

IRAN UPRISING — 2023 —

**NO MONARCHY, NO THEOCRACY;
DEMOCRACY AND EQUALITY**

IRAN Uprising 2023:

No Monarchy, No Theocracy; Democracy and Equality

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Chapter 1: Unpacking the 2023 Revolution	9
Top Five Characteristics of the Uprisings	11
Six decades of fighting two dictatorships	14
Chapter 2: Three Obstacles	16
Internal Repression	16
Appeasement	17
Fake Alternatives	18
Chapter 3: Promotion of Fake Opposition Figures	19
The Myth of Reformists and Moderates	19
From Reformists to Fake Opposition	20
Tehran's Cyber Army and the 80-20 Rule	22
Chapter 4: How Shah's Repression Paved the Way for Khomeini	23
The 1979 Anti-monarchical Revolution	23
Historic Collaboration of the Shah and the Clergy	27

Chapter 5: Who is Reza Pahlavi?

28

The National Council of Iran	29
Contacts with the IRGC	31
Serious Questions for Reza Pahlavi	33
Like Father, Like Son	34
Torture, Prisons, and SAVAK	36
Bizarre Views	37
Criminal Legacy.	40

Chapter 6: The Path Forward

43

Executive Summary

Since September 2022, Iran has experienced unprecedented nationwide anti-regime uprisings, with many Iranians calling for an overthrow of the regime in favor of a democratic and free Iran. The uprisings have rapidly become radical in nature and have engulfed every sector and corner of Iranian society, reflecting the reality that the country is now on the precipice of a revolution to overthrow the ruling theocracy and establish a secular, democratic, and non-nuclear republic.

The uprisings have not occurred in a vacuum; they are the culmination of decades of organized resistance to the regime and persistent advocacy for freedom and democracy. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) and its principal member the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) have played a pivotal role in leading the decades-long fight for freedom in Iran and against dictatorships, both of the Shah and now of the clerical regime.

The ongoing protests in Iran are actually a revolution in the making. There are five key characteristics of the protest movements: 1) their continuity and consistency; 2) their rapid radicalization and clear demands for regime change; 3) the rejection of all forms of dictatorship (symbolized by the popular slogan “death to the oppressor, be it a Shah or a Leader [Khamenei]”); 4) their organization and coordination, especially with regards to the role of the MEK’s Resistance units; 5) the leading role of women in the uprising, as a result of key leadership role they played in the opposition over the past decades.

However, there are several potential obstacles to the current uprisings, taking lessons from the past to ensure history is not repeated. The obstacles to the success of the ongoing revolution include: 1) the increased level of internal repression by the regime and its propaganda, 2) appeasement policy by the West, and 3) the rise of fake opposition figures that ultimately ward off the possibility of regime change. While Iranians are showing they are no longer deterred by the regime’s violence and many Western leaders are learning from

the mistakes of past appeasement, the third obstacle remains ever-present and must be resisted.

One must note the historical efforts by the regime to derail popular uprisings by diverting internal and international attention to fake opposition figures who lack the will or capability to overthrow the regime. In the past, this strategy was largely employed through the elevation of fake “reformist” politicians in Iran who gave Western leaders a false hope that the regime could be reformed from within.

The latest attempt to distract from the revolution by highlighting fake opposition figures is evident in the campaign to elevate monarchy, which was swept out of power by the Iranian people during the 1979 revolution, as part of the historic collaboration of the clergy and monarchy.

However, the legacy of 57 years of Pahlavi dynasty includes the imprisonment, torture, and execution of Iranian political activists and intellectuals by the Shah and his secret police, SAVAK. Perhaps most significantly, the Shah’s political repression and single-party dictatorship paved the way for Khomeini to come to power in 1979, since the Shah had eliminated all voices of dissent but had left the clergy much room to expand. Indeed, Shah’s historic collaboration with the clergy took place at a time when all other political opposition groups were suppressed, imprisoned, or executed.

This explains the demands of Iranians in the streets with their chants of “Death to the dictator, be it the Shah or the supreme leader,” as they look to a bright future devoid of any form of dictatorship.

Leaders in the West should stand with the Iranian people in their bid for a democratic revolution against their tyrannical rulers. Additionally, it is crucial that Western leaders do not provide legitimacy to any groups or individuals that are, directly or indirectly, associated with any form of dictatorships, current or in the past.

Introduction

Since mid-September 2022, a revolution has been in the making in Iran. The initial protests rapidly spread all over the country, engulfing over 280 cities in all 31 provinces. The killings of hundreds and the arrests of tens of thousands have failed to stop the yearning of the Iranian people for a democratic, free republic based on separation of religion and state.

In recent years, Tehran has needed new tactics to prevent its downfall. After the public loudly rejected the “moderate” faction and engaged in widespread uprisings since 2018, Khamenei had to shed that faction and install Ebrahim Raisi as president, as well as further empower the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), including in its parliament.

To replace the political benefits of touting the currently useless moderate faction, Tehran has resorted to surreptitiously hyping the remnants of the deposed monarchical dictatorship to muddy the waters and beguile the West. The unprecedented level of crimes by the mullahs have given the Pahlavi family, despite its history of dictatorship, corruption, torture and single party rule, in association with others, the opportunity to paint their fake alternative as genuine. Khamenei covertly or overtly uses the remnants of the past dictatorship, to undermine the uprising, since it knows well that the monarchic alternative is a non-starter.

Meanwhile, even though, the West has become more critical of the regime’s repression of the protesters, but has yet to take any meaningful actions to side with the Iranian people and recognize their right to defend themselves against the IRGC and overthrow the theocracy. Despite overwhelming support in European parliaments, its capitals have failed to designate the IRGC as terrorist.

On the anniversary of the genuine popular revolution of February 1979 (stolen by the mullahs), this manuscript examines three obstacles to the success of

the ongoing Iran revolution in 2023: It deals with Tehran's repressive and propaganda tactics, the failure of the West to fully abandon the appeasement policy, and the revival of the historic collaboration of the Shah (now the son of the Shah, Reza Pahlavi), and the clergy (now the ruling theocracy, the IRGC and the Intelligence Ministry). Unlike the West, the Iranian public has a deep understanding of the historic collaboration of the Shah and the clergy; thus, the popular and widespread chants of "Death to the Oppressor, be it the Shah or the Supreme Leader (Khamenei)" heard across Iran.

Chapter 1:

Unpacking the 2023 Revolution

Since mid-September 2022, a new wave of anti-regime protests has broken out across Iran. Now in its fifth month, the continuity of the unrest has far outlasted all previous cases since 2017. Over 130 key universities have engaged in demonstrations which have engulfed some 280 cities in all 31 provinces. Unlike past uprisings, the unrest has transformed into a universal call for regime change and a democratic revolution spearheaded by women and youth. What is happening in Iran are no longer protests; rather, it is a revolution in the making.

Regardless of what the regime does, and despite all its efforts to derail or even temporarily pause the uprising, the situation in Iran will never return to its pre-September 2022 status.

The message of the protesters is strikingly unified throughout Iran and is focused on the overthrow of the regime. The universal slogan is “Death to the dictator, death to Khamenei.” Other dominant slogans target the heart of the regime while rejecting dictatorships of the past, notably the single-party rule of the Shah and its notorious secret police, SAVAK. This includes the widely heard chants of “Death to the oppressor, be it a Shah or a Leader [Khamenei].”

University, high school, and middle school students have turned out as the scope and geographic expanse of the uprising expands to all social sectors. Workers, bazaar merchants, and the business sector have joined the strikes and protests.

Tehran wants to discredit the protesters by painting them as driven by foreign agitators. The reality is that Iran is now unified around a singular message. Iranians from all walks of life—from the Kurds to the Arabs, from the Baluchis to all ethnicities—seek an end to the rule of the clerics. Beyond that, Iranians seek a true democracy. As the *Washington Post* reported on October 21, “One new iteration—‘Death to the Shah, Death to the religious leader,’ captures the consistent repudiation of autocratic rule among Iranians.”



Demonstrators on the streets of Tehran in September 2022, shortly after the nationwide protest started which spread to over 280 cities in all 31 provinces of Iran.

Those leading the fight to confront the repressive forces on the ground are setting the pace and leading the way in the streets, as the nation is ever more unified behind chants of “Death to Khamenei.” The protests are increasingly organized and on message, leaving little room for Tehran’s plots to derail the movement. Over forty years of organized resistance against the regime, including in Iranian prisons and at a very high price, such as the 1988 massacre of thousands of political prisoners, have created a culture of defiance, based on which the new generation is now operating in the streets.

Top Five Characteristics of the Uprisings

1. Continuity: Despite the repression, killings and large-scale arrests, the protests continue and the regime's efforts to end them have failed. To the contrary, the anger among Iranians has deepened. Iran's new generation of young people, students and women are at the forefront. University students have spearheaded defiance that has shocked the regime, in the face of brutal beatings, arrests, and attacks.

The uprising has transcended all ethnic, religious, economic and social boundaries. Workers and farmers are joined by teachers, physicians, nurses, and many in the bazaar, which used to be a stronghold of the ayatollahs. The general populace also overwhelmingly supports the protests, and many passersby honk their car horns while bystanders cheer on the protesters from the doors and balconies of their houses.

The wall of fear has visibly cracked; fear of the regime has been replaced by outrage, anger, and a determination to sacrifice for change. In dozens of cases, people arrested by security forces or plainclothes thugs have been set free by other protesters. Additionally, there have been retaliations against several Basij members by those they had attacked. Protesters declare, "We do not fear anymore; we fight," and "For every protester who is killed, a thousand more rise," signaling their unrelenting commitment to overthrowing the regime.

2. Focus on regime change and Khamenei: The people realize that Khamenei represents the regime as a whole, and target him for regime change, as evident in their chants. Many of the slogans in the protests call for the overthrow of the entire system of *Velayat-e Faqih*, including all of the elements that maintain that regime. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and the Basij as well as the State Security Forces are all tools to keep the *Velayat-e Faqih* regime headed by Khamenei in power.

3. Clear rejections of present and past dictatorships: The slogans of the current movement are very clear, calling for the overthrow of the entirety of the regime and rejecting all forms of oppressive dictatorship. *The New York*

Times reported on Sept 22, "In the northern city of Rasht, protesters took over a street, chanting ... 'Death to the oppressor, be it the shah or the supreme leader!'" The slogan reported by the NYT also appears on streets throughout Iran (a sample is shown on the following image).

Some of the chants heard loudly across the country include:

- ▶ "Death to the dictator; death to Khamenei!"
- ▶ "This is the year of sacrifice; Seyed Ali [Khamenei] is going to fall!"
- ▶ "Death to the oppressor, be it a Shah or a Leader [Khamenei]"
- ▶ "No to monarchy; no to theocracy; democracy and equality!"
- ▶ "We will fight, we will die; we will take back our Iran!"
- ▶ "Freedom, freedom, freedom!"



4. Organized and focused: A central theme of the protest movement in Iran is the resolve and organization of the Iranian people. A network of Resistance units affiliated with the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK) have for six years spread a culture of defiance in the face of the religious dictatorship

by torching regime symbols, posters, statues, IRGC and Basij centers, and pursuing regime change. These units have gradually increased in number, size, geographic expanse, and operational capabilities. They have played their role during the 2017 and 2019 uprisings and are playing their role in the 2022 uprisings.

These Resistance units are helping to guide, support, and direct the protests and provide a mainstay of political leadership and stability for the movement and its continuation.

The Resistance units have increased in number, size, geographic expanse, and operational capabilities, despite having hundreds of members arrested, some subjected to severe torture and sentenced to death. The regime's top leaders constantly express alarm over the growing role of the MEK and its affiliated Resistance units inside Iran.

On the anniversary of Khomeini's death, for instance, Resistance Units in Iran, carried out extensive cyber operations during which they controlled and destroyed 5,138 CCTV cameras installed in Khomeini's mausoleum, government centers, and various other institutions. In another act of cyber resistance in early 2022, they managed to take control and broadcast messages by Maryam Rajavi on multiple state television channels, which had an enormous impact on the general population that had not experienced such interruptions on state television for the past 43 years.

In March 2022, they took over the websites of key regime ministries, exposing the names of over 33,000 officials, interrogators, torturers, and executioners in Iran's Prisons Organization, as well as taking control of over 5,000 surveillance cameras of the municipality of Tehran.

5. Women's leading role: Misogyny is core to the Islamic fundamentalist ideology. The mullahs started mandatory hijab for women weeks after taking power in 1979. Women have played a significant role in the nationwide resistance against the regime. The world has witnessed the courage, commitment, and wisdom of the women confronting a system that considers them as second-class citizens. Iranian women are not fighting only for their own rights; rather, their priority is to free their nation.

Additionally, the primary Iranian resistance is led by women. The National Council of Resistance of Iran's president-elect is a woman, Maryam Rajavi. The NCRI parliament-in-exile is majority female, and the NCRI's pivotal member organization, the MEK, whose entire Central Council are women, has since 1989 had nine successive female general secretaries.

Six decades of fighting two dictatorships

The September 2022 uprising did not happen overnight. It came as a result of overcoming thousands of obstacles, hardships, and difficult challenges, by the people of Iran. The uprising was preceded with a series of uprisings, massacres, and battles. Indeed, it is backed by 57 years of continuous struggle against the dictatorships of the Shah and the mullahs.

Now the world can see the dawn of freedom in Iran, replenished with the blood of 120,000 brave men and women who paved the way for the ongoing revolution with the price they paid.

Since September 2022, the regime's repressive measures have forced innocent and unarmed people to defend themselves.

According to the figures announced in the official media, more than 7,000 suppressive forces have been wounded in clashes with protesters. More than 1,000 Basij militia centers, IRGC bases, as well as government sites and headquarters have been torched.

Also, 700 vehicles and equipment of the repressive forces and 800 financial centers of the regime and IRGC have been targeted.

Adding fuel to the fire is the regime's inability to meet the demands of 85 million Iranians. Khamenei and his regime have no solution, program, or roadmap. The uprising has changed the society's coordinates and the public's psychology, steering it toward the regime's overthrow.

Neutralizing the present conditions requires fundamental political changes, which Khamenei will never embark since that would be synonymous with the overthrow of his regime.

The society needs urgent solutions and improvement in the foundations of the country's economy, yet Khamenei is going in the opposite direction by increasing budget and resources to the repressive forces, instead.

Today, Khamenei relies on the IRGC, the Basij, the MOIS, and murderous judges to preserve his decadent regime. But if repression were the solution, the current uprising would never have erupted.

Iran's democratic revolution is the outcome of rejecting the Shah and the mullahs, and the historical evolution of Dr. Mosaddeq's strategy of negative balance.

Chapter 2:

Three Obstacles

As the protest movement continues across Iran, it is important to highlight the main obstacles that the regime has leveraged in its efforts to derail the people's call for overthrow of the religious dictatorship. Historically, the regime in Tehran has used these obstacles to defuse uprisings and quash dissent, underscoring the importance of identifying these roadblocks to ensure they are not repeated.

The primary obstacles to the ongoing protests fall into three categories: (1) internal repression to suppress the protests, (2) Western appeasement policies, and (3) the elevation of fake alternatives.

Internal Repression

The first obstacle is the regime's own violence. The mullahs rely on brutality and killing in order to instill fear in the public. During periods of mass protests, the Iranian regime has historically resorted to vicious repressive tactics against its own citizens, such as mass arrests of peaceful protesters, torture of detained Iranians, and even executions, in order to intimidate, scare, and suppress the people. The regime relies on its security forces to clamp down by carrying out violent attacks against unarmed civilians, in particular with plainclothes agents who blend in with the public in order to create heightened fear among protesters that they may be arrested or attacked at any moment

Most notoriously, in 1988, the Iranian regime carried out mass executions of 30,000 political prisoners. In fact, Iran's current president, Ebrahim Raisi, was one of the four members on the Tehran "death commission" responsible for the massacre. More recently, in 2019, after a wave of uprisings across the country, the regime used its

security forces to violently crackdown against protesters. Over 1,500 Iranians were killed by government forces, including many teenagers and 400 women.

Simultaneously, the regime cuts off access to the internet and severely limits telecommunications in the country whenever and wherever needed.

Since September 2022, the regime has resorted to widespread arrests, focusing on the leaders of the protests or those associated with the MEK's Resistance units, with the goal of removing them from the scene, torturing them to compel them to confess or provide information, and/or releasing them only after forcing their families to post very large sums of money or property as bonds in order to ensure that those released do not go back into the street.

So far, this policy has failed to produce the desired result, but Tehran will continue to use repression as the primary weapon in its arsenal.

Appeasement

The second major obstacle to regime change has been the West's attempts to appease the mullahs. In the past, when backed into a corner, facing growing pressure at home, the regime has benefited from the West's policy goals of rapprochement, which extended lifelines to the clerics when they were at their weakest.

For example, in 2009, following the fraudulent presidential elections, many Iranians took to the streets in a wave of protests. The mullahs facing an internal crisis at home could have been a great opportunity for Western leaders from the United States and Europe to stand in solidarity with the people of Iran and to increase pressure on the regime. Instead, the West focused on the negotiations for a potential nuclear deal, and remained largely silent. Today, former U.S. president Barack Obama has acknowledged that one of the worst mistakes of his administration was failing to stand with the Iranian people.

Furthermore, in an attempt to appease the ayatollahs, Western countries have also curbed the primary opposition force, the MEK. For example, in 1997, the United States included the MEK on its list of foreign terrorist organizations.

At the time, “One senior Clinton administration official said inclusion of the People’s Moujahedeen was intended as a goodwill gesture to Tehran and its newly elected moderate president, Mohammad Khatami” reported the *Los Angeles Times* on October 9, 1997.

In the midst of Iran protests in late 2022, the United States and Europe refused to abandon the JCPOA, providing the regime with the opportunity to use the nuclear deal as leverage. The West has been a lot more critical of the regime’s repression of the protesters, but has yet to take any meaningful actions to side with the Iranian people and recognize their right to defend themselves against the IRGC and overthrow the theocracy. Europe remains hesitant to designate the IRGC as terrorist, despite overwhelming evidence to support the designation and extensive pressure by cross-party voices in their parliaments.

Unfortunately, attempts to appease the mullahs have only emboldened their repression at home and aggression abroad. At the same time, appeasement strategies have resulted in neglect of the people of Iran and their fight for freedom. It is crucial that Western leaders do not repeat the mistakes of the past and extend the regime another lifeline at the expense of the Iranians fighting for freedom and democracy.

Fake Alternatives

A third obstacle potentially hampering the current protests are the regime’s attempts to elevate fake opposition movements, promoted by the clerics because they do not pose a real threat to its survival. The mullahs view the well-organized opposition movement, the MEK, as a legitimate threat and their primary opposition. To detract attention from it, the regime and its lobbyists highlight figures who have neither the intention nor the capacity to even help the overthrow of the regime.

In the following sections, this report will provide an analysis of the role that manufactured opposition groups play in Iran. Particularly, it will focus on the latest attempt by the regime to elevate Reza Pahlavi, the son of the overthrown Shah, to ward off regime change.

Chapter 3:

Promotion of Fake Opposition Figures

Faced with an existential threat from the organized democratic resistance of the MEK and its Resistance units, Tehran has resorted to advocating bogus opposition groups and figures to distract from the real threat to its survival.

The Myth of Reformists and Moderates

For four decades, the regime attempted to promote so-called “reformists” who were deeply embedded within the ruling apparatus, but put on a façade of moderation. The performative narrative of “reformists vs hardliners” was used to derail real calls for regime change by giving a false hope that the regime could be transformed. For years these reformists and their propagandists, such as Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, fooled international interlocutors into giving concessions to Tehran’s rulers. The “reformers vs hardliners” dichotomy was also used as a boogeyman. Those advocating holding the regime accountable were told that applying pressure on the mullahs would “undercut moderates and reformers” and “empower hardliners.”

- ▶ Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, president from 1989 to 1997, was widely portrayed as a pragmatist in the West, providing the regime with room to maneuver while pursuing its goals.
- ▶ Mohammad Khatami, president from 1997 to 2005, was portrayed as a moderate and gained significant concessions from the United States while pursuing Tehran’s nuclear and missile program and suppressing students.
- ▶ Hassan Rouhani, president from 2013 to 2021, was portrayed as a reformist, given his leading role in the nuclear negotiations.

Since the start of the uprising in December 2017 and early 2018, however, the daily task of keeping the regime in power became an overriding preoccupation. Supreme Leader Khamenei needed his most brutal and closest allies at the helm and in key positions. Furthermore, the internal benefits of the “reformist” faction had all but petered out, as people had been chanting “Reformers, hardliners, the game is now over” since the 2018 protests. During the February 2020 parliamentary elections, almost all the members of all other factions were disqualified, and the new parliament emerged with over 80% of its members entirely allegiant to the Supreme Leader, with IRGC Brig General Bagher Ghalibaf as the parliament speaker.

During the presidential elections of June 2021, Khamenei hand-picked Ebrahim Raisi, a mass murderer of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988, as the next president during an election that even the regime conceded was boycotted by the majority of Iranians. Raisi’s internal mission has been to prevent the re-start of the nationwide uprisings and to crush any rebellious movements in the bud. Yet, the September 2022 uprising and its continuation showed that Raisi’s project has been a major failure.

From Reformists to Fake Opposition

Since the “moderates vs. hardliners” song and dance lost its appeal, the regime in Tehran has resorted to a new tactic, namely creating or advocating fake alternatives to ward off regime change. That is, in order to undermine protesters’ efforts to overthrow the dictatorship, the regime has resorted to pushing the Iranian people in the direction of disingenuous and ill-equipped figures who lack the will and capacity to fundamentally alter the foundations of the regime.

Faced with the stunning success of the MEK Resistance units, the mullahs needed a new trick to prolong their rule and muddy the waters. As a result, the Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) is behind a new set of slogans in favor of monarchy, often planting fake protesters among the people in order to distort the protests and uprisings as efforts to return the Shah’s dictatorship.

In the midst of an outbreak of infighting among the regime's factions, *Jomhuri Eslami* newspaper, a leading state-run newspaper, wrote on July 26, 2018: "They are sending some people in front of the parliament with unprecedented slogans of 'Reza Shah, your soul be blessed,' maneuvering freely with police protection. This is exactly the same group that shows up in Tehran Friday prayers and marches, and the end of their slogans is 'Death to the looter of the treasury.' Everyone knows them well..."

The MOIS issued an eight-point directive to "trained and informed forces in recent rallies" to chant slogans in favor of the monarchy. Mohammad Mahdaviyar, a wounded veteran of the Iran-Iraq war, published the MOIS directive on May 18, 2022 in his *Telegram* account:

1. *Carry some medium-sized stones.*
2. *Travel around the crowd normally and identify leaders.*
3. *If the slogans against the regime and the leadership [meaning specifically Khamenei] and the IRGC become sharp and radical, chant slogans against high prices and "Reza Shah, your soul be blessed," "Death to Raisi" and a few other protest slogans that have already been given out, and encourage the people to repeat these slogans...*

Hashem Khastar, the head of the Iran Teachers' Union, imprisoned in Mashhad, wrote in a detailed message on May 17, 2022, regarding the massacre of political prisoners:

"In the contemporary history of Iran, Shah and Sheikh [the mullahs], in collaboration with each other and at critical junctures, have always acted against the interests of the Iranian nation. This historical collaboration can be seen even now in every uprising that peaks and when the nation rises...In every uprising, we have witnessed and are witnessing that under the command of the Ministry of Intelligence, Shah and Sheikh are introduced with the ridiculous slogan 'Reza Shah your soul be blessed' by their well-known Bassij mercenaries, to replace the radical and righteous slogans of the people. Their goal is to portray a picture of the people of Iran as longing for the past and a dead king, and to not let the people move towards the future and popular sovereignty. With this trick, the ruling mullahs want to postpone their overthrow a bit longer."

Tehran's Cyber Army and the 80-20 Rule

One tactic used by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) has become known as “the 80-20 rule,” meaning certain individuals will spend 80% of their time criticizing the regime in order to gain credibility, then spend the remaining 20% attacking the MEK and undermining real efforts for regime change. This creates the illusion of opposition to the regime while inhibiting actual change.

This strategy does not necessarily consist only of individuals who are directly employed by the regime. Instead, Tehran uses sophisticated methods to take advantage of individuals who may be several layers removed from the regime itself, but who are indirectly fed talking points that benefit it.

An informative account of this phenomena comes from Hashem Khastar, the Iranian teacher previously cited, who was arrested for participating in anti-regime protests in 2019. After his release, Khastar reflected on his experiences in prison:

“According to the regime’s own rulers, [the MEK] have been involved in all the protests and uprisings. On the other hand, monarchists are very sporadic in their efforts and lack any organization. Therefore, the regime is attempting to push freedom fighters towards the monarchists’ camp. The regime has also sent many of its moles into their ranks to support Reza Pahlavi while using vulgar language towards the regime and the PMOI/MEK.”

Chapter 4:

How Shah's Repression Paved the Way for Khomeini

The 1979 Anti-monarchical Revolution

The overthrow of the Shah in 1979 was one of the most significant developments in the history of Iran and the world. A dictatorship fully backed by the United States and the West was overthrown in a popular revolution that no Western analysts or governments had predicted. In fact, just 13 months before the fall of the Shah, during a bash in the Shah's palace in Tehran, President Carter praised Shah's "great leadership," and described Iran as an "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."

By the 1970s, the Shah's regime had the most powerful and best-equipped army in the region, trained by the U.S. military. Several thousand American officials and contractors were working in Iran. Nevertheless, they overlooked what was most obvious about Iranian society: the lack of freedom and the very repressive system the Shah had installed through his notorious secret police, SAVAK, not to mention the deep divide between the rich and the poor.

The absolute dictatorship the Shah exerted on society led to increased dissatisfaction among the population, especially among intellectuals. The student movement was growing stronger and more active. The Shah's solution was jailing every opponent and creating absolute fear. All the founders of the newly found opposition movement, the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), were arrested and executed simply for their opposition to the Shah. All other prominent members were either executed or sentenced to long imprisonments. The press was harshly repressed and no civil society activities were allowed. Nationalist groups were crushed or jailed. In a word, repression was everywhere.

However, the one group that the Shah allowed to expand and grow was the clerical network.

The Shah had become so arrogant that in 1975, he dissolved all the political parties, all of which were allegiant to the monarchy, and established a single-party rule. Soon the people started to protest. The unrest spread, to the point that the Shah ordered his troops to open fire on September 8, 1978. Today known as Black Friday, a large number of protesters were gunned down by the Shah's army during the massacre at Jaleh Square in Tehran.

By then a minuet portion of the population had even heard about Ruhollah Khomeini, who had been sitting idle in Najaf, Iraq, from 1963 to late 1978. Khomeini arrived in Paris from Iraq on October 11, 1978, exactly four months before he took power in Iran. He managed to manipulate the network of the clergy and mosques, which had remained intact under the Shah, to take advantage of the vacuum of leadership created by the Shah's repression and elimination of all other voices of dissent. Khomeini thus usurped the leadership of a genuine revolution, in which he had played almost no role.

The West, particularly the United States, played a significant role in proclaiming Khomeini the leader of the revolution. In the four months Khomeini spent in the Paris suburb of Neauphle-le-Chateau, he gave 450 interviews and TV appearances with American and other global media. Almost overnight, he went from an unknown to the most well-known person in the world, and of course in Iran. While in Paris, he made effusive promises in support of freedom, gender equality, and workers' rights, and pledged that the clergy would go back to the mosques and play no role in running the country. Almost immediately after the fall of the Shah, Khomeini started to betray the people and negate every promise he had made, installing the *velayat-e faqih*, or absolute clerical rule.

After widespread demonstrations across Iran, where chants of "Death to the Shah" were raised by millions of Iranians, the Shah fled on January 16, 1979. MEK leaders were freed from prison just 4 days later, by which time Khomeini and his clerical network had taken advantage of the vacuum created by the Shah's lengthy dictatorship and the elimination of all democratic opposition groups. From this perspective, Khomeini's dictatorship was the historic product of decades of monarchical dictatorship. Indeed, the Mujahedin-e Khalq's

organizational capabilities had been nearly annihilated by SAVAK, which left the MEK little ability to challenge Khomeini when he usurped the leadership of the anti-shah movement.

On February 1, 1979, the greatest thief of the century, Khomeini, arrived in Iran from Paris. He was at the peak of his social and religious popularity, making the situation doubly complicated for the true democratic forces who were seeking the overthrow of the Shah to be replaced with a democratic and pluralistic government. It was the only example and a unique case in the entire Iranian history where one person held religious and social legitimacy simultaneously with political legitimacy resulting from a revolution.

During half a century of dictatorship, the Shah and his father had left no room for anyone and anything except the mullahs' network. All political opponents were either executed or were in prison. Shah had even dissolved his puppet parties and asked every Iranian to join his newly formed party, "Rastakhiz (resurgence)," otherwise go to prison or leave Iran for good.

The people of Iran sacrificed many lives to welcome Khomeini, but he established a monopolistic religious dictatorship erected on what was left from the monarchical dictatorship.

From the outset, Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the Iranian Resistance, released from prison after 7.5 years, just 10 days before Khomeini's arrival in Iran, called for a "democratic revolution" and strongly rejected "talking about an Islamic revolution."

In a speech at Tehran University, less than two weeks after the fall of Shah's regime, Rajavi reiterated, "the demands of the people of Kurdistan and Baluchistan are no different from those living in Tehran and Azerbaijan ... except that the Kurds and the Baluchis have been subjected to dual oppression because of their language and ethnicity." He called for the formation of people's councils, concluding his remarks by saying, "The road ahead of us is long and tortuous."

According to the New York Times story filed nearly two weeks after the revolution from Tehran on Feb 28, 1979, "The opposition to Islamic control took a potentially dangerous turn three days ago when a major guerrilla group,

the People's Mujahedeen, which had been a prominent base of power for the Islamic movement, apparently defected." It added, "in a pointed statement, the group's leader, Massoud Rajavi, said to a large crowd of supporters in Teheran University that all those who had fought for the new order ... must have a voice in government." The article described the MEK as being "a long way from the orthodox Islamic concepts advocated by the regime and its supporters among the Moslem clergy, the bazaar merchants, old politicians and newly arrived exiles who came to Iran with Ayatollah Khomeini after years of exile abroad."

MEK's boycotting of Khomeini's referendum on the Velayat-e faqih constitution, resulted in its members being attacked with clubs and bullets by Khomeini's hooligans who later formed the foundations of the Basij, the IRGC, and the MOIS.

By encouraging female members and sympathizers who wore headscarves to protect and support women who opposed Khomeini's decree on mandatory hijab, the MEK further upset the mullahs.

In a March 1979 statement, the MEK said, "the compulsory imposition of any form of hijab on the women of this country... is unreasonable and unacceptable." The New York Times reported on March 11, 1979, "The confrontation between Islamic leaders under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and their secular opponents grew more intense today around the issue of women's rights... This issue has become the latest rallying point of the opposition to the Ayatollah's Islamic forces. That opposition includes ... the Moslem People's Mujahedeen."

Since 1979, Khomeini and his successor, backed by the IRGC, shed blood and suppressed, humiliated, and looted the people of Iran, destroying the lives of everyone. However, the true leaders, namely the MEK did not bow to Khomeini. They organized a monumental resistance, and fought the regime by paying a huge price unprecedented in Iran's history. In fact, the Iranian Resistance has been engaged in a full-fledged war of liberation against the clerical regime for more than four decades, becoming the most precious patriotic asset for the nation to free itself from the clutches of religious fascism.

Historic Collaboration of the Shah and the Clergy

The collaboration between the monarchy and the clergy during the 1979 revolution was not an isolated case. Indeed, the monarchy had derived its “divine” claim to legitimacy from the clergy, and the clergy had derived its wealth and expanded its network of mosques and seminaries with the full consent and collaboration with the monarchy. The two were a major obstacle to the formation of a developed civic society based on democratic values and human rights.

Their collaboration in blocking genuine reform in Iran was unmistakable in the 1906 Constitutional Revolution.

Significantly, the 1953 coup unseating Mohammad Mossadeq had been carried out with the full collaboration of the clergy, headed by the most prominent clerical figure at the time, Ayatollah Abolghassem Kashani. Mosques and religious seminaries were receiving grants and expanding.

The Shah had initially shown devotion to religious customs and heavily relied on the clergy during the first two decades of his rule. He appeased Grand Ayatollah Hossein Boroujerdi, who died in 1961. For its part, the clergy, with some exceptions, colluded with the Shah at the time when many political dissidents were imprisoned or executed in the 1970s.

The plot to oust the democratic and nationalist government of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1953 paved the way for the clergy to seize the leadership of the 1979 revolution and undermine the very goal of that genuine revolution.

Chapter 5:

Who is Reza Pahlavi?

After the 1979 Revolution, when the Shah and his family fled Iran with billions of dollars, Reza Pahlavi lived a lavish life, much like his father and grandfather, albeit in the United States. On November 1, 1980, the *Washington Post* reported, "Reza Pahlavi, eldest son of the late deposed Iranian monarch, proclaimed himself the new shah of Iran here today as he celebrated his 20th birthday...In his message, he said his official title would be Reza Shah the Second."

The *Los Angeles Times*, covering his 1988 speech in Los Angeles, wrote, "Those around Pahlavi refer to this young Western-educated prince offhandedly as 'the shah,' and, indeed, announcements for his Los Angeles speech, issued by the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, billed him as the Shah of Iran...In conversation, Pahlavi likes to be called 'your majesty.'"

Contrary to denials that he is not seeking the throne and that he believes in the people's choice, he proclaimed himself king shortly after the overwhelming majority of Iranians had renounced the monarchy and swept it out of power. Even today, on his website, he states, "Reza Pahlavi strongly believes in the inherent equal rights between men and women; and, as such, has stated that his daughters Noor, Iman and Farah are, successively, his heirs."

The first step to lend any credibility to his claims of respecting the people's choice would be to refute his claim to being Shah [king]. At no time has Reza Pahlavi ever criticized, let alone condemned, the atrocities of his father and grandfather. Quite to the contrary, at every opportunity, he has presented a misleading fallacy of Iran under the monarchic dictatorship. As detached and ignorant as Pahlavi might be about Iran's history, he cannot and will not airbrush what is historically documented and very much alive in the minds of millions of Iranians.

The National Council of Iran

Reza Pahlavi's only claim to political authority is his bloodline. He has attempted several times to form opposition coalitions (most notably the National Council of Iran) and has associations with vague opposition entities such as Qoqnus and Farashgard, but none have managed to gain traction as an organized opposition.

Pahlavi announced the formation of the National Council of Iran (NCI) on March 7, 2013, and acted as NCI spokesperson for a while before he left the group. There was an uproar among some monarchists, who from the very beginning claimed that the mullahs' regime had penetrated the NCI. *Sobhe Iran* newspaper, a well-known monarchist publication in Los Angeles, wrote on April 5, 2013, that Heidar Moslehi, Minister of Intelligence in Iran, "had in the past year done all he could to penetrate the National Council with his people to take it under his control... And he asked them to send names of those nominated to the Council to Tehran for approval."

According to the same newspaper, the council's charter was initially drafted in Paris and was agreed to by Reza Pahlavi on a trip to France. It was then presented for comment by others, and after one year of work and 40 revisions, particularly emanating from Iran, the final version was drafted in Iran.

In the NCI charter, there is no article demanding the overthrow, elimination, or change of the theocratic regime in Iran. Instead, the charter invites "government officials, military and police forces and intelligence and security agencies of the country" to "break their silence" and "play their role in this national effort and for national reconciliation."

On the topic of regime change, Pahlavi has in the past said that "regime change is not in my alphabet." Today, he tries to frame himself as an ardent supporter and leader of regime change.



With regards to the IRGC, Reza Pahlavi has repeatedly stated that he is in communication with IRGC and Basij, and that the IRGC are not all terrorists. As recently as January 2023, he said in interviews that the IRGC should be promised a role in the future of Iran. Now, he declares that the IRGC should be designated as a terrorist organization (a campaign which the NCRI started several years ago).

As for the "nuclear deal," or JCPOA, Reza Pahlavi said in a July 22, 2015 interview and a 2017 speech that "unlike many people who claim it to be a bad [deal], I actually support it conditionally because it...eliminates the immediate danger of military conflict." This, of course, is borrowing from the false dichotomy of diplomacy or war that was parroted by the regime's apologists for years. In the same speech, he also supported the sanctions relief provided by the JCPOA. Now, he says that the JCPOA is a failed experiment that should be abandoned.

Moreover, Reza Pahlavi has refused to clarify his positions on any serious issues, such as the demands of the Kurdish and other ethnicities for autonomy within the territorial integrity of Iran. Similarly, he has sidestepped questions about the form of the future government in Iran, keenly aware that the Iranian people will in no way stand for a rebranded monarchic system. While he strives to say that he is open to the idea that people should decide about the future form of governance, he refuses to withdraw his claim to the throne. What's more, his

mother has gone even further and appointed his daughter as the heir to her son in an interview with Italian newspaper *Libero*).

Contacts with the IRGC

Reza Pahlavi outlandishly believes that he can achieve regime change in cooperation with the IRGC and the Basij paramilitary force. He claims that he is in contact with some elements within the IRGC and the Basij, asserting that even after the overthrow of the regime, those same forces will be the guarantors of the peaceful transition of power. Such preposterous statements date back as early as 2002, and were repeated after the November 2019 nationwide uprising, when 1,500 people were shot to death by the IRGC.

He sticks to this same line to date. Demonstrating that he relies on the IRGC and the Basij as key elements of his regime change strategy, during a talk show with Iran International TV in 2018, he said: “I am in bilateral contacts with the (regime’s) military, the IRGC and the Basij. We are communicating. They are signaling their preparation and express willingness to align with the people.”

Speaking at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Pahlavi explicitly stated that his only hope for change is through the IRGC and Basij force, claiming to be in contact with sections of the IRGC and Basij who are “highly situated.”

The question arises, is Reza Pahlavi in contact and associated with elements within the IRGC, or have elements from the IRGC infiltrated his ranks and taken control of Reza Pahlavi?

In an interview with Bloomberg in 2002, Reza Pahlavi said, “We have to provide an exit strategy for them– for clerics, revolutionary guards, bureaucrats. We speak to them by phone, fax, and e-mail. We know they cannot take the initiative. But if there is sufficient momentum, they can join [us] or at least remain neutral.”

On November 19, 2019, four days after the start of the uprising in some 191 cities and massive killings by the IRGC and Basij on direct orders from Supreme

Leader Ali Khamenei, Pahlavi took it a step further in an interview with Iran International TV. After the same Revolutionary Guards slaughtered the people, Pahlavi blamed the killings on the protesters themselves:

“The security forces will never take the first step for a very simple reason, because they cannot stay in a state of limbo, they need a firm ground on the other side of the line. To a large extent, the people are indeed responsible in motivating the security forces not to resort to violence and instead encourage the security forces to join them.

“Therefore, we must strongly believe in this. Obviously, I do not say that there would be no casualties, I do not say that the regime would not suppress and do not say that the regime would not try to open fire on people under cover of darkness. But, if it does get to violence, killings and armed confrontation, there would be lot more killings and a lot more fatalities and more importantly we will never have a reconciliation scenario with security and peace after such disintegration.”

Pahlavi stated in a meeting on December 18, 2018, “The most important component among all factors is the role that the military and paramilitary forces can play in this transition (regime change). That is why soldiers and militiamen are the target audience of some of my messages. Of course, the individual who is a member of the IRGC and the Basij, those who are disappointed today like the rest of us, they have a place in the future, and they should. They must have a place. They should know that the very force to guarantee Iran’s future security and stability are actually themselves...I say this based on my direct contacts with representatives of Iran’s military and paramilitary forces that happen on a daily basis. These are increasing every day.” (Pahlavi at Washington Institute for Near East Policy)

Actually, the vulnerability of the ranks of the Iranian monarchists to infiltration by the regime’s Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC is no secret. Hashem Khastar, a leader of the Iran Teachers Union who is currently in prison for his opposition to the clerical regime, said that the IRGC urged him not to work with the MEK, and to instead contact Reza Pahlavi.

In January 2010, an article appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, describing Mohammadreza Madhi, a former officer in the Revolutionary Guards’ Intelligence

Organization, who had fled Iran and claimed he wanted to form the broadest coalition of opposition forces in the diaspora. Alleging he had about 10,000 rogue IRGC elements behind him, he succeeded in beguiling many Iranian activists, mostly monarchists, to associate themselves with him.

A year later, Madhi appeared in *Diamond for Deception*, a documentary aired by Iranian state television just a few days before the second anniversary of the 2009 uprising. The documentary described Madhi as “a double agent” who had infiltrated the Iranian opposition movement and foreign intelligence units.

Serious Questions for Reza Pahlavi

There are several critical questions to which Reza Pahlavi has not offered any replies:

- ▶ From where does his legitimacy derive? From being the son of a deposed dictator?
- ▶ On what basis does he claim that his role must be above all political parties?
- ▶ Does he believe in the right of various nationalities to autonomy within the territorial integrity of Iran?
- ▶ On what basis does he praise his father’s dictatorial single-party system?
- ▶ Is he prepared to condemn the executions and torture of political opponents under his father’s rule?

How much money did he and his family steal from the Iranian people when they left the country in 1979? He once said \$62 million, but according to the *New York Times* on January 1, 1979, “Bankers say that a substantial part of the \$2 billion to \$4 billion that, according to estimates, has been transferred from Iran to the United States in the last two years belongs to the royal family.” The *Washington Post* wrote on January 17, 1979, “During the 53 years of the Pahlavi dynasty, the imperial family has amassed a great fortune estimated to run into billions of dollars. One Iranian economist estimates the assets of the entire royal family at more than \$20 billion.”

Like Father, Like Son

According to the book "The Shah," Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, ascended to the throne on September 16, 1941, ridiculed his father Reza Khan in private conversations, calling him "a thuggish Cossack" who did little as king.

In the early 1950s, the popular Nationalist prime minister, Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq, began to introduce democratic reforms, including laws securing the freedom of the press and protecting women's rights. He also led a movement to nationalize Iran's oil resources. The Shah joined the reactionary clerics in pushing back against Mossadeq's democratic reforms while helping the British to resist his campaign to nationalize oil. In August 1953, the Shah, allied with the clerics led by Kashani and Anglo-American intelligence agencies, conducted a coup against the democratically elected Mossadeq.

After overthrowing the sole democratic functioning government in Iran's history, the Shah began ruling with an iron fist, creating the despised secret police SAVAK, imprisoning reformists, clamping down on the media, killing opponents, and eventually creating a one-party system in Iran. Torture and execution by the Shah's secret police, SAVAK, are part of Iranians' unhealed wounds.



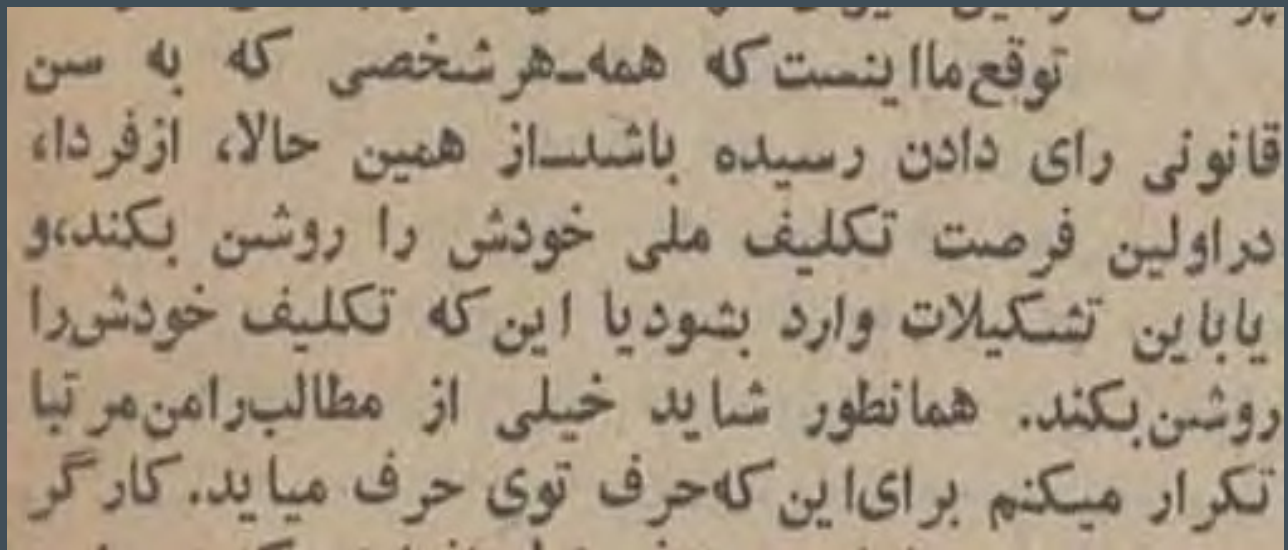
State-run Etemad newspaper, March 3, 1975. The headline reads: "His Majesty declared the formation of a single political party." The sub-headline continues: "Millions across the country have joined the Resurrection (Party) of Iran."



State-run Etela'at newspaper, March 3, 1975, highlighting important parts of the Shah's remarks: "From now on, only one party will have the right to political activity...The name of Iran's single party will be the National Resurgence or Resurrection of Iran (party)."



Shah: "Anyone who opposes the constitution, the imperial system, and the White Revolution should be in prison or easily leave the country forever." State-run Etela'at newspaper, March 3, 1975,



Shah: "We expect that everyone who has reached the legal age to vote, will immediately clarify his national duty and either join this organization or clarify his position..." State-run Etela'at newspaper, March 3, 1975

Torture, Prisons, and SAVAK

For decades, the Shah and his secret police SAVAK brutally murdered and tortured political activists and intellectuals, including authors, academics, artists, and poets. In November 1976, Amnesty International quoted a former prisoner as describing the Shah's torture methods, including beatings, hanging upside down, rape, electric shock, pulling nails, pulling teeth, and using a hot iron rod to burn the mouth. "A young man was killed this way," the prisoner told AI.

An Amnesty International report by a delegation sent to Iran in 1972 found that some prisoners' bodies were burned, which paralyzed them. A prisoner told the delegation: "I saw Behruz Tehrani die near me in the torture room."

"The Shah of Iran," said Martin Ennals in the introduction to Amnesty International's Annual Report for 1974-5, "retains his benevolent image despite the highest rate of death penalties in the world, no valid system of civilian courts and a history

of torture which is beyond belief.” The total number of political prisoners for 1975, stated the report, “has been reported at times throughout the year to be anything from 25,000 to 100,000.”

US media reported torture is a “national pastime” for the Shah “The vast bulk of the population is desperately poor, undernourished, and uneducated. In Quri-Chai, the northern slums of Tabriz, there is only one school for 100,000 children.... The Shah’s torturers were as brutal as they get. Former prisoners recall whipping, breaking fingers one by one, and raping daughters in front of fathers.” (The Village Voice, November 14, 1977).

Like the mullahs, the Shah was anti-democratic: “Freedom of thought, freedom of thought! Democracy, democracy! With five-year-olds going on strike and parading in the street. Is that what you call democracy? Freedom? ... Democracy, freedom, democracy! But what do these words mean?” (Interview with Italian journalist Oriana Falacci, Dec. 1, 1973).

While Shah was brutal on political prisoners and intellectuals, he maintained an obsequious policy toward the mullahs and ayatollahs; he also recommended that the clergy join and complement his army corp.

Bizarre Views

Shah was not shy about sharing his reactionary, superstitious and bizarre religious views, even with foreign reporters. He said: “I’m not entirely alone, because a force others can’t perceive accompanies me. My mystical force. Moreover, I receive messages. I have lived with God beside me since I was five years old. Since, that is, God sent me those visions.”

Echoing the mullahs, the misogynist Shah told Italian journalist Oriana Falacci that according to his religion, “when a wife is ill [or...] refuses to perform her wifely duties, thereby causing her husband unhappiness,” he can take an additional wife...

“You’ve never produced a Michelangelo or a Bach. You’ve never even produced a great cook. And don’t talk of opportunities. Are you joking? Have you lacked the opportunity to give history a great cook? You have produced nothing great, nothing!” (Interview with journalist Oriana Falacci, Dec. 1, 1973).



Shah cozying up to the mullahs, including senior ayatollahs Abolghassem Kashani, and Seyed Hossein Boroujerdi, Mirza Ahmad Kafei, to name a few.

He again aired his reactionary and offensive views on women in an interview with Barbara Walters, on April 6, 1977. Walters asked the Shah: “Do you think that women are equal to men?” After a long pause, the Shah said: “Well there are cases, sure. ... But on the average, [no]. ... I repeat again, where have you produced a top scientist?”

The Shah’s extreme corruption was well known, even back in the 70s. “He has funneled his assets into a private foundation whose proceedings are secret and whose operations are beyond scrutiny. The Pahlavi Foundation, now 19 years old,



"Shah to the religious leaders: The clerics can complement the revolutionary mobilization of the corps" the newspaper headline captures.

is thought to have assets of more than \$1 billion and is a combined charitable foundation and family trust fund." (*The Village Voice*, November 14, 1977).

Mohammad Reza Shah's decades of corruption, suppression, and mismanagement generated immense social anger. Massive popular demonstrations against his rule began in the late 1970s. In 1978, the Shah wept on TV as millions of Iranians poured into the streets, begging them to let him stay in power. "You, the people of Iran, have risen up against oppression and corruption. ... I will pledge to never repeat the mistakes, unlawfulness, oppression, and corruption of the past," Mohammad Reza Pahlavi said. But it was too late. He was forced

to flee the country on January 16, 1979, and with him ended the monarchical rule in Iran.

Criminal Legacy

The Pahlavis (father and grandfather) ruled Iran between 1925 and 1979. In the 1920s, while the shifting political landscape in Europe and Asia gave rise to awakened, well-educated classes in Iran, more and more movements became vocal about their longing for change. The weak king of the Qajar dynasty was challenged by demands for groundbreaking reforms and constitutional rule.

A British-led push back in 1921 sought to curb the new sentiment. They chose a strongman who preserved the interests of the Commonwealth. An illiterate bully with a rough and violent temperament, Reza Pahlavi (nicknamed Reza Khan), had joined the despised Russian-led Cossack Brigade at the age of 14. The force was created in Iran by the Qajar shah to protect the throne. After working as a servant to the Dutch consul general in Tehran, Pahlavi rose through the ranks of the Cossacks to sergeant, lieutenant, colonel, and finally earned the favor of the British General Edmund Ironside in January 1921 to become the first and only commander of the Cossack Brigade of Iranian descent.

On January 14, 1921, General Ironside directed him to move on and occupy Tehran. Reza Khan's rise to power commenced a period of brutal dictatorship and authoritarianism that lasted well beyond the Pahlavi dictators, into the reign of the mullahs in Iran. Secure in his backing by his British masters, just two years later, he declared himself as prime minister. Then in 1925, he forced the Parliament to depose the Qajars and to crown him as the Shah of Iran. He later changed his name from Palani to Pahlavi, as the former had a disparaging implication in the Persian language.

Reza Pahlavi, the new King, expropriated over 3 million acres of estates in Iran and enriched himself and his family through force. He murdered journalists and politicians who were critical of his heavy-handed and superfluous attempts at reforming Iran at the tip of the bayonet. His caricature of modernization

included such intemperate actions as the compulsory unveiling of traditional Iranian women and banning any photographing of camels in Iran. He systematically decimated Iranian intellectuals and free thinkers and restricted the development of the free market through his cronies among landowners and rich, beholden families.

Reza Khan cracked down on ethnic groups that demanded equal rights all across the country, hanging and killing them by the hundreds. He banned women's rights organizations and wiped-out independent media outlets.

Menacing Iranians at home, Reza Shah was very soft toward major powers abroad. In 1933, when the British demanded the extension of oil agreements, he negotiated with John Cadman, the head of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), and Reginald Hoare, the British ambassador to Tehran, to extend the D'Arcy Concession and forced the Majlis (parliament) to unanimously pass it.

In accordance with the treaty, APOC continued to explore, extract and sell oil, paying 20% of its total shares to Iran in return. The Shah was the biggest beneficiary. Meanwhile, the scope of Iran's Imtiaz operations was reduced from



*"His Highness – Reza Shah Pahlavi –
Emperor of Iran – With best wishes –
Berlin, March 12, 1936 – Signed: Adolf
Hitler".*

400,000 miles to 10,000 miles. According to this contract, 32 years were added to the D'Arcy Concession, to expire in 1962.

In the 1930s, Reza Shah became an outspoken admirer of Adolf Hitler, and invited Nazi military advisers to Iran. His personal admiration of Hitler led him to boast that his career path resembled that of Hitler. On a trip to Germany, Tajol-Muluk, the wife of Reza Khan and the grandmother of Reza Pahlavi, wrote in a diary about the Persian carpet and pistachios the Iranian delegation brought as gifts for Adolf Hitler. In return, Hitler praised the Iranian monarch and sent a self-portrait with the inscription "His Highness – Reza Shah Pahlavi – Emperor of Iran – With best wishes – Berlin, March 12, 1936: Adolf Hitler." This photo is kept in the Saheb Qaran Palace in the Niavaran Museum Palace Collection.

Reza Khan envisioned a new balance of power in favor of the Axis in the emerging world war. His gamble failed miserably. Intolerant of a Hitler-ally in a geo-strategic locale, the British and Soviets forced him to abdicate the throne and transfer power to his son in 1941. He died in exile on the Island of Mauritius near South Africa in 1944.

As a corrupt ruler and an infamous land grabber, Reza Shah is believed to have forcibly seized 44,000 real estate properties from their owners, destroying the lives of countless people. He had the equivalent of anywhere between \$20 million to \$300 million dollars in his bank accounts (*Washington Post*, October 1, 1941). According to *The Village Voice*: Reza Shah "laid the basis for the Pahlavi family's wealth by simply stealing it. He confiscated vast estates." (*The Village Voice*, November 14, 1977).

Chapter 6:

The Path Forward

1. The United States and the European Union should support the Iranian people's bid for democratic revolution against their tyrannical rulers. They must recognize the Iranian people's right to self-defense against the brutal attacks of the regime, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
2. The United States should urge its European partners and allies to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Ministry of Intelligence (MOIS) as a terrorist organization and encourage all economic ties to be severed. Western countries should not provide sanctions relief to the Iranian regime under any pretexts.
3. The IRGC and MOIS designation is vital to international peace and security and must be adopted by international bodies, parliaments, and governments committed to human rights.
4. The West should lead punitive political, diplomatic, and commercial sanctions against the Iranian regime.
5. Western countries should shut down the regime's embassies and expel its diplomats, agents, and those who, directly or indirectly, lobby for the Iranian regime.
6. All agents and operatives of the Ministry of Intelligence and the IRGC Quds Force should be expelled.
7. The United Nations and Western leaders should bring Iranian regime leaders, including Khamenei and Raisi, to justice for their four decades of genocide and crimes against humanity. This includes the 1988 massacre of 30,000 political prisoners as well as the more recent atrocities, including November 2019 and the current killing of protesters.

- 8.** Western leaders should continue to work with private technology companies to ensure free access to the internet and communications technologies by the Iranian people.
- 9.** Any equipment and technology used for espionage, repression, and censorship must be prohibited by Western countries to be sold to Tehran.
- 10.** The Iranian people will never return to any form of dictatorship, e.g., the monarchical dictatorship of the Shah. The United States, Europe, and other nations must not provide legitimacy to any groups or individuals that are, directly or indirectly, associated with any form of dictatorships, current or past. Otherwise, it would, in effect undermine the uprising and the regime's overthrow.

Since September 2022, Iran has experienced unprecedented nationwide anti-regime uprisings, with many Iranians calling for an overthrow of the regime in favor of a democratic and free Iran.

The uprisings have rapidly become radical in nature and have engulfed every sector and corner of Iranian society, reflecting the reality that the country is now on the precipice of a revolution to overthrow the ruling theocracy and establish a secular, democratic, and non-nuclear republic.

The uprisings have not occurred in a vacuum; they are the culmination of decades of organized resistance to the regime and persistent advocacy for freedom and democracy.

However, there are three obstacles to the success of the ongoing revolution. They are the increased level of internal repression by the regime, appeasement policy by the West, and the rise of fake opposition figures that undermine the prospect for regime change.

Leaders in the West should stand with the Iranian people in their bid for a democratic revolution against their tyrannical rulers. It is crucial that Western leaders do not provide legitimacy to any groups or individuals that are, directly or indirectly, associated with any form of dictatorships, current or in the past.

