

## Key terms + ideas

- sultanistic regimes
- Mosaddeq and the National Front
- Mohammad Reza Pahlavi
- Revolutionary Guard
- Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
- Muslim Brotherhood
- Kefaya
- Mohamed Morsi

## Key questions

**Q: Why, according to Professor Levitsky, was Iran vulnerable to revolution?**

**A:** As Professor Levitsky discussed in lecture, Iran was vulnerable to revolution for three main reasons. First, the Shah of Iran relied on the United States to help him gain power in 1953. As a result, he pursued strong diplomatic relations with the United States and sponsored US-friendly policies, like Westernization. Second, Iran could be categorized as a sultanistic regime at the time, meaning the state was built around the ruler's persona. Sultanistic states are particularly vulnerable to revolution because personality-based institutions are unstable and prone to rampant corruption. Third, there were multiple independent sources of regime opposition. A broad coalition of Iranian civil society opposed the Shah's policies, like using the SAVAK to repress dissent and the cutting of clerical subsidies.

**Q: Why are revolutionary regimes very durable?**

**A:** In Levitsky and Way (2024), the authors explain why revolutionary regimes can last so long. They argue that revolutionary regimes are fundamentally inoculated against three types of regime challenge (that usually spells the end of non-revolutionary regimes) because of the regime's response to and adaptation during the *counterrevolutionary* reaction.

First, revolutionary regimes will likely have few disputes within the ruling coalition because these regime elites often have to cooperate to survive the post-revolutionary conflict. Because of this past cooperation, this coalition is less likely to fracture in the post-conflict rule. Second, the post-revolutionary conflict also forces the regime to develop a loyal and effective coercive apparatus, usually the military. Since the military is likely allied with the regime, they are less likely to want to depose it in a coup. Third, revolutionary regimes will likely face weak societal opposition because they destroy opposition centers throughout the post-revolutionary conflict.

**Q: What are the critical differences between Skocpol (1982) and Goodwin and Skocpol (1994)?**

**A:** Skocpol (1982) identifies Shi'a ideology as an important motivating factor for Iran's cross-cutting revolutionary coalition. She insists, however, that the coalition to maintain the revolutionary regime will only stay in power because of the rentier nature of the Iranian state. In Goodwin and Skocpol (1994), the authors attribute Iran's neo-patrimonial sultanistic regime as the primary driver of elite and middle-class opposition. More personalistic regimes,

they argue, do a poor job of impersonally handing out goods, which angers elites and non-elites.

## Week's readings

- Goodwin and Skocpol, "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World," pp. 259-278.
- Selbin, "Revolution in the Real World: Bringing Agency Back In," pp. 123-136.
- Halliday, "Islam and the Myth of Confrontation," pp. 42-75.
- Skocpol, "Rentier State and Shia Islam in the Iranian Revolution."

## Review questions

Check your understanding of this week's material and key ideas with the following questions.

1. According to the authors this week, when does revolution happen?
2. How do the so-called Third World Revolutions in the latter half of the 20th Century challenge the arguments we saw last week, from Marx and Davies to Skocpol (1994)? What explains them?
3. How does Levitsky and Way's argument about revolutionary regime stability differ from Tilly's bellicist theory of state-building? How does this difference help us understand the differences between states and regimes?
4. Where are we most likely to witness revolutions in the present day? Think about the different structural and agential variables leading to revolutionary movements.
5. What type of argument does each author make (i.e., voluntarist or structuralist), and which do you find most compelling?
6. What are some of the consequences of revolutions? What do post-revolutionary states and regimes look like?