

# Iran college essay



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## Iran

Iran is a country located in the Middle East. The main source of income for the country is oil, the one object that had greatly influenced its history. Iran's present government is run as an Islamic Republic. A president, cabinet, judicial branch, and Majilesor or legislative branch, makes up the governmental positions. A revolution that overthrew the monarch, which was set in 1930, lasted over 15 years. Crane Brinton's book, *An Anatomy of a Revolution*, explains set of four steps a country experiences when a revolution occurs. Symptoms, rising fever, crisis, and convalescence are the steps that occur. The Iranian Revolution followed the four steps in Crane Brinton's theory, symptoms, rising fever, crisis, and convalescence occurred. Numerous symptoms led to the crumbling downfall of Reza Shah Pahlavi, ruler of Iran until 1978. One of these symptoms is rising expectations which can be seen during the 1960's and 70's. The rich Shah cleared the way for the land reform law, enacted in

1962. The land minority had to give up its land to the government, and among those stripped of land, were the Shi'ah Muslims. Iran's power structure was radically changed in a program termed the " White Revolution". On January 26, 1963, the White Revolution was endorsed by the nation. By 1971, when land distribution ended, about 2, 500, 000 families of the farm population benefited from the reforms. From 1960-72 the percentage of owner occupied farmland in Iran rose from 26 to 78 percent. Per capita income rose from \$176 in 1960 to \$2, 500 in 1978. From 1970-77 the gross national product was reported to increase to an annual rate of 7. 8% (" Iran" 896). As a result of this thriving economy, the income gap rapidly widened. Exclusive homes, extravagant restaurants, and night clubs and streets loaded with expensive automobiles served as daily reminders of a growing income spread. This created a perfect environment for many conflicts to arise between the classes.

Iran's elite class consisted of wealthy land owners,

intelligencia, military leaders, politicians, and diplomats. The Elite continued to support the monarchy and the Shah. The peasants were victim of unfulfilled political expectations, surveillance by the secret police, and the severe social and economic problems that resulted from modernization. The middle class favored socialism over capitalism, because capitalism in their view supported the elite, and does not benefit the lower classes. The middle class was the most changeable element in the group, because they enjoyed some of the privileges of the elite, which they would like to protect. At the same time, they believed that they had been cheated by the elite out of their share of the industrialization wealth (Orwin 43).

About this time, the middle class, which included students, technocrats, and modernist professionals, became discontent with the economy. The key event should have further stabilized the royal dictatorship, but the increase in oil prices and oil income beginning in 1974 caused extreme inflation. This was due to the

investment strategy followed by the Shah, which led to a spectacular 42% growth rate in 1974. (Cottam 14). And because of the Shah's support structure which enabled the new rich to benefit from inflation, the government effort to deal with inflation was aimless. Poor Iranians and Iranians with a fixed income suffered major losses in real income. Better standards of living were no longer visible. Thus, the majority of the Iranian people developed a revolutionary predisposition.

As the middle class became discontent in Iran throughout the 1970's, the desertion of intellectuals could be found in great excess. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini represented much of the discontent of the religious sector of Iran. For speaking out against the Shah's autocratic rule, Khomeini was exiled to Turkey in 1963. In 1965, Khomeini moved to Iraq where he became the central spokesperson for expatriate opposition to the Shah. On October 6, 1978, Khomeini was expelled from Iraq and moved to Paris, where he was accessible to a larger body of opposition

forces. He was also accessible to the Western Press. Khomeini preached that he would displace the Shah and expel the foreigners. He also said he would enforce religious and traditional values, and redirect Iran's wealth away from large industrialization schemes and toward reforms needed by the common people. Throughout the 1970's, Khomeini gained tremendous popularity with the masses, and he became the symbol of the opposition towards the Shah.

As Khomeini gained popularity, many religious groups grew in numbers and in status. In the early 1950's, the technocrats had showed core support for Mohammad Mossadeq and Iran's national movement. They saw Mossadeq's overthrow as the removal of the symbolic leader of the Iranian nation by an American directed coup d'etat. Many of his followers formed groups in opposition to the Shah. Leaders of the Freedom Front, one of the groups that grew out of the Mossadeq movement, were a group composed of intellectuals who tended to be centrist in philosophy, more

religious, anti-Marxist, and militant (Cottam 13). They recognized Khomeini's large and potentially enormous following, and associated themselves with him

The rise of religious opposition groups and Khomeini proved to be a great test for the Shah. As time progressed the weakness of the Shah became apparent. Waves of opposition began building after 1975, due to the formation of the Rastakhiz , the legal political party in Iran, and the banning of opposition political parties. It also became clear that the increased oil revenues following oil price increases, were spent on arms and industrialization. In mid-1977 the religious leaders began demonstrating against the modernization brought on by the Shah. In November, several people were killed when police broke up demonstrations. As time went on, protests became more radical. To try and quiet dissent, the Shah became more of a dictator. As a result, those who had been moderate in demands for reform became more radical. In the fall of 1978, strikes against the

oil industry, the post office, government factories, and banks demolished the economy. This pattern continued throughout most of 1978 (Orwin 45). As these protests became more frequent there were more and more people killed. This reflects the Shah's loss of power over his government and his people.

In late 1978, the Shah came to the conclusion that he would and could not rule a country in which he had to stand in the flowing blood of his people. In short, he understood that he could not militarily occupy his own country. The Shah's early mistakes had been devastating as the years went on. His forceful actions did not work and it's no wonder that his grip weakened and his mid wavered.

These events all led to the march against the government of the Shah, in which eight million Iranians protested on December 10, 1978 (Bill 25). One-fifth of the Iranian government was willing to join in a massive and nonviolent manifestation of opposition even though most of them knew that thousands of their



countrymen had been shot in previous demonstrations. The banners and slogans made clear the religious and political essence of the revolutionary movement. This massive demonstration was the turning point from symptoms to rising fever. It clearly reflected the weakness of the Shah, and the inevitability of revolution in Iran.

After a year of public demonstrations against him, the Shah of Iran left Tehran on January 16, 1979, for an “ extended vacation” (Orwin 46). He left the country in the hands of a regency council and Prime Minister Shahpur Bakhtiar, who was a former member of the National Front.

The opposition leader, Khomeini, was to become the new ruler, and he returned to Iran on February 1, 1979. Khomeini occupied preeminent positions among Iran’s most respected religious scholars, the Mujahedin-e Khalq.. Although Khomeini wanted a stable government that could cope with the problems of reconstruction, he wanted to eradicate the evil roots of the old

system, which he describes as satanic. He denounced the materialism of the recent past and called for a climate in which social justice would prevail.

On April 1, 1979, after a landslide victory in a national referendum, Khomeini declared an Islamic republic. This republic consisted of a new constitution reflecting Khomeini's ideals of Islamic government. He was named Iran's political and religious leader for life. Khomeini tapped the deep-seated conservatism of the Muslim fundamentalists by making moderate changes in the law. Women were required to wear the veil, Western music and alcohol were banned, and the punishments described by Islamic law were reinstated. Political vengeance was taken, executing hundreds of people who had worked with the Shah's regime ("Iran" 897).

The large moderate center composed of the professional and bourgeois middle class had proved to be ineffective in their leadership abilities. Moderate Bakhtiar, the last prime minister under Pahlavi rule, was very unpopular, and he was unable to

compromise with his former National Front colleagues or with Khomeini. He was then forced to flee to France.

On April 1, 1979, his replacement, Mehdi Bazergan was appointed by Khomeini (Cottam 15). This 73-year-old engineer was a leader of the Freedom Front, and president of the committee of human rights. The middle and upper middle classes looked to Bazergan to provide stability so the economy would recover and the government services could be restored. Bazergan appointed a cabinet, mainly, from the ranks of the Freedom Front, the National Front, and the religious bureaucracy. Bazergan's position was weak, however, and he steadily lost ground to the due to the attacks from the far right and left. As their base of support narrowed, their dependence on Khomeini intensified.

During this time, Iran's relation with the US went downhill.

It reached a stage of outright confrontation, when, on November 4, 1979, 500 extremist students seized the US embassy in Tehran.

They took hostage 66 citizens at the embassy and the foreign

ministry (“ The Iranian Revolution” 835). The takeover seemingly sanctioned by Khomeini, continued for the next 444 days, and American-Iranian relations sunk to an all-time low. This led to trade conflicts with the United States and its allies, causing economic problems.

During the rising fever stage there is a presence of a dual government. During Bazergan’s rule, it became difficult to administer justice with a court system that had been particularly lenient to the royal will. To deal with these problems on a temporary basis. Khomeini set up a system of revolutionary committees presided over by a revolutionary council. Religious leaders clearly predominated in the revolutionary council-committee-courts system, which came to be almost a parallel government.

In November, 1979, Bazergan resigned, and in his place Khomeini appointed Abol Hassan Bani Sadr. Bani Sadr was an idealist, a bookworm, and most personally ambitious of all the

liberal revolutionaries. Like the other moderates, he was a representative of the professional middle class, who had little skill or patience to build political organizations. Bani Sadr's efforts were fruitless in dealing with the hostage releases.

After being elected Iran's first president in January 1980, he and his followers, out of self defense and desperation, formed an alliance with the Mujahedin-e Khalq ("Iran" 897). He also attempted to work hard to establish close relations with the military leaders. He ineffectively tried to appeal to the Iranian people, who had little in common with a Paris trained intellectual. One can see that during this stage of rising fever, moderate control is losing power. The people of Iran became upset with the little change that was taking place, and wanted more extreme measures taken.

In mid-1981, leaders of the Islamic Republican Party (IRP) convinced Khomeini that Bani Sadr was plotting against them, and suggested evidence indicating that he was a threat to the

revolution. This led to his dismissal on June 20, of position of commander-in-chief of the armed forces. His presidency lasted 17 months. He was arrested and dismissed as president on June 22.

Forced into hiding, he fled Iran on July 29, 1981, and was

granted political asylum in Paris. On July 24, extremist

Muhammad Ali Rajai with substantial IRP backing, won the

electoral victory over the moderates. Thus, the period of rising

fever ended, and the period of crisis began.

In 1981, Khomeini took complete control over Iran and took

many extremist measures. He made sure the government completely

controlled the media, as well as newspapers, television

broadcasts, and radio programs. He had strict control of

everything, including the treasury and flow of money to religious

leaders. Those who disagreed with him faced severe economic

retribution. The crisis had begun and radicals had taken over.

Under Khomeini's rule (1981-1989) came a great period of

reign of terror. For example, after a speech the Ayatollah made,

right wing revolutionary guards fired into a rally of approximately one hundred thousand Muslim leftists outside the U. S. Embassy in Teheran. Five people were killed and more than 300 were wounded. Supporters held food riots in Tunisia, and others held six car bombings in Kuwait. The Islamic Jihad held suicide bombings that killed two hundred-forty one U. S. Servicemen, and fifty-eight French troops in Beirut. These acts were not looked at as being bad acts of terrorism, but rather as acts of patriotic heroes. The reign of terror, the next step in the crisis, brought extremists into complete control.

The people of Iran in the early 1980's, had just about enough of all these laws and regulations, and were outraged at their standard of living. People were finally starting to revolt against the way that they have been treated. This period according to Crane Brinton, is known as the civil war. Civil war started in Iran with the conflict with the Kurds. These people were pushed out of their homes, religious temples, and places of

business, because of the overpowering radicals. An entire religious group was almost completely annihilated because of the savage behavior of the radicals. It was later found that the Kurdish problem was merely a pretext on Iran's part to engage in meetings and collaborations with two influential middle eastern states, Turkey and Syria. People suffered so that government could gain allies. The poor treatment of the Kurds led to confusion in the nation.

Because of all of the chaos in the country, due to different public demonstrations and mass rioting, government groups were forming. The IRP, one of these groups, was in support of a nationalistic movement. Opposed to it was the Hojatieh, and a third party, which represented the Mullahs and the high ayatollahs. This third group thought Khomeini was reckless, so there was great hostility towards the IRP. These groups formed different factions among the people of Iran, and led to a divided nation.



In the early 1980's, patriotic fever was bordering on hysteria, and the nationalism was incredible. This patriotic fever fits in to the next part of the revolution, the republic of virtue. Iran's people had a great sense of nationalism inside of them. People held many parades and marches to express their nationalism. During this time, women were forced to wear veils in public, modern divorce laws were repealed, and harsh courts were set up, which set strict laws and harsh penalties.

The colliding views of the Iranian groups, as well as the republic of virtue, made it hard for Iran to deal with other countries. During this period, Iran's relationship with Iraq became troubled. The war began with a fight for land and oil and as a result of the personalities of the two leaders. Both Hussein, the leader of Iraq, and Khomeini are headstrong. In addition, they disliked each other (Orwin 42).

All of the circumstances that resulted from the war may have contributed in some measure to the outbreak and continuation of

the conflict between Iran and Iraq (Iran-Iraq War 77-78). The situation worsened in September of 1980 when Iraq launched an attack on Iran to take control of the waterway that divided the two countries (“ Iranian Revolution” p. 835).

During the war, industry suffered. Chemical, steel, and iron plants in the war zone were heavily shelled. There have been shortages in electricity, fuel, and spare parts. The available pool of workers has diminished as thousands of men marched off to the front lines to fight. This caused great economic problems throughout the mid-1980’s. Iraq attempted to devastate oil economy even further. Tankers and ships 50 miles off the oil terminal were struck. Iran would be deprived of a major source of income (Orwin 41).

By 1984 it was reported that there were one million refugees in the Iranian province of Khuzestan. Some 300, 000 Iranian soldiers and 250, 000 Iraqi troops had been killed, or wounded. Among the injured were Iranian soldiers who sustained burns,

blisters, and lung damage from Iraqi chemical weapons (Orwin 47).

The war lasted about 8 years and Iran suffered casualties, not

only in people, but in economy and leadership as well.

Because of the war with Iraq, and the purges going on in

Iran, the economy was severely depressed. Besides the enormous

human cost, economic losses from the war exceed \$200 billion.

Agricultural growth has declined as a result of war, also (Orwin

34).

During the crisis and during the war with Iraq, industry is

plagued by poor labor management, a lack of competent technical

and managerial personnel, and shortages of raw material and spare

parts. Agricultural suffers from shortage of capital, raw

materials, and equipment, and as a result, food production has

declined. Also, out of an estimated work force of 12 million,

unemployment is up to 3-4 million (Orwin 16). Iran's economy was

desperate.

In connection with the devastating economy with the war,

there was economic suffering through purges, the next step in crisis. Extensive purges were carried out in the army, in the school and university systems, and in some of the departments of government although the Ministries of Justice and Commerce proved significantly more resistant because of the entrenched power of conservative elements there). Additionally, new institutions were created, like the Revolutionary Guards – including the creation of a ministry for them – and the counsel of Guardians, along with a string of other judicial bodies (Akhavi 53).

Purges eliminated many qualified personnel, and lowered the morale of the Iranian people.

Finally, after about 9 years of crisis and fighting among different groups, there was a breakthrough in the revolution, with the return of conservatives. The Ayatollah Khomeini died in May of 1989, and a new leader by the name of Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani was elected and came to power two months later. This would start the convalescence stage of Crane Brinton's

revolution. Rafsanjani has not actually called for a reversal of strict Islamic injunctions, but in oblique ways he is signaling that he favors a more relaxed approach, especially in the enforcement of the hijab (Ramazani 7).

Under Rafsanjani, the return of the church has been allowed to occur, which is another step in the theory of a revolution.

On August 2, 1991, Iran resumed diplomatic relations with Iraq and had also resolved the issue over the pilgrimage of Iranian Muslims to Mecca, which has been suspended for three years.

Inside Iran, the most significant development in the last few months took place in October, when several Iranian leaders teamed up in a maneuver to marginalize opponents (Igram A-10).

Twelve years after Khomeini came to power, Iran's Islamic revolution has finally softened around the edges. The signs of fitful change are everywhere. On Tehran's streets women still observe hijab (the veil), the Islamic injunction that women keep themselves covered except for their faces and hands. But some

have exchanged their shapeless black chedors for slightly fitted raincoats in colors like green and purple. Women's fingernails are starting to sport glosses, too (Ramazani 32). Obviously, the republic of virtue has been eliminated, which is the next part in the convalescence.

After Khomeini's death, many radical groups were weakened.

This led to the elimination of radicals. President Rafsanjani, with the support of Khomeini, swiftly eliminated four of his most hard-line adversaries from the political scene by challenging their right to re-election. With Rafsanjani in control, Iranians took a new look at crisis. His pragmatic policies were firmly established, replacing militancy and isolation. Rafsanjani campaigned to decrease the influence of important opponents, therefore improving ties with the western world. As well as attracting foreign trade. The radicals were finally eliminated, and Iran could return to the way it was.

Economic problems after a revolution are good. Iran had

been in debt from the time the revolution started, and an economic recovery was needed. There was an increase in oil revenue in 1990, since ties with non-oil bearing countries had been replaced. There was also an increase in oil price, as well as other raw materials. Iran did have ten billion dollars froze in American banks, which still partly remain there today. The country's economic problems were starting to be resolved.

The return of status quo, is the final step in the convalescence stage. Iran has returned to the status quo. They have many ties, including ties with North Korea, Libya, Syria, and Europe. Trade and friendliness has increased with Russia, as well. Russia currently want to build nuclear reactors in Iran.

Commerce opened with Japan, Pakistan, Turkey, and even some allies of Iraq. Rafsanjani wants to end Iran's pariah status in the world community and gain desperately needed aid. He thinks they are in a period of reconstruction (Desmond 32).

The Iranian Revolution is over, and the country is back on

its feet. Rafasanjani was an incredible help to the economy and the government, and remains in power today. Iran has a great number of allies, which improves its ties with the west. Iran's oil industry is booming, and the country's economy remains stable. Americans are again allowed to be seen on the streets of Tehran, and the foreign debt has reduced. The U. S. still has their problems with Iran (the money in the banks), but these problems are still in the process of being resolved. Iran is progressing steadily, and has recovered from the revolution. The Iranian Revolution follows Crane Brinton's theory on a revolution because the revolution included symptoms, rising fever, crisis, and convalescence, just as the theory states.

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