

The Iranian Revolution

February 19, 2019

Manifest Pedagogy

Iranian revolution is a significant event in World history with profound Geo-Political consequences. The revolution and its consequences continue to strain the relations between USA and Iran. It also affected the internal harmony in the Islamic world by dividing it vertically on lines of Shia and Sunni factions. In line with UPSC emphasis on Non-Western world history (Suez and Malyan Peninsula) this issue is being elaborated by Manifest.

In news

40 years of the Iranian Revolution

Placing it the syllabus

- **History of the world** will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.- their forms and effect on the society.

Dimensions

- Causes of the revolution
- Consequences of the revolution
- Impact of the revolution on Middle East politics
- Impact of the revolution on USA-Iran relations
- Impact of revolution on India – Iran relations.

Content

What it was?

The Iranian Revolution also known as the Islamic Revolution or the 1979 Revolution was a series of events involving the overthrow of the monarch of Iran, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, and replacing his government with an Islamic republic under the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a leader of one of the factions in the revolt. The movement against the United States-backed monarchy was supported by various leftist and Islamist organizations and student movements.

Causes

1. The revolution was in part a conservative backlash against the westernization, modernization and secularization efforts of the Western-backed Shah, and a more popular reaction to social in justice and other shortcomings of the *ancien régime*.
2. Shah was perceived by common Iranian people as a puppet of the United States. Under the Shah's rule, Western powers exploited Iran's natural resources blatantly.
3. Toward the people, The Shah's regime was oppressive, brutal, and corrupt; it also suffered from basic functional failures, like overly ambitious economic programs that brought economic bottlenecks, shortages, and inflation.
4. The shah's dependence on the United States, his close ties with Israel—then engaged in extended hostilities with the overwhelmingly Muslim Arab states—and his regime's ill-considered economic policies served to fuel the potency of dissident rhetoric with the masses.
5. The **White Revolution** was a far-reaching series of reforms in Iran launched in 1963 by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and lasting until 1978. Mohammad Reza Shah's reform programme was built especially to weaken those classes that supported the traditional system. It

consisted of several elements including land reform; sales of some state-owned factories to finance the land reform; the enfranchisement of women; nationalization of forests and pastures; formation of a literacy corps; and the institution of profit sharing schemes for workers in the industry.

6. The Shah advertised the White Revolution as a step towards westernization, and it was a way for him to legitimize the Pahlavi dynasty. Part of the reason for launching the White Revolution was that the Shah hoped to get rid of the influence of landlords and to create a new base of support among the peasants and working class.
7. Shia cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini – first came to political prominence in 1963 when he led opposition to the Shah and his White Revolution.
8. The budding Iranian revival began to undermine the idea of Westernization as progress that was the basis of the Shah's secular reign and to form the ideology of the 1979 revolution.
9. Khomeini developed the ideology of **velayat-e-faqih** (guardianship of the jurist) as government, that Muslims – in fact, everyone – required “guardianship,” in the form of rule or supervision by the leading Islamic jurist or jurists. Such rule was necessary as it would protect Islam from deviation from traditional sharia law and in so doing eliminate poverty, injustice, and the “plundering” of Muslim land by foreign non-believers.
10. Other opposition groups included constitutionalist liberals – Islamic Freedom Movement of Iran, and the more secular National Front. They were based in the urban middle class. Marxist groups – primarily the communist Tudeh Party of Iran and the Fedaiian guerrillas.

Consequences

1. The Shah was forced to flee Iran by the revolutionaries who involved in street fights with the Government forces.
2. Ayatollah Khomeini returned from France and took over the leadership of the revolution and with the declaration of the neutrality of the armed forces, the government of the last prime minister of Iran Baktiyar fell under the pressure of Khomeini and his armed groups.
3. Iran was declared as an Islamic republic through a plebiscite.
4. Elements within the clergy promptly moved to exclude their former left-wing, nationalist, and intellectual allies from any positions of power in the new regime, and a return to conservative social values was enforced.
5. The Family Protection Act (1967; significantly amended in 1975), which provided further guarantees and rights to women in marriage, was declared void.
6. Mosque-based revolutionary bands known as *komītehs* (Persian: “committees”) patrolled the streets enforcing Islamic codes of dress and behaviour and dispatching impromptu justice to perceived enemies of the revolution.
7. The violence and brutality often exceeded that which had taken place under the shah.
8. The militias and the clerics they supported made every effort to suppress Western cultural influence, and, facing persecution and violence, many of the Western-educated elite fled the country.
9. Iran continues to be under the leadership of the clergy even though there are periodic elections and institutions like parliament the final decision-making authority rests with the Supreme Leader.

How it impacted and impacts today West Asia

- The Islamic Republic positioned itself as a revolutionary beacon under the slogan “neither East nor

West, only Islamic Republic (i.e. neither Soviet nor American/West European models), and called for the overthrow of capitalism, American influence, and social injustice in the Middle East and the rest of the world.

Persian Gulf and the Iran–Iraq War

- In its region, Iranian Islamic revolutionaries called specifically for the overthrow of monarchies and their replacement with Islamic republics, much to the alarm of its smaller Sunni-run Arab neighbours Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the other Persian Gulf States – most of whom were monarchies and all of whom had sizable Shi'a populations.
- In September 1980 the Arab Nationalist and Sunni Muslim-dominated regime of Saddam Hussein of neighbouring Iraq invaded Iran in an attempt to take advantage of revolutionary chaos and destroy the revolution in its infancy. Saddam Hussein was helped in this revolution by the USA and other European powers to destroy Iran.
- Iran was “galvanized” and Iranians rallied behind their new government helping to stop and then reversing the Iraqi advance.

Western/U.S.–Iranian relations

- Iran experienced difficult relations with some Western countries, especially the United States. Iran was under constant US unilateral sanctions, which were tightened under the presidency of Bill Clinton. The recent withdrawal of the USA from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action continues to sour the relations.
- Britain suspended all diplomatic relations with Iran. Britain did not have an embassy until it was reopened in 1988.

Other countries(including India)

- In the Mideast and Muslim world, particularly in its

- early years, it triggered enormous enthusiasm and redoubled opposition to western intervention and influence. Islamist insurgents rose in Saudi Arabia (1979), Egypt (1981), Syria (1982), and Lebanon (1983).
- Although ultimately only the Lebanese Hezbollah Islamists succeeded, other activities have had a more long-term impact. The Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 Fatwa calling for the killing of Indian-born British citizen Salman Rushdie had international impact. The Islamic revolutionary government itself is credited with helping establish Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.
 - The Iranian regime is a key supporter of the Baathist party of Bashar al Assad in Syria.
 - The Shia regime of Iran is also a key supporter of the Shia regime in Iraq which is battling the Sunni dominated Islamic State.
 - During much of the Cold War period, relations between the Republic of India and the erstwhile Imperial State of Iran suffered due to different political interests—non-aligned India fostered strong military links with the Soviet Union while Iran enjoyed close ties with the United States. Following the 1979 revolution, relations between Iran and India strengthened momentarily. However, Iran's continued support for Pakistan and India's close relations with Iraq during the Iran–Iraq War impeded further development of Indo–Iranian ties.
 - Now with a changing Geo-Political situation and emergence of China as a superpower in the neighbourhood India and Iranian relations have seen a reset with Indian involvement in Chahbahar.