238).

However, the arguments of this paper do not hinge on the spread of ideological innovations among the population in general. 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 in sustaining the movement by mobilizing, coordinating, and leading the masses. In particular, I do 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. In fact, one can argue many participants had a very different vision of the post-revolutionary state than Khomeini and his followers even though they may have shouted slogans supporting an “Islamic state” (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2008).

Instead, 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 con-
vincing or followed him due to his high-ranking position in the Shia clerical establishment as a prominent marji 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 goals: 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 6), 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.

4 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,

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 Iqbal was replaced by Sharif-Imami, 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 Amini 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 Amini 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 Sharif-Imami by Amini (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 Amirí 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 provide 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).

5 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 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?\textsuperscript{16} 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 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 folis 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 is that the Shah’s attitude was similar in the early 1960s, too. 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,

\textsuperscript{16}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.
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-protest nexus” offers no answer to when repression prevents and when it provokes further protests (Davenport 2007). 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 1978,17 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

17The 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.
and editors of I’tilā‘at and Kayhān, the two main newspapers, were approached directly by the prime minister but responded that they had no control over their employees. 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, 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 more than a decade before. 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 contrast, 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, nor was it because security forces were restrained in 1978, but not in 1963. The reason was that in 1963, they did not know how to deal with an internal uprising of such magnitude. To fire on a popular demonstration might seem an easy response, but it is not always an optimal one. Such harsh reactions may or may not indicate state strength, but they do indicate the failure of the state in managing discontent.

6 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). In this section, I compare the organization and the resources of these opposition groups in the early 1960s and the late 1970s.

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 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* and other financial resources of the clergy. However, 

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18 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. The regime had effectively suppressed communists after the 1953 coup. Clandestine militant groups such as Mujāhidin and Fadāʾīn had not been formed in the early 1960s, and did not play a significant role until the late stages of 1979 revolution (Abrahamian 1982, p. 495; Milani 1994, p. 133). See Jafarian (1386 [2007]) for a comprehensive study of opposition groups.
the stipends paid to seminary students indicate the clergy’s financial resources. Khomeini was hesitant to pay a stipend after Burūjirdi’s death because he did not receive much religious taxes (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), 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 mobilization 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). 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 in 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. 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.\footnote{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). Also, see Kazemi (1980) who shows the relatively apolitical attitude of the poor slum-dwellers in the 1970s.}

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 Şâliḥ after the uprising of June 1963. Şâliḥ told him: “Lebaschi, our file was closed. [They] made this June 6 (15 Khurdâd) 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 Burûjirdî in 1961, Sanjâbî, a prominent member of the National Front, sent Shanehchi, another active member of the National Front, to Qom to investigate different existing marjas 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. Tâliqânî, 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 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 marjas (Sharî’t-Madârî and Milânî) 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 marjas; (2) Following the Fayṣiyyih incident in which the security forces attacked seminary students protesting in a madrassah called Fayṣiyyih, 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 cam-
pus” 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 Khurdad) resulting in the cancellation of final exams and the closing of the Tehran University (Arya-Bakhshayesh 1384 [2005]; Ghasempour).

7 The Economy and Economic Policy

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 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.21 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

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20 The data is from the Central Bank of Iran and the Statistical Center of Iran.
21 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.
1977, even higher than its growth rate of 1976, which was 4.4 percent.\textsuperscript{22} 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

\textsuperscript{22}The corresponding per capita growth rates are 1.28 percent in 1976 and 1.46 percent in 1977.
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 that the 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).

8 Conclusion and Discussion

“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 be-
behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics”. It is the persistence of these opposing views that Tilly refers to as the recurrent puzzle of ideological innovation, of which the contrasting views of Skocpol, Sewell, and Parsa are recent examples. This paper confronts this puzzle head-on and argues that ideological innovations had a decisive role in the making of the Iranian Revolution: 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.

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 to contemporary history. 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 Russian 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). 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.\(^{23}\)

The 1989 Tienanmen uprising in China is a more recent example. 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. As for democratic movements in Islamic countries, the development of an Islamic ideology that shows the consistency of Islam with democracy can encourage many devoted Muslim activists to opt for democracy, not just as a convenient mean 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.\(^{24}\) 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

\(^{23}\)Skocpol (1979, p. 94-6) claims that the 1905 Russian Revolution failed because the Russo-Japanese war had not weaken 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 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 bourgeois revolution that were to set the stage for a socialist revolution \textit{in the future} (Ascher 1988; see also Trotsky’s 1905).

\(^{24}\)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 sustaing 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 mean 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?
opposition did not call for further actions: they did not want a regime change. One can’t help but to 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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