



RESEARCH PAPER

Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi Reign: An Analysis of White Revolution

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Received: June 03, 2018	The study aims to explore the period of Pahlavi's family, who is known as the last monarchy of Iran. Iran was ruled by the two members of Pahlavi's family and they ruled over Iran for fifty three years. Their ruling tenure to be considers very significant in the Iranian history. After the downfall of Reza Shah's monarchy in 1941, his son Muhammad Reza Shah became the next monarch of Iran who ruled from 1941-1979. He continued his father's reforms regarding modernization and the reasons behind these modern developments were the influence of the west. Existing data describes that Land reforms were the core of White revolution which created politically and economically uncertainty in the country. The descriptive analysis will evaluate about the Muhammad Reza Shah's reforms plan called 'White Revolution' which was prepared according to the desire of U.S government. This revolution solidified national support and he had to face criticism especially from clerics on his policies of unequal dispersal of oil wealth, autocratic rule, corruption, enforced western style reforms and the actions of SAVAK (secret police). The findings suggest and indicate towards the argumentative planes of Shah led to the Islamic revolution of 1979.
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Introduction

The era of Pahlavi realm was known as very important in Iranian history because of their modernization reforms as Shah considered it crucial for political and social developments. The era of Mohammad Reza Shah can be distributed into four parts, the 1st period started from 1941-46; in this period foreign powers captured Iran. The second era consisted on seven years after 1946 when

Mohammad Mossadegh hold the office of Prime Minister and Shah had to leave the country in 1953 for two years. Next third period started when Shah returned back to Iran and removed the Prime Minister General Zahedi from his position. Finally, in 1955, started the fourth period of his reign which known as his climax period until his decline in 1979 (Haghighat, 2000).

Mohammad Reza Shah is known as the last ruler of Pahlavi Empire. In the early year of his reign he had to face many problems under the Premiership of Mr. Mossadegh. But he restored his image with the help of America and came back to Iran and Mr. Mossadegh was arrested. The era of Shah was comprised on forty years and it is measured his efforts to develop social and economic restructurings and the close ties with west especially with America. He was not disparate the foreigner's engrossment in oil industry just to secure his position he planned program of foreign and domestic affairs under their influence. In Middle East Iran and Saudi Arabia became the 'Twin Pillar' of America. Due to the good response and pleasant dealings of Shah with United States, U.S provided all economic and military support according to the desire of Iran (Seeberg, 2014).

It was cleared that by the backing of U.S Shah saved his throne but Shah had lost his political legitimacy and his relations with Nationalist became critical. Than he was labeled as the 'U.S. Shah' he was trapped by U.S. government for all his life and he lost his ability and self-power to took decisions freely. Iran's dependency on U.S increased and basic objects of America were to preserve Iran from communism, easy access to its oil resources and wanted to continue their dominancy over Persian Gulf states. By the agreement U.S. became the main partner in oil companies. (Hensel, &Gharlegghi, 2012)In 1954, by the creation of a National Iranian Oil Company and an association of foreign oil firms like the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company which was known as British Petroleum and many American based partnerships the clash was solved (Lapidus, 2002).

Authoritarian Rule of the Shah

The era of Muhammad Reza Shah From 1941-1953 was marked by politically and socially instable and pandemonium. The country had to face the movement of nationalist and Anti-British to nationalize the oil manufacturing in 1949 to 1953, which in 1953 terminated that CIA-backed coup d'état. The government of the Mossadegh was collapsed and the position of Shah was merged vis-à-vis the general and socialist movements. After the strong position of Shah, a new phase started which repressed the oppositional groups and political parties.

To preserve prevailing social and economic arrangements by the attempt of Shah but did not solve the flaws and other political and social clashes of Iranian society to restructure the economics of the Iran he was tried on capitalist lines. By the aid of U.S resumption of oil exports are increased and then government started its second seven year plan. The agricultural sectors were promoted to complete the construction of three dams such as Safīdrūd, Karaj and Dez. Economy started to

increased and government initiated the 'Economic Stabilization Program' which proved highly effective (Moghissi, 2016).

"In the end of 1954, shah was determined to extinguish all sources of independent power in his drive towards absolute rule. In 1955 he dismissed his Prime Minister Zahedi and appointed Husain Ala, his close confidant, as a new Prime Minister. Candidates for the elections to the eighteenth Majlis were selected by the regime and the assembly proved duly obedient. The Shah's most critical move was to consolidate his power over intelligence gathering agencies. In 1957, with generous support from the CIA US intelligence agency, Mossad of Israel, SAVAK and Information and Security Organization of the Nation were established".

The organization was headed by the key person of 1953 coup named General Teymur Bakhtiyar. A second bureau within the ranks of the armed forces was formed by Shah to preserve his position and to prevent against coups. He also formed the 'Royal Inspection Organization' for the supervision of states actions and all organizations were directly answerable to the Shah. The National Front of ex-president was dispersed and Tudeh partisans were inexorably chased by SAVAK (A notorious Police). Two puppet parties of the Shah were formed known as National Party (Melliyun) and People's Party (Mardom) and shah moved along way, from the powerless monarch in 1941 to a powerful autocrat in 1960.

United State provided him an advisor named McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow, and Americans warn the Shah to start the reforms program otherwise he would be overthrown. The Shah was also advised and pressured by military to decrease his army from 200,000 to 150,000. The protests and incursions arisen in Tehran in May 1961 by the teachers when declined the wages. During the protest of teachers a large amount of students united and join the protest that made the reason of downfall of the Prime Minister of the Shah Jafar Sharif Emami and announced Dr. 'Ali Amini as new Prime Minister of Iran (Summitt, 2004).

New government of America had great trust on Amini and they chose him as Prime Minister by their influence on Iranian government. During the tour of Shah to Washington in May 1962, American government arranged a party in his honor and gave their consent in the favor of Amini and called him "apt and competent" Prime minister. But the new Prime Minister Amini started to investigate the corrupt leaders but the Shah sought to defend his friends. There were much difference between the thoughts of Shah and Prime Minister Amini regarding issues of budget like other issues (Sreberny, 1994).

American government had design land reforms plan to be carried out by Amini. In the month of July same year of his selection of prime minister, he was asked to resign his designation. The Shah, on the other hand, to secure himself from the blame of being the successor of the government of the Amini and to obtain the reward as the pacesetter of the land reform program and he started

many reforms to happy the U.S government. In an inhibited plebiscite, he got the "National approval" for the assemblage of the arrangements called the "White Revolution" (Haghigh, 2000).

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Mansur was murdered, after his assassination Abbas Hoveyda was appointed new prime minister, before he was cabinet minister. He was very obedient and tried to fulfill the desire of Shah because he wanted to secure his office. By these tricks he served for 12 years as Prime Minister of Iran which is considered the longest tenure in the history of Iran.(Cornell,1998). This period called the highest authoritative tenure for the Shah as government was compliant and media was under his control. Nobody had courage to criticize the government and oppositions were quashed by the SAVAK. (Sadegh, 2007).Shah became more conceited in this period and also increased the wealth and power. Shah tried to be proved a religious leadership but public refused to accept by his modern reforms. With the passage of his ruling time Shah became more harsh and stubborn and gradually tried to wielding power on the way of his father (Choksy, 2012).

Shah wanted to strong his position and did not want to exile like his father. Despite of many hurdles he established giant improvements in Iranian GNP. In 1934 father of Muhammad Reza Shah established a University. But Muhammad Reza Shah established universities more than twenty three and strength of students were round about eight million all over the country. But the students had no right to involved in political discussion and public had no right of speech. This was proved very unfavorable and created various social problems. Iran became the member of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1960. The price and trade value of oil with the U.S. was susceptible by this membership; Shah used this upper hand to petition that the U.S increase trade to Middle East and this was pretty alarmed to the west. A new phase also revealed. The economic inequality disclosed, Shah planned a set of more reforms in 1963 that were known as 'White Revolution' (Ramazani, 1974).

Shah combined his followers with the support of U.S. who had expanded a lot of power and influence in Iran following the coup d'état and started to suppressing his enemies by reinstating the power of armed forces. Muhammad Reza Shah became the single dominant power on the Iranian political scenario; he was declared the 'crown prince' on 5 Nov, 1960 and after the success of Democrat in American election Shah with the help of president Kennedy presented a social and economic reforms program called '*White Revolution*' in 1961.

White Revolution Reforms

Shah started the 'White Revolution' in 1960s which was six reforms agenda including land reforms and other five plans. The white revolution was passed by the referendum 26 January1963. Land reforms were the cornerstone of the white revolution agenda which provided the revolutionary air to reform movement of the Shah. This revolution of the Shah was formed and implemented under the

pressure of American president John F. Kennedy. There were no peasantry and bourgeoisie classes participated at the outset. As an outcome, its development and consequences were influenced by the substantial and non- substantial benefits of the main social forces as well as by national and foreign political performers. The key characters of the movement were Shah, Ali Amini, minister of agriculture, Hassan Arsanjani and the John F. Kennedy government of U.S. (Rahnema, 1996).

White Revolution was created from 1958 to 1963 which was remained until 1978. The White Revolution plan construed as an effort of the Shah and his followers to deliver a legitimating fable for the Pahlavi Kingdom. The White Revolution not only destabilized the fundamental grounds of the Pahlavi realm, but also significantly backed to its moral undermining. It is said that the 'White Revolution' was a political program and considered a bloodless revolution which aims were to strong the Shah's monarchy, political awareness to general public and increase in socio economic fields and to solve the issues of economic in country. This was a status quo concentrated upon the institute of the monarchy as the lynchpin of Iranian state and people. The central inspiring thought was that of 'modernism' (Ansari, 2010).

The voters who gave votes in his favor in referendum were 5598711 and there were only 41125 who had cast their votes against his reforms. This referendum was succeeded by fraudulent ways and opposition boycotted the Shah. However Shah was warmly congratulated and appreciated on his victory by the American President John F. Kennendy. The Shah prepared the white revolution plan on the desire of U.S government was consisted on six points, later in 1970s extended more twelve pints but the six were the main points that are following:

- 'Land Reforms'
- 'Nationalization of Forests'
- 'Profit Sharing among Workers'
- 'Sale of state-owned enterprises to the public'
- 'Women's suffrage'
- 'Formation of Literacy Corps'

The Shah envisaged a widespread series of modifications that he named the political, social, western social integrity, economic democracy and autonomy. Actually he wanted to limited freedom of the mass mobilization and desired to convert the society from traditionalism to modernism. Shah continued these transformations to attain his own prophecy regarding social, economic development without instigating important political modification to undermine his position (Shahriari, 2017).

By the White Revolution formula many social programs were launched and many educational institutions were established. By these initiatives the ratio of literacy was increased from twenty six to forty percent especially by the Literacy Corps which was created on the model of Cuban style for proposal to educate the

people. The strength of doctors, nurses, medical clinics, hospitals were increased and these development also raised the population of the country. (Ibrahim, 1989)

Number of Educational Institutes	Before White Revolution	After White Revolution
Kindergartens	13,300	221,990
elementary schools	1,640,000	4, 080,00
secondary schools	370,000	741,000
vocational schools	14,240	227,000
Colleges	24,885	145,210
Health Development		
Doctors	4,000	12,750
Nurses	1,969	4,105
Medical Clinics	700	2,800
Hospital Beds	24,100	48,000

Land Reforms was considers the core of the White Revolution. By these reforms, land was converted from landowners to small groups. The government forcibly got the land from landowners by paying fewer amount and distributed among villagers. Each person got the piece of land and it made the necessary by reforms that nobody kept the land more than 50 hectares and they had offered some alternatives. The Abol Hassan Ebtehaj one of the Shah's advisors claimed against the way of getting land from the landholders and proposing that the right of private property must not be dented. But he failed to alternate the view of Shah (Milani, 2008).

Shah gave another name to 'white revolution' as revolution of the people and shah but it was never adopted by the people as revolution. They considered it just a burden which was imposed on their heads. By the land reform law government bought 16000 villages or 19.5 % farmlands of the Iran from landowners and gave plots to 743406 farmer families and restricted the landowners for keeping more than one village. More, communes were established for guiding new famers and to assist them. Unfortunately, this land reform plan was unsuccessful by the government wishes to retain a stifling central mechanism and failed to funded it properly. Eventually the reason of 'white revolution' failure not just the economic as it had some developments economically but it failed in political sphere and stemmed in social interruption (Lorentz, 2010).

There were four political objectives which could be get by these reform such as

- The influence of traditionally dominated class of landowners in rural areas could be eliminated and power of center could be extending in villages.
- Secondly Shah was known that intelligentsia and urban middle classes were against him, the wanted to remove the stigma of unpopularity and to be developed his image.

- He wanted to get the favor from peasantry class and wanted to strong his monarchy by giving them land.
- Finally, he wanted to appease the U.S government of Kennedy which was pushing him for these reforms, even U.S had no experience of its own. (Hooglund, 2014)

In the era of 1960 to 1970s agriculture production considerably weakened because land reforms program failed to fulfill or provided the necessary wealth for the farmers those who had attained lands and failed to form an adequate arrangements in the rural areas to backing the new proprietors in handling their lands. By these issues Iran was forced to depend on western nations. Though by land reforms developed the political immovability of the rustic peoples but indirectly raised the uncertainty and tension in urban sides as thousands of landless farmers roamed to big cities to become the combatants of the Islamic Revolution (Najmabadi, 1987).

The land reform program had far-reaching significances. First, by this plan harshly reduced the political influence of the landed upper class. Secondly, it shaped a great petty-landowning echelon from the positions of the sharecroppers. The strength of sharecroppers was in more than 2.1 million in 196, and in 1971 the 1,766,625, or 92 percent of them, had got lawful label to the parcel they worked. Third, the landlords who had before absolute power was changed with that of the state as demonstrated in the formation of lots of new organizations in the rustic zones. Most significantly state government controlled the banks (Mohsen, 1995).

The land reform's consequences proved very dramatic for farmers. The peasant household had to lose their homes, lands, culture, sociological objects and they became landless wage workers who were not able to earn enough to their needs. Land reforms considerably transformed the rural area's economy by making strong the middle peasantry. Ghods stated that in the initial period of the reforms almost nine percent farmers came to be self-contained landowners that were a known as substantial upsurge. But the farmers who got land after 1965 were not enough able to look after their family's needs and famers more than forty percent were ignored. The neglected people had compelled to search for jobs in urban areas where they became the part of religious movement against the Shah. The land reform plan that was the main reform f white revolution was not succeeded to recover the condition of agrarian laborers of the villages (Majd, 2000).

Although this land reform program could not entirely accomplish the desires of people but it was an important initiative towards right way as land reforms were the part of a top economic and social policies inventiveness, the white revolution or 'Shah and people revolution'. There were several complications with the land reforms of white revolution. First only the men had the right to get land as head of households and women were depressed of land ownership, secondly, it snubbed homeless farmers, many of whom were women. Thirdly, it delivered slight fiscal sustenance for sharecroppers while parting them

susceptible. By this state policy for the modernization and commercialization of agriculture became problematic for minor landholders to make a profit.

The relations of the Shah with clerics became serious because of the land reforms bill and it was criticized by the grand cleric Ayatollah Borujerdi and he stated that any restriction on landownership is forbidden in Islam. By his prime status as a 'Marja-e-Taqlid' government at that time stopped these reforms but after his death in March 1961, these reforms were implemented. Besides the land reforms, also prolonged with the issues of women, women were allowed to cast the vote, to join office as per to their wishes and permitted to work as judge or lawyer and in 1967 'Family Protection Law' was approved in favor of women and also forced them to be modernize on western style. More 'Literacy and Health Corps' were formed to prolong the amenities regarding education and medical. Literacy Corps was consisted on the people who had high school certificate and wanted to serve the illiterate people of the rural areas as soldiers and for health also trained the 45000 medical groups (Esfahani, 2011).

In 1966 'Women Organization of Iran' was established by the great support of the government. The purpose of the organization was to provide their social privileges to them and sister of the monarch Princess Ashraf Pahlavi appointed as head of the organization. There were 190,000 female professionals university degree holders in 1977. The act of 1967 permitted the women to participate in politics and permitted to work as judges in judiciary (Moghissi, 2016).

However, white revolution could not be succeeded to fulfill the expectations of the people and failed to improve the condition of society on large scale. But other objects of white revolution such as profit sharing of workers, nationalizations of forest and literacy corps improved the condition of rural areas. The literacy corps which was known as 'army of knowledge' sent the educated people more than seventy thousands in villages to literate the peoples of rural areas, by this monarchy not just improved literacy rate but also demonstrated the concerns for people outside the cities. Like the literacy corps, a health corps was also formed for the purpose of health care in those areas (Flanagan, 2013).

After the death of grand religious Scholar Ayatollah Borujerdi, Ayatollah Syed Khomeini appeared as a grand religious Shi'ite scholar (marja-e-taqlid), Syed Khomeini openly opposed Shah's activities, his white revolution, westernization, corruption, autocratic rule, SAVAK activities, his ingenuity and succeeded to attract the people's support. The government of the shah reacted aggressively against the cleric. (Studymoose.com)

A pervasive frustration was created in 1978 among the lower classes, students, clergy, and bazaar traders. Ayatollah Syed Ali Khomeini got a great support who was exiled by Shah and living in Paris. Syed Ali Khomeini also criticized the economic policies of the Shah because they proved unsuccessful to fulfill the needs of the poor Iranians. Imam Khomeini condemned the Shah's reforms because these reforms worsen the condition of the poor and he said it is

the first duty of Islam to care the poor but the government of the Shah did not countenance the plans of Islam to be instigated. Further, he critiqued the white revolution reforms as it was just intended to promote the foreign values to the remotest areas, villages and contaminated the youth of the republic. He criticized the land reforms and declared it attack on Islam. He also criticized the modern western style reforms and unveiling of women. Land reforms also affected the clerics who had their owned lands, it happened first time when open rivalry started between Shah and clergy (Flanagan, 2013).

White Revolution Paved the Way for Islamic Revolution 1979

Opposition leaders claimed that the land reforms and all other reforms were the result of pressure of Kennedy administration on the Shah. Shah insisted on the necessity of land reform since ascending the throne. There were many other features of white revolution such as women rights transformation on western way that was bitterly opposed by the religious leaders of Iran and clerics also criticized land reforms, traditional leaders and Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Borujerdi, prior to his 1961 death. (Maloney, 2015)

Under the Premiership of Asadollah Alam the opposition of clerics reached to its peak. In November 1962, they intensely opposed the proposed Local Council Elections Bill. By this bill Ayatollah Khomeini got national attention and became the political charisma. There were three main reasons behind the clash between shah and Khomeini, the issues were National Referendum of 1963, the local Council elections bill and in 1964 admitting of capitulatory privileges to U.S. mentors, military personnel and their dependents in Iran (Milani, 1995).

These reforms affected the large strength of clerics who belonged to landlord families. The result of these reforms was appeared in increasing fame of Ruhollah Khomeini and he openly started to oppose the Shah and his reforms and he asked for his overthrow. The failure of some of the land reforms programs and the inadequate lack of democratic reforms, as well as unadorned antipathy to the White Revolution from the land owner elites and clerics, would eventually contribute to the downfall of the Shah and paved the way for Iranian Islamic Revolution 1979 (Rudel, 2014).

The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini started the revolution with the support of Iranian people against the shah because they were prevailed frustration with his government. The money that was earned by the Iranian oil, Shah was spending on American military products and very little amount to be ploughed back into economy of Iran. A large community of Shia clerics also against the shah because of his westernizes reforms and dropping the Islamic ways of life. In this situation shah faced collapsing country, the fall of Shah's regime in Iran happened by the struggle of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to keep Iran an Islamic nation (Amuzegar, 1991).

Conclusion

A series of reforms collectively called 'White Revolution' was introduced by Muhammad Reza Shah in 1963. White revolution was a modernization program of social, political and economic developments and formed on the desire of American president. The focus of the reforms was the 'land reforms' which started a turning point in Iranian history. Shah dissolved the 20th Majlis in 1961 and paved the way for land reform law 1962. By these reforms government bought land from landlords in fewer amounts and distributed among villagers. More he introduced literacy corps and established health care center in rural areas, women were given franchise right and more freedom. These reforms had mixed outcome but land reforms which were the core of white revolution became the one of the significant cause of his failure. Shah prepared this plan just on the demand of Kennedy government even he knew these reforms would be a risk for his position but under the pressure of American government he enforced these reforms. Some peasants gained benefit while mostly laborer class turned into worst conditions and they had to migrate into cities for jobs. White revolution appeared as an unfitted plan and failed to fulfill the needs of people as Shah proclaimed and created economic and political uncertainty in the country. Shah wanted to secure his position by appeasing the U.S and he reduced the power of landlords as mostly landowners belonged to the clergy families. Shah had to face the strong criticism from two groups 'clerics' and 'landlords' and Imam Khomeini declared these reforms a great attack on Islam. A large percentage of traditional women started to feel insecure by western style dresses and modernization. Imam Khomeini started to openly oppose his reforms and became the hero of the nation as he got widespread fame and support. White revolution paved the way for Islamic revolution 1979 and became the reason of downfall of Shah's regime.

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