



The Islamic Republic is not the Pahlavi regime

A glimpse into the aspects distinguishing the Islamic Republic from the Pahlavi monarchy on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei tours an exhibition displaying Iran's homegrown products and new technology-based firms' capabilities in Tehran on January 29, 2024.
● khamenei.ir

Essentially, the Islamic Republic system cannot be compared to the Pahlavi monarchy, and this statement is not necessarily an exaggerated one or aimed at glorifying the Islamic Republic. The incomparability here is not a matter of value judgment; rather, it is descriptive and stems from the fundamental differences in the nature of the two political systems. As political science experts also acknowledge, a republic-based political system and a monarchy-based political system have fundamental structural and functional differences. Therefore, they cannot be compared in a way that identifies specific key components and establishes a form of correspondence between them. However, a comparative analysis in terms of characteristics may be possible.

The audience for this discussion is not necessarily limited to defenders of the Islamic Republic; in fact, it is particularly important for opponents of the Islamic Republic and even those who, according to their own claims, pursue ideas such as revolution, overthrow, coup, transformation, or any other fundamental change. This is because enmity towards a phenomenon without a proper understanding of it does not lead anywhere and may even be counterproductive. This article seeks to answer the question of why the Islamic Republic is different from the Pahlavi monarchy and why, just as revolutionaries managed to overthrow the Pahlavi regime, current radicals and overthrowers cannot overthrow the Islamic Republic.

Difference in the establishment of political systems

The rulers who come to power are not the same; the second Pahlavi followed the first Pahlavi to power, and the first Pahlavi regime was relatively entrenched itself. Therefore, even if we do not consider the second Pahlavi government as entrenched, it cannot be claimed that it came to power with the social support and will of the people. So, it is natural that if people have no involvement in the ascension of the ruler, they probably won't have a clear preference or interest in it either. During the time of the second Pahlavi, people were merely observers, and since they lacked effec-

tive tools proportional to the political and social conditions of the time, they couldn't interfere in who came to power. However, the Islamic Republic emerged from a social revolution; it was the people who brought this system into power with their own will. Therefore, this system, whether willingly or unwillingly, has its roots in common values with society and cannot be easily uprooted because it would require engaging with the entire society or at least the majority of the society that shares common values with the government, which is very challenging for opposition movements.

Difference in the politics of persuasion in dealing with public opinion

The Islamic Republic system has tried from the beginning to communicate with the people in their language; hence, at least superficially, it has had the will to persuade public opinion. This is in contrast to the Pahlavi monarchy, where not only was there not much continuous communication with public opinion, and no di-

alogue was formed with society, but there was also no will to engage with the people. The personal nature of the Shah's power and the aura of monarchy had led both the Shah and his entourage to see themselves as detached from the people, and fundamentally, they felt little reason to be accountable to the public opinion of society.

Difference in the presence of authoritative media and the presentation of official narratives

During the Pahlavi era, modern forms of social communication were not extensively developed, and the concept of media did not exist. Consequently, people had limited understanding of events and relied solely on hearsay and rumors to stay informed about current affairs. Additionally, written media were very restricted and did not have widespread influence across all segments of society. As a result, the government was unable to provide an accurate narrative of events, and essentially, the concept of narrative did not exist; at best, there was dissemination of information and reporting of events. However, with the emergence of new media platforms and the expansion of social networks and written media, the Islamic Republic seized the opportunity to firstly inform the public about its nature and secondly to explain

its achievements for the society. Furthermore, the proliferation of new media space has rendered rumors and falsehoods less effective compared to the Pahlavi era, unable to significantly impact public opinion. Therefore, during the rule of the Islamic Republic, it is not possible to sway public opinion or incite against the government with misinformation and falsehoods. Controlling official media and regulating the interaction of society with official media have led to the news authority being associated with state broadcasting, which can be considered as a winning card in the hands of the Islamic Republic. Whereas, the Pahlavi monarchy did not have such a widespread and influential news authority.

Difference in structural complexity

During the Pahlavi era, political and economic structures were not as extensive and complex, whereas in the Islamic Republic, structures are extensive and intricate. While this complexity poses challenges from various perspectives, ultimately it has made it difficult to easily overthrow or paralyze the Islamic Republic politically and economically. The complexity and expansiveness of political and economic structures have made calculations and planning by opposing governments very intricate, rendering them unable to significantly affect key points or threaten them. The status of cultural, political, economic, and social institutions differs between the two periods of the Islamic Republic and the Pahlavi era. During the Pahlavi era, due to various reasons including the simplicity of societal structures, low population, and lack of bureaucratic organs and institutions, cultural, political, economic, and social institutions were not well-es-

tablished, and society lacked structural cohesion. However, in the Islamic Republic, with the will for political and social development, it can be said that cultural, political, economic, and social institutions have relatively taken shape, and this has led to a significant distribution of power and authority among institutions rather than individuals. Therefore, during the Pahlavi era, activists and revolutionaries were only fighting against one person or at most a group of individuals who formed the court and aristocracy, and their work was simpler. But currently, if opponents want to fight against the Islamic Republic, they must contend with all existing institutions, or at least if they do not want to fight with institutions, they must recognize them officially and in a way engage in negotiations or exchanges with them, which is very difficult and almost impossible due to the complexity of institutions and the complexity of values and culture.

Difference in regional influence and the possibility of regional consensus against Iran

The Islamic Republic plays a significant role in the region, which could be considered an anchor of stability. Consequently, achieving regional consensus against the Islamic Republic is challenging, making it difficult for neighboring countries to perceive Iran as a threat. Iran's neighbors have realized that to maintain their own power, they are compelled to include Iran's influence and power in their calculations. Even for safeguarding their own country's situation, they tend not to align with for-

ign powers attempting to weaken the Islamic Republic. This factor has significantly contributed to the stability of the Islamic Republic and its stable position in the region. Naturally, it also aids in enhancing domestic stability. However, during the Pahlavi era, regional relations took a different shape. The Shah's reliance on external powers in military matters on one hand, and the lack of effort to develop relations with neighbors on the other, made the Pahlavi government very vulnerable.