

Social Movements, Protest, and Contention

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John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*

A Century of Revolution Social Movements in Iran

John Foran, editor



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an honest professional bureaucracy, ending capitulations, settling the nomadic tribes, expanding Western-style state-supported schools (including girls' schools), opening careers to talent, encouraging Iranian capital development, separating religion and politics, and making Persian the national language. They were disillusioned with universal suffrage, because giving equal votes to peasants and the urban poor had enabled conservative landowners and the ulama to dominate the Fourth Majlis. They opposed provincial autonomy and favored central government. Tajaddud and Socialist objectives meshed well with Reza's own, and the parties were willing to work under military leadership.⁴⁶

Although Western observers sometimes called this reform program socialist, it seems to have owed more to the liberal ideals of the 1789 French Revolution and of American Presbyterian educators, teaching in Iran since 1835,⁴⁷ than to those of the Bolshevik revolution. Tajaddud support encouraged Reza to break with the Qajar past. His government levied new taxes, planned a railway to be financed entirely by Iranian money, built new roads, established a national system of weights and measures, introduced a solar-based *hijri* calendar, imposed conscription, abolished all aristocratic titles, and ordered the adoption of surnames. Tajaddud leaders also supported Reza's continuing military campaigns to unite the country (as did other Majlis groups). During 1924 the army successfully campaigned among the Bakhtiaris and the Lurs.⁴⁸

The Independents (Munfaridin), including Mustaufi al-Mamalik, Mushir al-Dauleh, Taqizadeh, Yahya Daulatabadi, 'Ala, and Musaddiq, also supported Reza within the Fifth Majlis. These constitutionalists, whom Homa Katouzian calls "the Presbyterians of the Persian Revolution," hoped to tap Reza's energy, ability, and patriotism for Iran's progress. Reza met with them regularly, perhaps mainly to keep them quiet until he was able to do without them. In practice, if not intention, they helped him toward supreme power.⁴⁹

Reza miscalculated in March 1924 when he tried to establish a republic. Just before the Majlis under Tadayun's leadership was to vote, Turkey ended the caliphate, galvanizing Muslim opinion against overthrowing the monarchy. While Mudarris filibustered, ulama-led demonstrations forced Reza to retreat. After a pitched battle between a crowd of 5,000 and two Cossack regiments in the Majlis garden on March 22, Reza withdrew to the country. On the 26th he went to Qum to confer with Ayatullahs Ha'iri, Na'ini, and Isfahani, after which they issued a joint statement that Islam prohibited a republic. Reza then resigned from the prime ministry in order to be restored by the Majlis.⁵⁰

Rebuilding Reza's authority after this incident led to further violence. During summer 1924, the government encouraged an ulama-led anti-Baha'i pogrom. In early July, the opposition poet and newspaper editor Mir Zadeh 'Ishqi was murdered by an unknown assailant rumored to be a government agent. On Friday, July 18, American Consul Robert Imbrie was beaten to death by a crowd led by mullahs and largely composed of Cossacks. Reza weathered the diplomatic storm

created by Imbrie's murder and used it to establish martial law in Tehran and to jail his opponents.⁵¹ Then, in the fall, he departed for the south to complete the unification of the country by imposing his will on the previously autonomous British-supported Arab Shaikh Khazal of Muhammareh (Khurramshahr).

Once Khuzistan was subdued, Reza further consolidated his position. He cemented religious support, going to Najaf in January 1925 to confer with Ayatullah Na'ini before returning to Tehran. With the support of Mudarris and Musaddiq, the Majlis then voted him the position of commander in chief of the armed forces, formerly a royal power. During the next months he moved to depose the Qajars, which the Majlis voted on October 31, 1925. Only Taqizadeh, 'Ala, Yahya Daulatabadi, and Musaddiq voted no. Musaddiq's argument that it was not "to achieve dictatorship that people bled their lives away in the Constitutional Revolution" was ignored. A constituent assembly was hastily chosen to change the constitution, and by its vote on December 12, Reza finally achieved total power. Only three Socialist deputies, including Sulaiman Mirza Iskandari, abstained. No one opposed.⁵²

Reformers, Tajaddudists, Socialists, and Independents all were political manifestations of movements referred to above that favored modernization, nationalism, or Islamism. Because of their natural antagonism and other weaknesses, however, they could not achieve their aims unaided. So these men of politics turned to Reza Khan, whose military strength they thought they could use. Instead, Reza manipulated them and discarded them.

Sir Percy Loraine: Appeasing Dictatorship

The crux of the charge that Britain made Reza shah may stem from his complex relationship with British minister Sir Percy Loraine. Contrary to previous British policy, Loraine favored Reza's efforts to create "a stable and self-dependent Persia, capable of maintaining herself unaided . . . a new Persia disciplined and homogeneous."⁵³

Before Loraine arrived in Tehran in mid-December 1921, Britain saw Iran as chaotic, a view caused in part by British bureaucratic disorganization. In addition to legation reports, London received often conflicting information on Iran from consuls, military attachés, the government of India, the Imperial Bank of Persia, the Indo-European Telegraph Department, and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC). In the cabinet, the Foreign Office had to defend its position against other departments whose arguments were strengthened by British public indifference to Iran. Treasury strictures minimized funds available for subsidies to the tribes and British forces. The Foreign Office denied funds to Qavam's government, which it regarded as hostile to British interests. Against Whitehall's advice, however, the Imperial Bank independently financed Cossack expeditions against autonomist movements. British confusion extended even to the key pol-

private dinner, as Mallet had been in the legation during the coup, Oliphant argued that if his hosting Zia became public knowledge, Mallet's hospitality might persuade critics to believe rumors that the coup was planned by the British legation. FO 800, Oliphant papers, Pe/23/6. Proposed for Oriental secretary in Tehran, Edmonds was vetoed by Loraine, who noted, "Edmonds seems to have been mixed up in the Seyyid Zia coup d'état." FO 1011, 11, February 14, 1922.

34. Norman, Tehran, January 24, T. 56, and March 1, 1921, D. 31, FO 371/6403.

35. Norman, Tehran, February 21, T. 121, and March 1, 1921, D. 31, FO 371/6401, 6403.

36. Norman, Tehran, March 3, 1921, T. 135, FO 371/6401. Norman expressed his dismay to Dr. Samuel Jordan, president of the American College of Tehran, on February 25. Jordan to Speer, February 25, 1921, PHS, RG-91-3-18.

37. Curzon to Norman, February 28; Churchill, minute, March 2, 1921, reacting to an intercepted cable from U.S. Minister Caldwell to Secretary of State Hughes. FO 371/6401.

38. Ironside war diary, National Army Museum.

39. Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, 71.

40. E.g., Ellwell-Sutton, "Reza Shah," 18-20; Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 88.

41. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 131; FO 371/9046, 9047; Faghfoory, "The Ulama-State Relations in Iran," 413-32; Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, 27ff.; Muhammad Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, ed. and trans. Homa Katouzian (London: Jebhe, National Movement of Iran, 1988), 5-10, 209-46.

42. Avery, *Modern Iran*, 254; Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, 88; Ramazani, *Foreign Policy of Iran*, 180-81; India Office Records, London, L/P&S/11/210, file no. 573; Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 120; Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 114-42.

43. Norman, Tehran, March 1, 1921, D. 31, FO 371/6403; *Fourth Quarterly Report of the Administrator General of the Finances of Persia* (Tehran, September 24, 1923), 84, preserved in USNA, RG 59, 891.51/328.

44. India Office Records, L/P&S/11/197, P.2545, Foreign Office correspondence with Henry W. R. Tarrant, secretary and manager, BSA Guns, Ltd.; Mahdi Farrukh, *Khatirat-i Sijyasi-yi Farrukh* (The political memoirs of Farrukh) (Tehran, 1969), 222-25, cited by Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 131; Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, 37-38.

45. For a discussion of the British role in this drama, see below.

46. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 121-26, 132-33; Bahar, *Ahza-b-i Sijyasi-yi Iran*, passim; Muhammad Ali Jazayeri, "Kasravi, Iconoclastic Thinker of Twentieth-Century Iran," in Ahmad Kasravi, *On Islam and Shi'ism* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda, 1990).

47. See Michael P. Zirinsky, "A Panacea for the Ills of the Country: American Presbyterian Education in Inter-War Iran," *Iranian Studies* 26 (Winter-Spring 1993); Zirinsky, "Harbingers of Change."

48. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 132-33.

49. Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, 6-8; Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power*, 23; Katouzian, *Political Economy*, 85 and passim. Musaddiq played a key role in Reza's election as commander in chief following suppression of Shaikh Khazal, cooperating with Mudarris. Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, 94-97.

50. Faghfoory, "Ulama-State Relations," 416-18; Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, 28-31; USNA, RG59, 891.00, 1262, 1268; FO 371/10145, file no. 455; in particular, note Oriental Secretary Havard's diary of events surrounding the failure of the republic, Tehran, April 1, 1924. Musaddiq was among those demanding Reza's return. Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, 7; Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power*, 23. Katouzian believes that Musaddiq and other "popular democrats still hoped that it would be possible to contain [Reza] within the constitutional framework."

51. Zirinsky, "Blood, Power, and Hypocrisy."

52. Loraine, Tehran, T. 398, December 12, 1925, FO 371/10840; Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, 6-9; Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power*, 24-25; Ghods, *Iran in the Twentieth Century*, 93-100; Faghfoory, "Ulama-State Relations," 419 and passim. Mudarris spoke against deposing the Qajars, asserting, "Even if you take a hundred thousand votes it would still be unconstitutional," but left the Majlis without voting. Neither he nor Musaddiq was elected to the constituent assembly. Mudarris, slapped during his filibuster against the republic on March 15, 1924, was shot on October 30, 1926; Tehran rumor held that the attack was commissioned by the chief of police on the direct order of the shah. Justice Minister Vussuq told British chargé Harold Nicolson that "all the evidence showed that the attempted murder was the work of the secret police." Havard, Tehran, April 1, 1924, FO 371/10145; Nicolson, Tehran, November 4, 1926, D. 527, FO 371/111481. Mudarris was imprisoned by Reza Shah in 1929 and killed in prison nine years later, strangled while at prayer. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 91-92; Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power*, 272 n. 25.

53. Chargé Harold Nicolson, Tehran, September 30, 1926, D. 486, FO 371/11483.

54. Norman, Tehran, May 25, 1921, and Churchill's response, FO 371/6404. The financial distress was general: see Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 14, 1916-22, *The Stricken World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 531. The careers of Norman and Reginald Bridgeman, chargé d'affaires before Loraine's arrival, were ruined by Curzon, who revealed his frustration in a long letter to Loraine on May 30, 1922, ruing the "complete collapse of British prestige and influence . . . and, as I judge, the universal execration of [our] friends." FO 1011; Waterfield, *Professional Diplomat*, 54-68.

55. Waterfield, *Professional Diplomat*, 1-9, 51-52; Harold Nicolson, *The Evolution of Diplomacy* (New York: Collier, 1962), 75, 111.

56. Oliphant to Loraine, March 6, 1923, FO 1011.

57. Loraine to Trevor, July 6, 1922, copy to Oliphant, FO 371/7807.

58. Loraine, Tehran, January 31, 1922, FO 371/7804.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Loraine, Tehran, T. 83, February 6, 1922, India Office Records, L/P&S/11; Foreign Office, Eastern Department, 34 (Persia) files, 1921-26; Jones, *Banking and Empire in Iran*; Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia*, 11-32, 108-40.

61. Curzon, March 1, 1922, *FRUS*, 1927, vol. 3, 524; Loraine, Tehran, May 24, 1923, FO 371/9024.

62. Loraine, Tehran, May 25, 1926, FO 371/11498.

63. Loraine, Tehran, June 12, 1923, FO 371/9024; Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), 51-64, 102-17; Wright, *The English amongst the Persians*, 2-3, 62-74.

64. Loraine, Tehran, May 17, 21, June 1, 1923; Foreign Office, June 5, 1923, FO 371/9024.

65. Loraine, Tehran, September 1, 3, 8; Curzon, Foreign Office, September 6, 1923, FO 371/9024, 9025.

66. Loraine, Tehran, October 24, 26, 28, 1923, FO 371/9025.

67. Mallet, Oliphant, November 14, 1923, FO 371/9025.

68. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 150; Wright, *The English amongst the Persians*, 72.

69. The Foreign Office regarded the "Lynch Road" as an important British interest. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 111; see also *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Confidential Print*, pt. 1, *From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War*, ser. B, *The Near and Middle East*, David Gillard, ed., vol. 18, *Arabia, the*

The clergy's response to the reforms was divided. Only a small clerical minority that maintained ties to the government supported the shah; they included Ayatullah Mahdavi, Allamah Vahidi, and the Imam Jum'eh of Tehran.⁶¹ Most of the clergy opposed both land reform and the vote for women, but they assumed differing stances on the issues. In some areas, notably Azarbaijan, Isfahan, and Kirman, the clergy were large landholders who stood to lose under the proposed reforms. Land belonging to mosques and religious institutions was also slated to be confiscated. For some preeminent clerics, including Ayatullahs Shari'atmadari and Muhammad Reza Gulpaigani, women's franchise was unacceptable, and they specifically asked the shah to withdraw this proposed reform. Still other clergy, including Ayatullahs Taliqani, Zanjani, and Mahallati Shirazi, adopted a radically different position. They criticized the shah's dictatorship and the capitulation laws and instead advocated justice for the poor.⁶²

Ruhullah Musavi Khumaini was among the preeminent clerics, although relatively young and unknown in the early 1960s. His vociferous opposition to the shah and the proposed reforms soon made him well known. He condemned virtually all the features of the White Revolution and their broader implications for Iran's place in the world. A central theme of many of these attacks was Khumaini's concern for the position of the clergy and Islam, both of which he believed to be threatened by the reforms. Women's suffrage and equality were rejected as a Baha'i principle.⁶³ Land reform was opposed in part because of a lack of support for it within the agrarian sector, and in part for its perceived negative economic consequences.⁶⁴ Even the referendum organized by the shah was condemned as against the interests of the nation. Khumaini opposed the government's policies because he believed they would fortify Iranian Baha'is, Israel, and American imperialism, all of which were potential threats to Islam. Khumaini was alone among Iran's preeminent religious leaders in going beyond strictly religious matters and issuing statements that took up the causes of other social groups, thus facilitating coalitions with other forces opposed to the shah. He denounced Iran's economic penetration by Israel and the United States, the loss of Iranian markets, and bankruptcies among farmers and bazaaris.⁶⁵

Most important, and a point that has been ignored in other analyses of the period, Khumaini was the only political or religious leader at this time who actually called for the overthrow of the shah's regime. In preparation for the Persian New Year in March 1962, Khumaini called for a time of mourning rather than of celebration, "to awaken Muslims and the country to the dangers that are ahead."⁶⁶ In this message, Khumaini demanded that the "despotic government," which had violated the constitution, be overthrown and replaced by a new government that respected Islam and cared for the Iranian people. On the second day of the new year, clerical students in the Faizieh clerical school in Qum organized a ceremony commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq. They were attacked by the army, and a number of students were killed and wounded. Khumaini's re-

sponse was a vehement denunciation of the ruling apparatus and its "Ghenghis Khan-like nature. With this crime, the tyrannical regime guaranteed its own failure and destruction."⁶⁷ In the months that followed, Khumaini repeatedly criticized the shah's regime, specifically its reforms, its violation of Islam and the constitution, and its economic policies, which adversely affected bazaaris. His complete rejection of the government and unwillingness to compromise made him well known and respected within some sections of Iranian society, especially within a segment of the bazaar.

The Shi'i mourning month of Muharram took on a highly political tone in May and June 1963. This observance is marked by public religious ceremonies of mourning characterized by large-scale processions of men marching through the streets, beating their breasts with their arms and chanting. These religious rituals provided a unique opportunity for the expression of political opposition and protest against the government. On June 3, 1963, the actions of participants in the 'Ashura processions were highly politicized. Although organizers tried to block the slogan's from targeting the shah, anti-shah slogans were shouted as the marchers reached the Marble Palace.⁶⁸ The day after the peak of the mourning ceremonies, on June 5, Khumaini was arrested along with a number of other clerics throughout the country. Within a few hours of Khumaini's arrest, popular protests erupted in Tehran, Qum, Mashhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Kashan. This uprising lasted for three days, from June 5 through June 7, and was met by brutal repression. In the end, the uprising failed to dislodge the regime, and in fact, decisive repression solidified the power of the government and the shah. But the price was the breakup of the loose alliance that had existed between the monarch and the clergy since the shah first came to power during World War II.

The Failure of the Uprising

The mourning ceremonies and arrests of Ayatullah Khumaini and a number of other clerics sparked an uprising that presented a unique opportunity for broad segments of the population to voice their opposition to the regime. The movement was unable to bring about a political change, however, largely because of organizational weaknesses and the lack of a strong coalition.

Specifically, two major factors contributed to the uprising's failure. One was the weakening of all opposition organizations in the aftermath of the coup d'etat against Prime Minister Musaddiq in 1953. The Tudeh Party was virtually eliminated at that time, and the National Front lost some of its capacity to mobilize. The other factor was the absence of a coalition among major segments of the population. As a result, the military forces were able to repress and eliminate the opposition for more than a decade. Both of these can be illustrated by examining the second National Front and its inability to mobilize broad segments of the population before and during the June uprising.

24. Eric Hooglund, *Land and Revolution in Iran, 1960-1980* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 50.
25. Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Land Reform and Social Change in Iran* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1987), 11.
26. *Ibid.*, 9-10.
27. *Ibid.*, 66.
28. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Collection of Speeches, Messages, and Interviews of His Majesty Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi* (Tehran, 1962), quoted in Najmabadi, *Land Reform*, 82.
29. Najmabadi, *Land Reform*, 74.
30. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 145.
31. Katouzian, *The Political Economy*, 220.
32. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 142.
33. Katouzian, *The Political Economy*, 221.
34. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 64.
35. Katouzian, *The Political Economy*, 221.
36. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 147.
37. Quoted in Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, 146-47.
38. Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, 423-24.
39. Katouzian, *The Political Economy*, 224.
40. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 175.
41. *Ittila'at*, May 2, 1961.
42. *Ittila'at*, May 3, 1961.
43. Quoted in *Ittila'at*, May 9, 1961.
44. *Ittila'at*, May 2, 1961.
45. *Ittila'at*, May 20, 1963.
46. *Ittila'at*, April 30, 1963.
47. *Ittila'at*, May 21, 1963.
48. *Ittila'at*, May 7, 1961.
49. Interview with Abulqasim Labaschi, conducted by Habib Ladjevardi, February 28, 1983, tape 2, p. 7. This tape recording is part of the Iranian Oral History Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.
50. Bashiriyeh, *The State and Revolution*, 23.
51. *Ittila'at*, January 24, 1963.
52. Labaschi, interview, tape 2, p. 9.
53. *Ittila'at*, May 19, 1963.
54. *Ittila'at*, April 21 and 23, 1963.
55. *Ittila'at*, April 29 and May 16, 1963.
56. Mansoor Moaddel, "The Shi'i Ulama and the State in Iran," *Theory and Society* 15 (1986): 544. According to a sample of 579 individuals in Tehran who participated in the uprising of June 1963, 22.1 percent were workers (9 percent were industrial workers, but only 2.9 percent of these were factory workers), 12.4 percent were students, 9 percent were clergy, 3.8 percent were peasants, 2.8 percent were unemployed, 0.9 percent were housewives, and 0.2 percent were merchants. The largest group were those Moaddel labels the "petty bourgeoisie," which made up 43 percent and included ice cream sellers, vegetable sellers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, grocers, and tailors. Their apprentices constituted an additional 5.9 percent. In terms of the occupational structure of the population of Tehran, virtually all groups except these were underrepresented.
57. Bizhan Jazani, *Tarh-i Jama'eh Shinasi va Mabani-yi Stratijiy-i Junbish-i Inqilabi-*

- yi Khalq-i Iran* (Sociological sketch and fundamentals of the strategy of the revolutionary movement in Iran) (Tehran: Maziar, 1979), 144.
58. K. S. McLachlan, "Land Reform in Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 1, *The Land of Iran*, ed. W. B. Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 690.
59. Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 24.
60. *Ibid.*, 25.
61. Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 103.
62. *Ibid.*, 101.
63. Ruhullah Khumaini, *Sahifeh-i Nur*, 16 vols. (Tehran: Ministry of Guidance, 1983), 1:56.
64. *Ibid.*, 1:70, 1:152-53.
65. *Ibid.*, 1:112.
66. *Ibid.*, 1:27.
67. *Ibid.*, 1:38.
68. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 178.
69. Siavoshi, *Liberal Nationalism*, 100-101.
70. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 151.
71. Katouzian, *The Political Economy*, 221.
72. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 164.
73. Katouzian, *The Political Economy*, 222.
74. Siavoshi, *Liberal Nationalism*, 102.
75. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, 167.
76. *Ibid.*, 184.
77. *Ibid.*, 164.
78. *Ibid.*, 130-31.
79. *Ittila'at*, May 20, 1963.
80. Farhad Kazemi and Ervand Abrahamian, "The Nonrevolutionary Peasantry of Modern Iran," *Iranian Studies* 11 (1978): 259-304.
81. *Ittila'at*, March 20, 1962.
82. Akhavi, *Religion and Politics*, chap. 5.