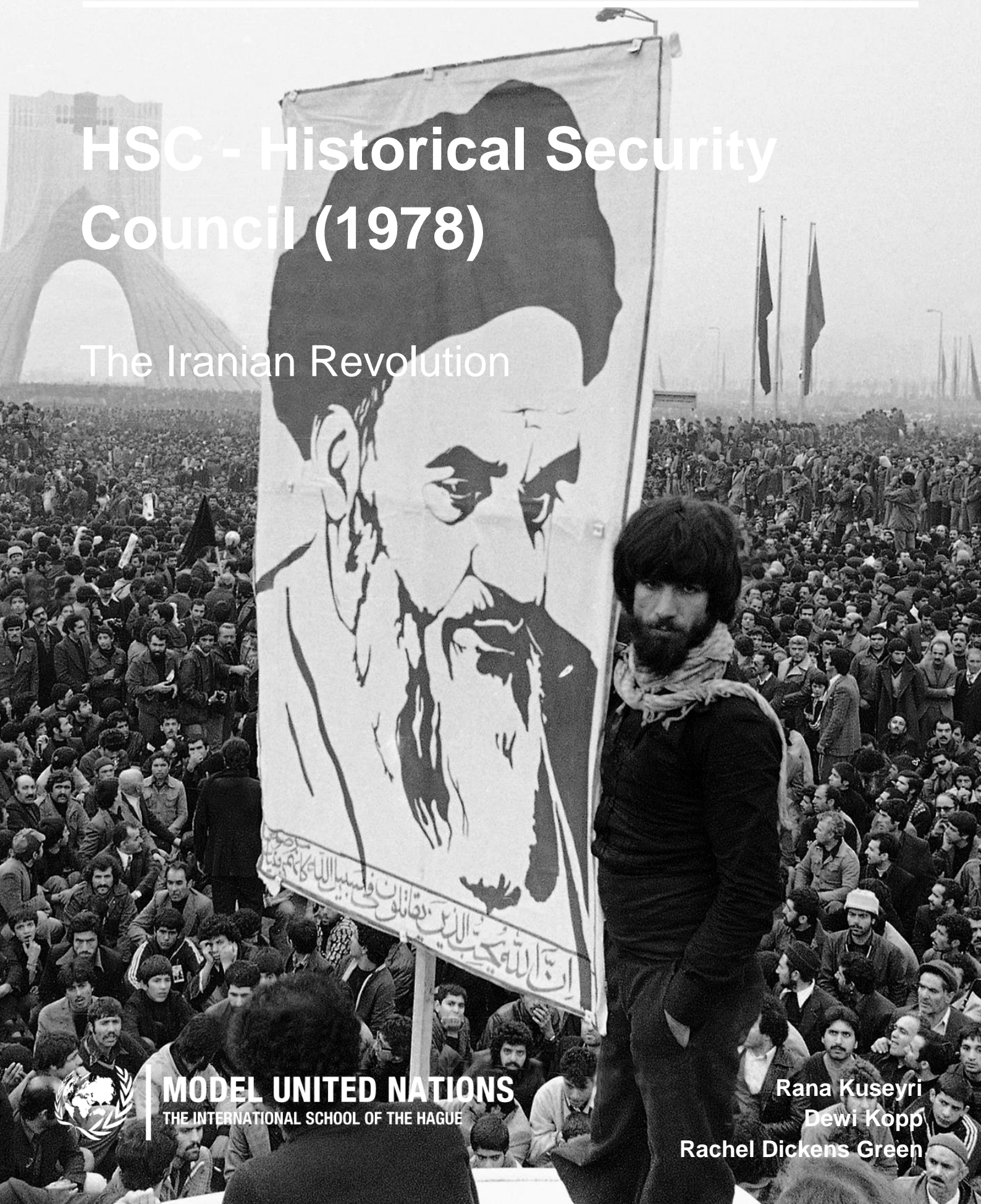


HSC - Historical Security Council (1978)

The Iranian Revolution



Forum: Historical Security Council (1978)

Issue: The Iranian Revolution

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Introduction

This week on the 2nd of December 1978, more than two million people gathered at the Azadi Square and surrounding streets of Tehran, demanding the removal of the Shah and return of Khomeini. The restless situation continues despite the efforts of the Shah. The Iranian Revolution began earlier this year as the demonstrations gathered millions of people to take the streets, but the protests began far earlier when the reign of the Shah was growing more tyrannical and his reforms caused more poverty. His Western focus was also not preferred by many of his nationals and the anti-Islamic implementation strongly upset the clerics in the country. But this issue has a large prehistory. The Shia Islam played a great role in the situation and also the father of the present Shah has had influence on the issue today. He was a dictator as well, and the present Shah surely has inherited his Western ideologies. In the following research report, a detailed explanation of the events leading up to the Iranian Revolution can be found that will hopefully provide the needed information to achieve a fruitful debate and is written in the context of 1978.

Definition of Key terms

Demonstration

A public meeting or march, at which people show that they are protesting against or supporting somebody or someone.

Dictatorship

Government by a dictator, a ruler who has complete power over a country, especially one who has gained it using military force.



Industrialisation

If a country industrializes and industries are developed. The country starts to focus on manufacturing services and goods, as it was based on agriculture before. Mechanical production replaces manual labour and technological innovation is used to solve issues.

Megalomania

A mental illness or condition in which somebody has an exaggerated belief in their own importance or power.

Religious expression

Things that people say, write or do in order to show their connection with a particular religion.

Revolution

An attempt, by a large number of people, to change the government of a country, especially by violent action.

Theocracy

A government of a country by religious leaders to rule by the religious law in the name of god.

Ulema

Authorities or scholars who are specialized in the Muslim law and religion.

General Overview

To gather a better understanding of the present situation, it is best to take a look at the fundamental identity of Iran. In Iran, or former Persia, the Shia Muslims have a majority unlike in most Islamic countries, as shown below in Figure 1. The split between the Sunni and the Shia Muslims occurred after the death of the prophet Mohammed in 632AD, when these two groups couldn't agree on who the successor of the prophet should be. The Sunnis were of the opinion that the one to succeed Mohammed should be the best suitable individual. The Shia Muslims believed the successor should be of the same blood as Mohammed and claimed that Ali, his son-in-law, was to be the next ruler. This can be found in the name of the group as Shia comes from 'Shiat Ali', which means 'Party of Ali'. Ali and his two sons were all killed on purpose and from these events come the Shia concepts of the 40th mourning day and martyrdom as important religious expressions. There are with no doubt a lot more differences between Sunnism and Shiism and a few can be found in the Appendix



1, but these are some that play a role in the Iranian Revolution. Previously it was already mentioned that Iran is one of the few nations in which Shia live as religious majority. During the Safavid dynasty in 1501 Shiism was even adopted as state religion.

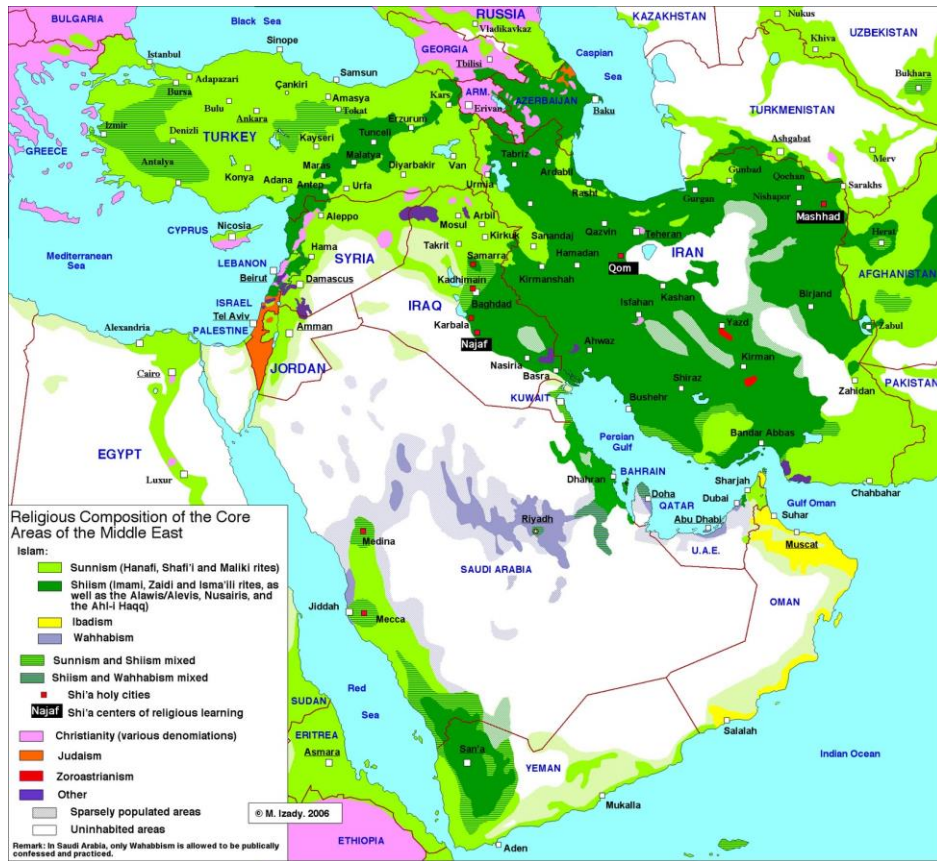


Figure 1. Middle Eastern Religious Composition Map

Beat, Matt. "My Map Gallery." *Cartography and Geographic Information Systems Laboratory*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Aug. 2016. <<http://maps.unomaha.edu/Peterson/geog1000/MapLinks/ReligionMaps.html>>.

Pahlavi dynasty

The Pahlavi dynasty began with Reza Pahlavi, who had overthrown the government of the Qajar dynasty as an officer with the help of the Brits in 1921. Soon after, he established a military regime by repressing nomadic tribes and other rebellions and gained control-over the police and the military forces. In 1925, he crowned himself the new Shah of Persia and by doing so he founded the Pahlavi dynasty. As an admirer of the developments in Turkey by Mustafa Kemal, he started to modernize his country in a Western manner. The Sharia law was replaced by a new civil code and there were laws that forced the population to wear clothes similar to those worn in the West. Furthermore, he had a Trans-Iranian railway built all the way from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea, which can be seen in

Figure 2, and other initiatives stimulated Iran's industrialisation. The Shah also established a national public education system and he sent hundreds of Iranian men to train in Europe, including his son. In 1935 he renamed the country Iran, as Persia only bore the name of one



ethnic group present in the country. The modernizing changes made new social classes to emerge, however, not everything was swell. Reza Shah held a strong preference for centralized government. However, his regime was no more than an instrument to perform dictatorial repression. This caused dissatisfaction. From 1936 onwards, all judges had to be educated at the newly founded Teheran University and clerics were forbidden to practice the law in state courts. This was not a welcomed change for the Iranian clergy, or *ulema*.

Figure 2. Map showing location of Caspian Sea and Persian Gulf in comparison to Iran

"Climate - Iran." *Climate Iran: Temperature (°C), Precipitation, When to Go, What to Pack*. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.climatestotravel.com/climate/iran>>.

Despite the Western path Reza Shah took, he tried to decrease involvement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Great Britain. This was somewhat caused by the fact that Britain wouldn't give the Shah a share of the Anglo Iranian Oil Company, which was established just after the Second World War. The dissociation led Iran to seek technical expertise from other countries, such as France and Germany, as this was needed to carry out many of the Shah's modernisation projects. When in World War II Great Britain became the enemy of Germany, Iran firstly took hold as neutral country. Nevertheless Britain was sure that German technicians in Iran were all spies with missions to incapacitate their oil facilities and insisted that all German people had to be expelled. The Shah refused to do this and so found himself on the German side during the war.

Mohammad Reza Shah

After the German invasion of the USSR the Soviet Union and Britain acquired each other as allies. Together they understood the benefits having the Trans-Iranian Railroad

under their control. The route was a great opportunity for transportation from the Persian Gulf to the USSR. The new allies tried to pressure the Shah but to no avail. The Shah refused and USSR and Great Britain decided that an invasion was the only option. By doing so, they also hoped to secure Iran's oil fields and its refinery from falling into German possession. The Shah's refusal to expel German individuals was the straw that broke the camel's back. On August 25 1941, British and Russian troops entered the country. They took control of the railroad and other communications. At last they send the reigning Shah Pahlavi into exile and put his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi on the Peacock throne on 16 September 1941. With his 22 he was a fairly inexperienced leader, so in his first years he primarily stayed out of politics and simply enjoyed life. The country was ruled by the government and there weren't any drastic restraints, as during the reign of Reza Pahlavi.

In January 1942, an agreement was signed between Iran, Britain and the Soviet Union to retreat the troops. Later that year, Iran received military aid from the United States to maintain its forces and the Trans-Iranian railway. This indicates how the Shah kept the Western world close as he began to show similarities to his father. Although he had vowed to position himself as a constitutional monarch, he soon finds himself more and more involved in political issues. Frequently, he opposed his own prime ministers leading to the overthrow of the government and prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddegh. After he nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, tensions between Iran and Great Britain rose increasingly and finally the Brits set up a boycott. This and the unstable economy lead to a coup against Mosaddegh in 1953 with help from the CIA. All of it was done with approval of the Shah and soon afterwards he emerged as a true dictator. After an attempt of assassination in 1949, Mohammad Reza Shah had already banned the communist Tudeh party and later he set up his own secret service: Organization of Intelligence and National Security or SAVAK. The SAVAK was guided by the United States' (US) CIA and the work force was trained by Israel's Mossad. With this organisation, his reliance on manipulation comes forth clearly, as the function of the SAVAK was to suppress all who were against the Shah and to keep the Iranian population as socially and politically unaware as possible. The SAVAK was commonly known for its cruel methods, including whipping, electric shock, inserting broken glass and pouring boiling water into the rectum, beating, the extraction of teeth and nails and tying weights to the testicles.

Another significant trait of the Shah was his army. He received a lot of weapons from the USA and his army was fully equipped with the latest technical devices. He hoped to ensure the power was under royal control with these military forces. The Iranian army then became the fifth largest in the world. However, many inhabitants were discontent with Mohammad's involvement with the United States. The presence of many Americans in Iran



didn't please them and they felt as if the USA had replaced Great Britain, as Western influential country.

Another concern was the economic problems, which came with the Shah's ruling. He had implemented certain reforms to try and gain more popularity in his country, but instead they caused him opposition. Many clerics and landlords spoke out against them. One of them was ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He gave a fatwa, a religious decree, against the reforms. For example, when the Shah had declared that changes would take Iran 'into the jet age', he said the *ulema* wanted to stay 'in the age of the donkeys'. The Shah had made himself less popular with the country's population, and numbers of clergy, who hadn't picked a side, shifted to Khomeini's. A lot of Muslims, mostly clerics, were also against many Western influences, such as but not limited to smoking, alcohol, movies and Western clothing, which were introduced by the former Shah and encouraged by the present one. Some discontent clerics still remembered that Reza Shah had banned the *ulema* from state courts and when Mohammad Reza Shah gave himself the power to initiate legislation, the clerics were far from happy. In the meantime, the gap between poor and rich only widened. This sparked discussion among foreign politicians. In June 1961, Khrushchev, the then premier of the USSR, warned former American president Kennedy about the situation. He said that Iran was "so poor that the country has become a volcano and changes are bound to occur sooner or later. The Shah will certainly be overthrown." After this the United States insists that new reforms have to come. This led to the White Revolution.

White Revolution

The White Revolution was the plan of the Shah to give his country an enormous boost. It included immense agrarian reforms that had to provide each farmer its own patch of land. More social services were established and modern industries sprang up like mushrooms. The amount of doctors increased threefold and the number of hospital beds doubled. There was even a special team that was determined to exterminate illiteracy. In the book 'Iran Between Two Revolutions', it stated that 'oil incomes increased from \$555 million in 1964 to \$20 billion in 1976'. A lot of the money was again invested in education and infrastructure. Infant mortality fell and the population grew. Foreign countries admired it and thought of the Shah as a stabilizing factor. Still, the Shah wasn't popular. He suffered from megalomania, which was clearly visible during the resplendent celebration of 2500 years Persian existence. He still made use of the SAVAK quite frequently to suppress opponents and corruption was not uncommon in his government. Other than that, poverty was nonetheless incredibly common in Iran. Trading Economics stated that the inflation rate



changed from 30 to 50 percent in only a year. The Shah tried to oversee this by controlling the prices, only to receive more critics from merchants.

A distinctive group that had complaints about the rule of the Shah were the ulema. They were strongly against the reforms that granted more women rights, including voting rights. The main figure between the clerics was ayatollah Khomeini, who was already mentioned before. He was in favour of a theocracy and had special vision of theocracy called *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), that shortly means that the ruler is an Islamic jurist who makes sure the Sharia is properly followed. Furthermore, he was a charismatic speaker and a great organizer in the demonstrations. In a smart way Khomeini achieves to get people to follow him by responding to the two most important sentiments under the Iranian population: the call for more freedom and democracy, mainly from the intellectual circle and opposition against the import of Western good from the conservative corner.

Demonstrations

On the 22th of March 1963, theological students were protesting against planned openings of liquor stores. Whilst doing so, the SAVAK and paratroopers attacked them. As this was the first demonstration against which was so violently handled by the government, the news swiftly spread the country. Also, in the holy city of Qom, where Khomeini was a lecturer at seminars, the occurrence was known. Khomeini went to honour the dead and in his speech he called the Shah a dictator. This was not unnoticed and the government decided to take their revenge. On June 5 Khomeini was arrested, which only caused more riots. These riots the Shah again tried to oppress with tanks, troops and air force. A lot of people were arrested and the government sent Khomeini into exile. Khomeini settled himself in Iraq in a Shia community. This harsh behaviour against the cleric broadened the Shah's opposition only more and more. In Iraq Khomeini still stayed active, as he sent tape recordings and pamphlets against the monarchy into Iran.

For some time, it was relatively quiet from the religious opposition of the Shah. But definitely changes. The establishment of book censorship in 1966 by which police raided mosque libraries created a lot of hostility, but the implementation of a new law that allowed women to apply for divorce without the husband's permission made the clerics outrageous. This was in any way against the Sharia law. When the Shah in 1976 replaced the Islamic calendar with a Western one, he further upset the *ulema* and his actions were considered anti-Islamic.

It is quite ironic that the revolution burst out just as the shah began to give his citizens more breathing space. In 1976, he prohibited the use of torture for the SAVAK, the press got a bit more freedom and his opposition received the opportunity to organize itself more freely. This was thanks to the USA president Jimmy Carter. He suggested that Iran should improve on the area of human rights; otherwise American aid would be stopped. In February 1977, the Shah released 357 political prisoners and so the lid of repression was slightly opened. Writers and publishers got together to demand for freedom of thought and open letters were sent to the Shah. Other people went to the streets but were met by the police. When in late October 1977 the son of ayatollah Khomeini died under mysterious circumstances, his death was suspected to be caused by the SAVAK. Protests took place in all of Iran.

After the publishing of an article against Khomeini by one of the Shah's minister, theological colleges in Qom shut their doors as form of protest. In January 1978, 4000 theological scholars took to the streets to demand restoration of freedoms. The students encountered armed police and when they challenged them to shoot, the police shot instead. There were several killings. Such protest only called for more demonstrations, as the dead were seen as martyrs, who are wholly respected in Shia Islam and the protests also became to grow more violent. The Shah felt threatened by all these demonstrations and tried to apologize to his citizens. He increased the number of people who could make the pilgrimage to Mecca. He put a stop to the controlling of the prices and banned movies that were considered pornographic. Furthermore, he removed the head of the SAVAK and asked his family to sever ties with commercial interests. But all to no avail. The demonstrations continue.

One day, the Shah declares martial law again. Barricades came up around Tehran. People armed themselves with rocks and Molotov cocktails. It was 8 September 1978, later known as Black Friday. Numbers were shot at the Jaleh Square but how many depended on which side you were. This action only led to more demonstration and everyone was a part from it.

As Khomeini obviously posed a threat for the Shah and his government by calling upon Iranian citizens to take measures into their own hands, the Shah decided that Iraq was to close for the imam and hoped to find a place for him where he would become more silent. On September 24 1978, the house of Khomeini was encircled by troops who informed him that he was wished to seek a residence outside of Iraq. Around a week later, Khomeini flew to Paris but in a way this only made Khomeini more popular as he was seen as a martyr denied from his own country.



Major Parties Involved

Iran

Iran is of course the country where our issue takes place. The majority of its population is Shia Muslim. At the moment, the leader is Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The Iranian Revolution is mainly against his reign, as Iranians despise his strong ties with the Western world and feel that he rules as a true dictator.

Great Britain

From 1908 to 1951 Great Britain used to be in possession of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. During that time, the Brits used Iran to extend their industrial imperialism. In World War I, Britain and the USSR invaded Iran to achieve the Trans-Iranian railway. They didn't retreat until 1942. After that, Great Britain didn't play a big role in Iran's history anymore.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

The Soviet Union put great interest in the Trans-Iranian railway and the Iranian oil fields in WWI and decided to invade Iran with Great Britain. Their groups didn't retreat at exactly the same time as the British, as they wished to ensure Soviet security and to assist Iranian rebel groups in the North. The relation between Iran and the USSR embittered when the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party was banned in Iran.

United States of America

The USA became involved in Iran in World War II. They then gave military aid and never stopped doing so. The CIA helped with the overthrow of Prime Minister Mosadegh and with the setup of the Iranian secret service. Iranian universities were even modelled on American universities such as MIT. In 1977, Jimmy Carter warned the Shah to improve his human rights record and so leading to the White Revolution. Because of that the USA saw Iran as a stable country but this view shifted a bit with the beginning of the demonstrations and the Iranian Revolution.

Timeline of Key Events

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| February 1921 | Reza Khan overthrows government with help of Britain and by doing so ending the Qajar dynasty |
| 15 December 1925 | Reza Khan crowned himself the new Shah of Persia, renaming himself Reza Shah Pahlavi and thereby starting the Pahlavi dynasty |

1935	Persia is renamed Iran
1936	Reza Shah Pahlavi prohibits clerics as judges in state courts
25 August 1941	Britain and USSR invaded Iran, sent him into exile and took control of the Iranian communication network and railroad
16 September 1941	Mohammad Reza Shah became the new Shah
January 1942	Britain, USSR and Iran sign agreement to respect Iran's independence and to withdraw troops within six months
1942	US sent military help to operate and maintain Iranian railroad
1943	Tehran Conference, US reaffirms the agreement between Britain, USSR and Iran
1945	USSR refuses to leave North-Western Iranian provinces of Azerbaijan as pro-Soviet movements begin to develop
May 1946	USSR withdraw its troops in Iran
1949	The banning of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party because of an assassination attempt on the Shah
2 May 1951	Nationalisation of Iranian oil fields
1951	Revolt against Shah is repressed with help of the CIA and further suppression increases
1954	Mohammad Reza Shah overthrows the Mossadeq regime with help from the CIA
1957	SAVAK, Organization of Intelligence and National Security, is formed
1963	White Revolution
1963	Iranian women receive the right to vote
22 March 1963	In Qom, a holy city, theological students that were protesting against the opening of liquor stores were attacked by paratroopers and the SAVAK
5 June 1963	Arrest of Ayatollah Khomeini which causes more anti-government riots



1964	Ayatollah Khomeini is released but sent into exile
5 September 1965	Ayatollah Khomeini leaves Turkey for Najaf, Iraq
1966	Book censorship is established
1967	Women get the right to apply for divorce without the husband's permission
21 Jan – 8 Feb 1970	Khomeini's lectures on <i>vilâyat-i faqîh</i> , his ideology of theocracy
1971	Celebration of 2500 years Persia existence
1975	Shah abolishes Iran's two political parties and replaces them with the Resurgence party
1976	Mohammed Reza Shah replaces Islamic calendar with secular calendar
February 1977	Shah releases 357 political prisoners
23 October 1977	Khomeini's son Mustafa dies mysteriously, which was attributed to the Savak and thus causing many protests
January 1978	Demonstration of 4000 theology students demanding restoration of freedoms in which many were killed
8 September 1978	Black Friday, shooting at a demonstration at the Jaleh Square in Teheran
24 September 1978	Khomeini's house in Najaf is surrounded by troops after which he is informed he is no longer welcome in Iraq because of his political activity
3 October 1978	Khomeini leaves Iraq for Paris
7 November 1978	Shah broadcasts on TV a promise not to repeat his mistakes and to make amends
8 November 1978	Shah arrests thirteen members of his own government



Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There have been no previous attempts made by the United Nations to resolve the issue. However, there have been attempts made by the Shah. He mainly tried to apologize in ways that were mentioned in the General Overview but he was unsuccessful to tone down the demonstrators.

Possible Solutions

What is important to keep in mind is that demonstrators have been so driven that it will be hard to change their minds. They mainly believe the Shah has to be overthrown and Khomeini has to come back. The strongest believers of this are the theological scholars who are opposed to everything that has Western roots. The longing for freedom and democracy comes from the intellectual demonstrators. They feel the Shah's regime was way too corrupt and that fundamental political changes have to be made. Furthermore there are people who took part in the protests but do not belong in these two groups. Most of them got swept up in the energy of the demonstrations and under these circumstances there was probably a part of the Iranian population that felt too afraid to state their opinion if it was different from the masses. It is important to keep in mind all the diverse ideas and to act somewhat along the wishes of the groups as they are the inhabitants of Iran that have to live with the consequences of certain decisions. When they are not satisfied they will probably again take the streets and the chaos in Iran will then not come to an end.

Possible solutions could be again modernisation but as this created a lot of opposition during the White Revolution, a different course would have to be taken. A broader focus on poverty is definitely necessary as the White Revolution left to increase the gap between rich and poor.

An option could be to react with military intervention from forces outside Iran. Perhaps these can easier control the situation than the Shah's army because the demonstrators are mainly opposed to the Shah. But the worship of martyrdom in Shia Islam has to be taken into account and more casualties will undoubtedly lead to more protests. Something could be done about the lack of UN involvement as well. They have stayed out of the issue as well as most other countries, as Iran continued to participate in UN peacekeeping missions in its region and because of the Shah's Western reign. Therefore Iran was seen as a reliable country.

A possibility, which Iran's population would probably prefer, could be the resignation of the Shah. Then the figure against whom the turmoil is about would leave the picture. Maybe this

will ease the mind of the opposition and would open them up for new reforms. A replacement of the Shah and his government could be a democratic regime without nepotism and corruption but that has to be insured by certain measures, as the country probably still is quite unsettled. Another reason that a replacement would be advisable is that if the Shah were to resign, the country would most likely fall in to political instability. It could be possible to give Khomeini a political role as he can be seen as leader through the Iranian revolution so Iranian citizens will certainly listen to him and he also has a wish to return to Iran.

Appendices

Appendix 1: BBC Sunnis and Shia: Islam's ancient schism
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709>

Appendix 2: Iran Chamber Society Historic Periods & Events
http://www.iranchamber.com/history/history_periods.php

Appendix 3: Macrohistory and world timeline The Iranian Revolution
<http://www.fsmitha.com/h2/ch29ir.html>

Appendix 4: Religionfacts Shi'a Islam
<http://www.religionfacts.com/shia>

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