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**The Iranian Revolution: Revalidating
Crane Brinton's Model of Revolutions for the
Operational and Strategic Planner**

**A Monograph
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ABSTRACT

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THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION
Revalidating Crane Brinton's Model of Revolutions
for the Operational and Strategic Planner

Introduction

The popular revolutions sweeping over Eastern Europe in 1989-90 have been enthusiastically received in the U.S. But brutal backlashes within these revolutions could soon shock the American public, warns historian Daniel Boorstin in a February 1990 article about the Eastern Bloc revolts.¹ Boorstin's analysis is based, in large part, upon the observations and caveats of Crane Brinton, who published The Anatomy of Revolution in 1938.

Brinton postulated a pattern of predictable stages for popular revolutions based on his "post-mortem" studies of the English, American, French and Russian revolts. According to his model, for example, the fifth revolutionary stage usually entails ruthless oppression, such as seen in the French Reign of Terror or in the Soviet Red Terror of this century.

Today's world of rapid political change should compel strategists and operational thinkers to study these stages of revolution and the political ramifications of each. Understanding the course of revolution would provide invaluable guidance to military planners in setting and achieving objectives, were the U.S. called upon for a military response to a revolutionary regime.

However, since the 1917 Russian Revolution was Brinton's last test case, is his model still valid? The Iranian Revolution

of 1978-79 provides an excellent test case to revalidate Brinton's model for the late twentieth century. Identifying the stages of Iran's revolution potentially extends the data base of Brinton's research to include a non-Western culture. Additionally, the utility of Brinton's model for operational planners can be nominally demonstrated in the case of the Iranian Revolution. Appendix A examines the appropriateness of specific ways and means used by the U.S. to project power toward revolutionary Iran at each stage of its revolution.

Background Theory

Brinton's model, as well as those of other theorists to be discussed, apply only to "popular", or democratic, revolutions. The revolutions Brinton case studied were:

carried out in the name of freedom for a majority against a privileged minority, and were successful; that is, they resulted in the revolutionists becoming the legal government.²

By contrast, "rightist" revolutions are transfers of power initiated at the top of a social structure by authoritarian or oligarchical interests. Often, these entail coups d'etat in which one general replaces another. Another type of revolution Brinton does not model is the "territorial-nationalist" revolt, a war of liberation from an imperialist or colonial power.

Based on social and economic factors, most models of revolution deal primarily with the "why" and not the "how" of revolution. Marx and Engels' socio-economic model posits the social sources of revolt, such as the discontent of deprived elements within a society. They believed the progressive degradation of the working classes would force them into revolt

against the capital owning classes. Social conflict would arise even if worker conditions improved but did not keep pace with the capitalists' welfare.³

Marx also asserted, and more accurately as Brinton's case studies bear out, that the failed expectations of a population at large can ignite a revolution. James C. Davies elaborated on Marx's "failed expectations" theme in his J Curve economic model of 1962:

Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. People then subjectively fear that ground gained with great effort will be quite lost; their mood becomes revolutionary.⁴

But while Davies' model adequately explains the roots of revolt in the French, Russian, English and even Iranian revolutions, it does not account for actions occurring after the overthrow of the old regimes. For a further explanation of Davies' J curve, see Appendix B.

Both Marx and Davies have given us good strategic-political concepts for anticipating revolts. However, their models are of marginal utility to the operational planner once an initial revolt is successful. What has been needed is a comprehensive theory of revolution that embraces more than the progression of causes and events leading up to revolt, as is normally given in low intensity conflict (LIC) and foreign internal development (FID) environment assessments. By identifying patterns and sequencing throughout a revolution, Brinton's work could give the military planner better insight into post revolt stages.

Description of Brinton's Model of Revolution

Brinton acknowledges that the social sciences are not exact sciences, since they depend more on observation than on clinical experimentation. This makes the use of a conceptual scheme essential to any study of revolutions. Brinton borrows an extended metaphor from pathology when he compares the stages of revolution to the course of a fever.

According to Brinton, there are early "prodromal signs", or preconditions, in evidence in an old regime before the "fever" of revolution breaks out. Full-blown fever symptoms represent the rage of revolt, such as recently seen in Eastern Europe. After feverish advances and retreat, a crisis usually occurs. In the delirium of this stage, the most violent revolutionists rule during what is known as the as the Reign of Terror. Once the fever "breaks", the convalescence, or Thermidor stage, may include a relapse or two. Finally, the fever is completely gone during the restoration period. The patient/ nation remains immunized for awhile and is, in fact, strengthened from the ordeal. But a post-revolution country has experienced wrenching change and is never restored to its former "self".⁵

In Brinton's studies, only the American Revolution does not adhere to Brinton's fever analogy, since the moderates were able to maintain power throughout the fever "crisis" period. The American Revolution was less radicalized because it was not animated by class conflict. Fueled by ideology and aspects of national liberation, our "popular" revolution may have been more of a "territorial-national" revolt. The English, French and Russian revolutions closely follow Brinton's stages of

revolution/ fever. Although all three began with hopes of high ideals and moderation, each succumbed to a Reign of Terror, or delirium, and ended in dictatorship, or the convalescence. Their revolutions were class and ideology based, similar to Iran's and, perhaps, to the recent revolts in Eastern Europe.

The Old Regime and Prodromal Signs

In medical parlance, Brinton has diagnosed the warning symptoms indicating the onset of disease, or, in this case, impending revolution. These "prodromes" are the preconditions and seeds of revolt that either must be addressed by the old regime to maintain power or by a new regime to retain newly gained power. In the countries he studied, Brinton found a structural weakness along political and economic lines which the "failed expectations" theories of Marx and Davies predict.

In each of Brinton's case studies, the societies were economically advancing. The revolutionary movements were not comprised of unprosperous people who experienced severe deprivation and oppression. Rather, economic "want" superseded "need" in fomenting unrest. The chief enterprising groups perceived that their opportunities were being limited by the existing political order in the old regimes.⁶ In fact, the⁷ governments were in financial difficulties, and not the people. Each of these societies that experienced rising economic trends had a recession immediately preceding revolt, an observation⁸ which supports Davies' economic J curve.

Economic power that does not translate into political power is a powerful catalyst for change. Class antagonisms are

exacerbated by the political frustrations of economically rising classes. The bonds of shared ideals between lower and upper classes, which Toynbee terms "mimesis", had fractured in each of the pre-revolutionary societies Brinton studied.⁹

The abandonment of shared ideals is accompanied by a sense of injustice for the excluded. Intellectuals develop a revolution's ideals when they transfer their allegiance to the discontented groups of society. Once they believe that a political system endorses social injustice, intellectuals will counter a regime's claim to legitimacy and expound upon their visions of an "ideal" state. A good propaganda base that raises social consciousness and moves people to demonstrate depends on an effective ideology. "No ideas, no revolution."¹⁰

In each of Brinton's case studies, numerous and influential members of the ruling elite eventually adopted the opposition's belief that they held power unjustly. The conversion of key ruling class members to part or to all of a revolution's ideals undermines old regimes from within their power structures and undercuts the use of power in forestalling revolution.

In the first stages of revolt, the use of determined force by a regime has the potential to put down demonstrations and stillborn the revolution.

... it is almost safe to say that no government is likely to be overthrown from within its territory until it loses the ability to make adequate use of its military and police power.¹¹

In each case, again, the old regimes demonstrated an ineptness in using adequate force that awoke the scent of the kill in the revolutionists.

Iran's Old Regime

Pre-revolutionary Iran displayed all the prodromal symptoms outlined in Brinton's model. The old regime had an economically advancing society which became rife with class antagonisms. The government was deserted by its intellectuals and became increasingly inefficient with a crumbling support structure. Eventually the regime would fail to forceably control the rebels.

Iran's roller coaster ride on top of its oil economy incurred both "failed expectations" and "J curve" economic conditions just prior to the revolution. The price of oil, Iran's main export, quadrupled in 1973. Flushed with new found national wealth, the Shah accelerated his already ambitious modernization plans. Iran's gross national product (GNP) rose by 34% in 1973 and by 42% in 1974, but fell to 15% growth in 1976-1977. Although 15% growth is spectacular for most countries, it spelled disaster for a highly mortgaged Iran.

By the end of 1975 Iran found itself overextended. It had a deficit of nearly \$4 billion in its balance of payments, inflation was about double the admitted 14% to 15%, (and) bottlenecks had developed in many areas.¹²

Stabilized oil prices, a falling dollar and the Shah's own overheating of his economy meant putting the brakes on expectations. Jamshid Amuzegar was appointed Prime Minister in mid-1977 to help solve the government induced economic crisis.¹³ He immediately launched a deflation program which resulted in high unemployment and the alienation of the business community.

To bring down prices and shift the blame, the government targeted the business community with censure and sanctions. Industrialists and businessmen were publicly hauled off to jail.

Officials recruited some 10,000 inexperienced students to check store prices. A quarter million shopkeepers were fined, 23,000 traders banned from their towns and 8,000 shopkeepers were jailed.¹⁴ Many of the middle classes were alienated by such rough treatment.

The middle and lower classes also felt a profound sense of injustice. Despite the sheer increase in wealth and material betterment of all classes, major inequities in capital distribution were supported by the Shah's government. The income inequality was in all dimensions: between top and bottom, between cities and countryside, and within the countryside.¹⁵ The International Labor Office tagged Iran as one of the most inequalitarian societies in the world. A 1973-74 survey showed the top 20% of Iranian earners accounting for 55.5% of household expenditures, while the bottom 20% accounted for only 3.7%.¹⁶

After a decade of hyped oil revenues, all classes were threatened by the sudden downturn in the economy. In 1977 the leading economic indicators reflected a Davies J curve. The combination of inflation, shortages, unemployment and uneven income distribution assailed economic and social expectations. The Shah's own propaganda campaign which hailed Iran's great future now worked against him. Most Iranians saw their opportunities blocked by his inept and unjust regime.

The Shah publicly ignored the widespread discontent and denied Iran's troubles. Privately, the government conceded problems of large scale corruption and industrial dislocation which America's Ambassador to Iran, William Sullivan, brought to its attention.¹⁷ Fear of SAVAK, the Shah's secret security force,

helped maintain the public appearance of support among administrators who personally dissented from the Shah's policies. But even these bureaucrats, together with the intellectuals, were posturing to abandon the Shah by 1977.

The striving classes had no legitimate political outlet for their frustrations. Ever since his overthrow in the 1950's, the Shah had been obsessed with eliminating political rivals, which resulted in all political power residing in his title. The development of political instruments needed to cope with a more affluent and educated society failed to keep pace with economic growth. The expanded upper middle classes of intellectuals, professionals and industrialists were systematically excluded from the political process.

Lacking political channels, Iranians turned to the only popular and legitimate institutions not dominated by the Shah-¹⁸ the mosques. Mosques provided the network and organization needed for an effective opposition to the old regime. The factories in pre-revolutionary Russia and, more recently, the churches in Poland and Eastern Germany similarly served their revolutions.

External sources of support for liberalizing the Shah's regime also acted as a catalyst for change. The Carter administration's human rights campaign encouraged the Shah to lift some press restrictions, which opened up an opportunity seized upon by middle class opposition parties, professional groups and intellectuals. In May of 1977, 53 lawyers signed a published letter demanding an independent judiciary. A group of 130 writers and intellectuals wrote the Prime Minister to protest

censorship and suppression. Political leaders, intellectuals and lawyers established an Iranian Committee for the Defense of Human Rights. An association of lawyers and judges was formed to protect prisoner rights.¹⁹

Organizations sprang up all over Iran, much as had the committees and clubs of Jacobin times. All that awaited revolution, according to Brinton's model, was a spark and inept government response.

Types of Revolutionists

Brinton profiles two types of revolutionists in his model, each of whom will dominate a particular stage of revolution in the struggle for power. Identifying the "moderates" and the "extremists" in power will show which stage a revolution is in.

Moderates, by definition, fall within a fairly broad political and ideological spectrum. They tolerate dissent and are more willing to compromise than are the extremists. Moderates seek political and economic reforms to correct the injustices of government rather than to create a Utopian state.

Usually, moderates share enough of the old regime's ideals that they are considered the natural heirs to power after the initial revolt. Their leadership is influenced by the intellectuals and privileged classes who abandon the ruling regime, but who are bound to many of the existing norms. Men such as Washington and Kerensky, while agents for change, exerted a moderating influence over the revolutions in America and Russia. Frequently, though, this identity with the old is a moderate's undoing in a volatile time of change.

Extremists, on the other hand, operate within a narrow band of belief and are not tolerant of ideological deviation. Most often their concept of justice requires far more than the reform of an existing government. "Leftist" extremists fight for a fundamental restructuring of the political and economic systems in their quest to create a "heaven on earth".

Extremists are driven by their ideals. "True believers", as Eric Hoffer terms them, believe that their ends justify all actions. They are schooled by their years of dissent and are well versed in the politics of pressure groups and revolutionary cells. They become hardened by the oppression of the old regime and exhibit a talent for organization and survival.

Despite their differences, both moderate and extremist revolutionists tend to share class background, especially at the leadership levels. Normally, they have been privileged with the social standing and education that is required for organizing and leading a successful revolt. Cromwell, Washington, Robespierre and Lenin were all well-to-do under their old regimes.

Revolutionist Types In Iran

The leaders of Iran's revolution were the intellectuals, politicians and religious leaders who, in opposing the Shah, had gained legitimacy by being oppressed or jailed for their actions. They came from all backgrounds, but were predominately from the middle to upper classes. As in Brinton's model, they were not the "have nots" as much as they were the frustrated strivers and products of failed expectations.

Iran's moderates were the evolutionary heirs to the old regime. As a minimum, they supported a constitutional secular government and, ideally, wished to invoke the old Iranian constitution that was based upon the Belgian's. Their agenda of economic reform included an end to corruption, a progressive tax, and a continuation of capitalism.

The extremists of Iran's revolution, who were either Marxists or Islamic fundamentalists, aimed to restructure Iranian society. Iran's Soviet model communist party, the Tudeh, together with Marxist/ Islamic Mujahadin sympathizers agitated for an economy and political system based upon the Soviets'. The fundamentalist mullahs, who were eventually supported by the Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers, resolved to create a theocracy based upon Islamic law, Shia tradition and a mixed economic system.

First Stages of Revolution

Brinton describes an unfolding revolution as it transitions from agitation to actual revolt. His model shows how the decadence of the old regime invites protest and illegal acts by revolutionists. The authorities respond with police and/or military force, but use it ineffectively against the demonstrators, as seen in each of Brinton's case studies. ²⁰ The failure to quash their defiance emboldens the opposition further.

Meanwhile, the government experiences a hemorrhage of support from the ruling classes, whose lack of confidence leads to a greater crisis. At this point, revolution is "in the air", as hopes and fears of radical change become "common property" and

signal imminent revolt. Ultimately, the country's crisis ends with the revolutionists either defeating or winning over the armed forces of the government.²² The first stage of the revolution ends after the overthrow of the old regime.

First Stage of Revolution In Iran

The Shah vacillated in 1977. He knew he was dying of cancer and wished that his dynasty would pass to his son and a regency to his Queen. His successors would need cooperation from various groups within Iran, and so, to regain their support, the Shah began to ease the ironclad restraints of his dictatorship and to "fix" the economy.²³

The Shah began to liberalize politics, while tightening economic constraints. As part of his liberalization campaign, he promised the International Commission of Jurists and the Carter human rights commission that his government would conduct civilian rather than strictly military trials. The change-over proved to be a critical mistake,²⁴ for it only encouraged rather than appeased the opposition. Meanwhile, his programs that targeted profiteering and inflation alienated one of his last bases of support, the Bazaar class, which was comprised of middle class merchants and artisans.

By autumn, the opposition groups had become very vocal as old and new political organizations merged. The tension of impending revolt was palpable. By November the opposition spilled into the streets, much as had happened in Eastern Europe in 1989-90. On 19 November 1977, after an Iranian-German cultural society meeting at Aryamehi University, a riot erupted

when police disbanded the 10,000 attendants. One student was
25
killed and seventy wounded.

The next ten days saw more student riots and university closings. Arrested students were tried and released by the courts. Ironically, protesters regarded the new civilian justice as a sign of weakness on the parts of the Shah and SAVAK. Liberalization was proving a potent stimulant to protest and
26
revolt.

The Shah wavered in the use of real force because, by now, he had eliminated virtually all his social support and had inadvertently neutralized his own military. In his effort to maintain personal control of all power institutions, he made them ineffective. The Shah distrusted the loyalty of even his military, despite its receiving up to 40% of all government expenditures. To circumvent coups, he disrupted the chain of command and the cohesion of the military. He removed the best commanders and promoted those beholden to him. To ensure diffusion of power, his command and control structure had 12 different organizations within the armed forces. Internal surveillance dampened dissent, and commanders of individual
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branches were forbidden to meet with each other.

During the revolution the military was paralyzed by the inactions of the only person who could wield its power, the Shah. Unhappily for him, the system of "organizational tension" that prevented a military coup also eliminated the efficient
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commanders and coordination needed in a national emergency. Brinton's observation that only adequate use of military and police power will stave off pending revolution boded

ominously for the Shah's situation by 1978.

Finally, the Shah committed a fatal error in directly attacking the ulama, or the Shia clergy, during tense times. On 7 January, amidst increasing street protests, a government publication vilified the anti-regime clergy and their exiled leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini. The article accused Khomeini of being a British spy and of having led a licentious life, among other charges. The seminaries in Qum, the holiest Iranian center, and the bazaar and business districts closed down in protest. Theology students and sympathizers went into the streets shouting, "we want our constitution" and "we demand the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini".²⁹ A police crackdown in Qum led to the killing and wounding of scores.

While the Shah's "reforms" had already alienated the ulama by attempting to undermine their influence, he deliberately incited them at a vulnerable time of his reign. In past ulama led uprisings, the Shah had possessed the will and adequate forces to put them down. He brutally suppressed the large ulama opposition movement led by the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1963. Khomeini was exiled the next year, fleeing in turn to Turkey, Iraq and then to France in 1978.³⁰ However, this time the Shah's attack was backed only by a weak show of force. Also, in the 1963-64 upheavals the secularists did not support the ulama. During this latest incident, the Shah had no strong political support and was not willing to use his military effectively.

Sensing a weakening regime, Khomeini called for more street protests the day after the killings. At the same time, the Ayatollah Shari'atmadari, a moderate constitutionalist, called on

the country to observe the fortieth day of the Qum massacre with
a general strike.³¹ The Shia traditional forty day mourning
interval gave the opposition time to regroup, organize and
mobilize forces. They observed the interval with street
demonstrations that turned violent, prompting further mourning
intervals and a cyclic pattern of riots and deaths. Although
massive memorial demonstrations occurred that year, the
government dared not to outlaw the custom.³²

All opposition parties united in the protests against the
Shah, including the bazaar leadership and the ulama, liberals and
constitutionalists. The Ayatollah Khomeini came to be considered
leader of the revolution, although, for the secularists,
Khomeini was just a figurehead. The National Front appeared to
be the heir to the old regime at this stage of revolution;
however, the Shah's earlier repression had seriously eroded the
secularists' organization and leadership. Meanwhile, the power
of the ulama was ever increasing due to their networking,
organization, and ability to mobilize the masses.

By the fall of 1978 Iran's economy and the Shah's power
collapsed as the industrial and salaried working classes and most
of the middle classes joined the protest movement. Unable to
impose military rule, the Shah asked moderate opposition leader
Shahpour Bakhtiar to set up a Regency Council and agreed to leave
Iran immediately.³³ The day after Bakhtiar's appointment as
Prime Minister on 29 December, the National Front, which had
struck a deal with Khomeini, expelled him from the party. The
Shah left Iran on 16 January and Khomeini returned to Iran in
triumph on 1 February 1979.

Rule of the Moderates

United in their opposition to the old regime, the successful revolutionists experience a "honeymoon" period of cooperation between the moderates and extremists immediately following their victory. But the enormous task of resolving the country's problems quickly sours any honeymoon harmony.

Provisional governments are normally dominated by moderates in this first stage of revolution. Moderates tend to assume the responsibility of governing by virtue of their relatively high social and political standing just prior to revolt. Their sentiments and training impel them to restore order and maintain institutions that prevent the further breakdown of an existing state. However, moderates quickly lose the legitimacy to rule that they had gained as opponents of the old regime. As heirs to the old regime, they take on more and more of the blame for the failed expectations of ideals they espoused before the revolt.

In each of Brinton's case studies, except for the American Revolution, the honeymoon period is short-lived. Once in power, moderates lose the party discipline they honed as an opposition force. They are beset with too many expectations of reforming state institutions while running the day to day business of government. They encounter opposition from within the revolutionist ranks, especially from the extremists who are disenchanted with their institutional conservatism. Moreover, in the aftermath of a popular revolution, provisional governments usually must contend with armed enemies from civil and/or foreign war.

Given the unstable state of affairs following the overthrow of the old regime, a strong central government and often the suspension of many civil rights are needed to prevent the slide into anarchy. As Madison stated, "War is the mother of executive aggrandizement."³⁶ However, revolutions made in the name of individual freedom are incompatible with the centralization of power needed to correct problems of the old regime or to protect a vulnerable new government.

The moderates' tendencies toward compromise and consensus building are inappropriate in the heady days of revolution. Their untenable position between disgruntled conservatives and aggressive extremists works only to tear down their support base rather than to build it up. When they ensure broad political rights and freedom of speech to the people, the moderates allow their enemies the advantage of publicly criticizing and conspiring against their government.

Eventually, the moderates find themselves opposed not by individuals, but by a "shadow" rival government which is better organized, staffed and obeyed.³⁷ The extremists establish a dual sovereignty, by virtue of operating outside the moderates' government and from a position of immunity. They use the efficient government machinery the moderates establish when they reform old regime structures. Their low-profile machinations, together with the prestige from having been in the forefront of the revolution, place the extremists at advantage in a takeover bid of a provisional government in crisis.³⁸ As the French moderate Vergniand poignantly observed, "The revolution, like Saturn, devours its children."³⁹

Rule of the Moderates In Iran

The rule of the moderates in Iran started with the Shah's abdication and the rule of Shapour Bakhtiar, an old constitutionalist and member of the National Front. The Shah had feared the National Front more than any other party, waging a campaign of suppression against it for twenty years ever since the party's attempted coup in 1950. The destruction of its organization ensured its feebleness, despite its high ideology and public acceptance. Unfortunately for Bakhtiar, his own party abandoned him for making a deal with the Shah, and his fall from office took only five weeks.

Four days after returning to Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini named Mehdi Bazargan to head the provisional government. For a week Iran had two prime ministers- Bakhtiar and Bazargan. After a street battle on 10 February 1979, the military leaders withdrew their support for Bakhtiar who slipped out of view two days later, leaving Bazargan as the sole Prime Minister.⁴⁰

The slide toward extremism had begun. While both Bazargan and Bakhtiar had been members of the National Front and were both constitutionalists, their subtle differences indicated the direction of the political shift to come. Bakhtiar had accepted a constitutional monarchy, while Bazargan supported a constitutional government with a secret revolutionary council. The council was comprised of seventeen members, eight of whom were prominent clerics, but all of whom were dedicated to assuring that the government operate in accordance with the holy law.⁴¹ The Ayatollah Khomeini presided over all this institutional structure, including both the legal and the

emerging "shadow" sovereignty.

Bazargan and other moderates failed to correctly gauge the power of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the ulama. The moderates, who had a near monopoly on the administrative and pragmatic functions of politics, dismissed the clerics as obviously unsuited for governing. They regarded Khomeini's ability to mobilize the masses as a useful but short-term phenomenon of the religious network.⁴²

The moderates focused on recreating institutions to deal with the immediate crisis of establishing law and order since the internal security forces had dissolved and the threat of anarchy was real. Yet, even in this tumultuous time, Bazargan's provisional government was guided by the moderates' ideals, which Bazargan articulated during the 1978 uprisings: "a return of truly constitutional government, supported by freedom of the press, total independence of the judiciary and free elections".⁴³ Most of the middle classes, technocrats and secularists favored a rule of law. But, just as had occurred in other revolutions, the call for civil rights also served the purposes of opponents who would be freer to plot the moderates' downfall.

Moderates sought to restore the Iranian social and economic order minus the injustices of the Shah's government. Democratic ideals seemed achievable during the "honeymoon" period immediately following the Shah's downfall. At first, the fundamentalist and extremist factions did not openly challenge the moderates. One of Khomeini's advisors, Islamic modernist and socialist Ibrahim Yazdi, leaked to Henry Precht of the U.S. State Department that various ideological groups would "enjoy full

freedom of speech and the press, including the right to attack Islam." ⁴⁴ Khomeini appeared to support the secular government of his hand-picked Prime Minister and seemed satisfied with his religious/elder spokesman's role. However, Khomeini was role playing, as later events would prove.

Inevitably, and as Brinton predicted for this stage of popular revolution, extremists surfaced as powerful rivals to the moderates. Muslim fundamentalists went public to advocate a return to authentic Islamic values. They voiced vigorous objections to the liberal, westernized and nationalistic values of the National Front and Bazargan's government. As Bazargan's drive toward a reinstatement of Western values was challenged, it became obvious that extremists were intent on nothing less than a "true cultural revolution". ⁴⁵ The polarization process of Iran was underway as the honeymoon ended.

Accession of the Extremists

During post revolutionary instability, there is a strong tendency for power to shift from the moderates to the extremists for many reasons. For one, the moderates' objective of returning to business as usual does not project the seductive idealism of the extremists' vision. Also, their personas do not project the strength and devotion of fanaticism, but rather the spirit of compromise, toleration and common sense. Moderates may be constitutionally unsuited for, or at least uncomfortable with, the rigors of post revolution power jockeying.

Extremists are definitely inclined toward the tough expediency needed for power grabs. Galvanized by the oppression

of the old regime, they develop a discipline and fanatic devotion to their cause and to their leaders. Extremists develop a cult of the leader at this stage of revolution and minimize the ideological differences within their ranks.⁴⁶ Their highly focused and single purpose of effort keeps leaders like Robespierre and Lenin on track in their bid for power.⁴⁷

Power shifts also occur as a result of political crisis points. Power becomes concentrated when the defeated parties drop out of the political arena. Both ideology and political support bases subsequently narrow, a condition which favors extremists. The party in power must use more extreme measures to ensure its survival. Usually at this point, the rule of law succumbs to a Reign of Terror. From Brinton's case study examples, only in the American Revolution did this slide into radicalization stop short of lawless excesses.

The normally short period following the downfall of the moderates and preceding the Reign of Terror is the Accession of the Extremists.⁴⁸ This lull "before the storm" gives extremists time to establish control over state machinery as they merge the dual sovereignties. They gain political capital from their monopoly over other opposition groups and purge them of all non-true believers, such as had happened in the Soviets and Jacobin clubs.⁴⁹ Extremists abandon ideals of universal liberty and toleration and champion rights for only the "deserving". As in Robespierre's experience, "The revolutionary government was the despotism of liberty against tyranny."⁵⁰

Accession of the Extremists In Iran

The Iranian extremists rose to power by insinuating themselves into governmental structures and by creating new and powerful institutions which they controlled. They established a "dual sovereignty" as they consolidated power and oiled the state machinery for their own use. Bazargan might have controlled the national organs of state, but the supporting structures of local government fell quickly to the extremists.

Extremists effectively undermined the power of the provisional government by creating "grassroots" institutions that were popular with the masses and which were represented to be the basis of a new Iranian order. In fact, the organizations were controlled by the extremists' leadership and were used to realize their political ambitions. The "Komitehs", or Committees, resembled the Soviets and the Jacobin clubs before them. They sprang up everywhere at the lower levels of politics and quickly took over the functions of local police and the administration of justice. Their membership originally was drawn from all of the participating groups of the revolt. However, since the only decentralized structure available to the loose organization of "Komitehs" was the mosque network, clerics were put in a position to purge them of all non-believers, or non-extremists.

"Pasadaran", or revolutionary guards, were organized to harness the energy of the youths, particularly the students who had been active in the revolt. Their corps became a paramilitary force that enforced and secured the revolution internally for the extremists. Finally, to serve revolutionary justice and legitimize the execution of opponents, the extremists set up

revolutionary courts independent of Bazargan's government. Summary executions by "hanging judges" such as Sadeq Khalkhali⁵¹ mocked the power of a protesting Mehdi Bazargan.

Bazargan saw the clear threat that the fundamentalists and their institutions posed to his government. Iran was splintering in the disunity of its revolution, with a reformist secular government on one hand, and cleric control of the masses, on the other. As early as 18 February 1979, Bazargan publicly protested the parallel government that undermined his authority and which threatened the revolution.⁵² His appeals to the Ayatollah Khomeini fell on deaf ears. Although Khomeini had, in fact, approved Bazargan's appointment, he did not support a secularist government. In a speech on 5 June of the same year, Khomeini came out in support of the clerics: "Do not oppose the religious scholar... the power afforded the nation by the religious scholars is a God-given power; do not lose it."⁵³

The real split between the revolutionists was over secular versus clerical rule. Only as a matter of convenience had Khomeini supported the secularist modernists up to this point. He had needed time to consolidate a support base before declaring a theocracy. The Ayatollah Beheshti, founder of the extremist Islamic Republican Party (IRP), reported that Khomeini asked him several times in 1979 if he and his IRP machinery were able to form an effective government. He says he responded that they were not yet ready because the "party's government should be a completely independent government and should have a specified program and we have not reached that stage yet."⁵⁴

Meanwhile, Khomeini and his clerics began to attack the middle classes, who formed the power base for Bazargan and the moderates. In their campaign to discredit Bazargan's supporters and elevate the clerics' stature, they attributed all success of the revolution to the lower classes and clerics. Soon, clerics occupied some important ministerial offices, as well as still heading their dual institutions. More extreme "moderates", like Bani Sadr and Sadiq Qutbzadeh, were temporarily allied with the mullahs in opposition to Bazargan's government while holding important governmental positions. The transition of power from the moderates to the extremists was now underway.

By 31 August 1979, Bazargan was publicly complaining about the "powerlessness and subservience of his government to the clerics".⁵⁵ Bazargan opposed the new constitution that vested dictatorial powers in Khomeini as the "Faqih". A "Faqih" is a "just and pious" leader who acts in the name of the Imam, who, in Shia beliefs, is the successor to the Prophet with direct access to Allah. Khomeini could now officially exercise strong discretionary powers over laws and actions of government, sanctioning them as he sees fit, on the basis of whether they conform to Islamic law and tradition.

Bazargan's foreign relations policy with the U.S. conflicted with the clerics as had his domestic policies. When Bazargan sought improved relations with the U.S., his solicitous stance turned out to be his final undoing. Over the objections of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, the Shah was admitted to the U.S. for medical reasons, which prompted the hostage crisis after radicals seized the Embassy on 4 November 1979. Bazargan had promised to

protect U.S. personnel were such an event to occur, and most Iranians expected the hostages to be immediately released after their initial capture. Bazargan was forced to resign his office when Khomeini threw his support to the militant captors, whom he annointed as the "followers of the line of the Imam".⁵⁶

Replacing Bazargan had to await the scheduled elections in January 1980. Bani Sadr, a modernist and secularist with socialist ideals, and who had been an advisor to Khomeini, was elected by a large margin.⁵⁷ His strong mandate was possible only because of Khomeini's voiced desire to have a non-cleric fill the presidency. Khomeini was buying time for his behind-the-scenes scramble to control state machinery before installing a cleric-run government.

The Hostage Crisis furthered the polarization within Iran as the political spectrum was narrowing toward the extremists. By supporting the captors, the extremists had replaced Bazargan's brand of moderates with more radical "moderates" like Bani Sadr and his Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh. Bani Sadr was both an extremist for wanting radical change and a moderate for insisting upon secular control of the changes.

Not surprisingly, Bani Sadr found his presidency without power. The IRP dominated the "Majlis", or parliament, after driving the secular community out of government. Bani Sadr had hoped to use his position to gain control of the powerful institutions of state, but, like his predecessor, he found himself dependent on Khomeini for his office.

When Iraq invaded Iran, the extremists used additional emergency powers to clamp down on dissent. Except for the

presidency, the mechanisms for a Reign of Terror were now in place. Bani Sadr also tried to use the war to further his power, but failed. Unable to establish a political base of support, he tried to build a support base among the army. He spent a great deal of time at the warfront in his capacity as Commander in Chief of the army. Of course, his military focus only increased the clerics' distrust, and the time away from Teheran politics gave his enemies free rein to sabotage his administration. The Speaker of the "Majlis", Hojatolian Hasheni Rafsanjani, along with the founder of the IRP and Chief Justice, the Ayatollah Beheshti, formed a powerful coalition to oppose Bani Sadr.

Finally, Bani Sadr committed political suicide when he blamed the IRP for the army's failure to rout Iraqi troops out of Iran. Extremist fundamentalists considered his speaking against the IRP to be an intolerable challenge to their power in government. They began impeachment proceedings against Bani Sadr after persuading Khomeini to remove his support for him. Bani Sadr called on the people and the army to "resist the establishment of a repressive dictatorship"⁵⁸, which was an appeal that directly attacked Khomeini's rule. Khomeini immediately dismissed the President from his office, and the last of the secular leaders went into hiding.

Reign of Terror and Virtue

Brinton has identified seven interwoven variables that give rise to the excesses of the Reign of Terror and Virtue. First, the habit of violence begins during the oppression of the old regime and continues on through the process of overthrowing and

sustaining a revolutionary government under near anarchy conditions. Also, the pressure of a foreign and/or civil war not only contributes to the climate of violence, but pressures a tentative government to mobilize all its resources and exert inordinate control over all military and civilian matters. Meanwhile, fits and starts of the Terror's state machinery yield poor results that extremists tend to "fix" with even more control.

Acute economic crisis, which threatens the solvency of the government and erodes public faith in its efficacy to manage, forces the government to implement harsh austerity measures. Class struggle, present in the old regime and exacerbated by the social, political and economic chaos of post-revolution, is often kept in a state of flux and manipulated by extremists to advance their agenda.

Further, the political and personal conditioning of the extremists' leadership, which results from the rigors of revolution and ideological honing, produces a government intent on surviving at all costs. Finally, the religious overtones to the Reign, which pit Good versus Evil in a moral battle for salvation, sanction even the severest of means to achieve righteous ends.

Once they consolidate a powerful government and dispose of all important challengers, extremists brace for their righteous and bloody term of government. This stage is a tremendously violent but mercifully brief episode of the revolution: "...human beings can endure but for a limited time the concerted attempt to bring heaven to earth which we call the Reign of Terror and Virtue."

Governments of the Terror become overwhelmed by the breadth of their tasks. The limited numbers of true believers, whittled down by the brutal selection process of sustaining a revolution, mean few have adequate governmental skills. The skills needed to run a government may not overlap those required to overthrow one. Fanatic ideologues end up becoming administrators who are frequently inexperienced and incompetent at their jobs. The extremists' government is beset by wars and economic crises that threaten the state and revolution. In response, extremists attempt to regulate society down to the average man in the street by using excessive law and institutionalized violence. Their governments rely on centralized executive commissions with special police enforcers, such as the "Cheka" and revolutionary tribunals of the Soviets and the French.

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Reign of Terror and Virtue In Iran

Bani Sadr's ouster marks the beginning of the Reign of Terror in Iran. The extremists were now in full control, and with no secular leader onto which to deflect blame. The Marxist/Islamic Mujahedin and other opposition groups on the fringes of the revolutionary spectrum used Bani Sadr's defeat as a call to arms. Sporadic political assassinations by these groups began to threaten the clerics' regime.

At a secret IRP meeting on 8 June 1980 to decide Bani Sadr's replacement and other policy issues, a powerful blast shook the meeting hall. The IRP was nearly decimated when 72 members of its top leadership were killed. Included in the dead were Beheshti, the founder of the IRP, four cabinet ministers and 27

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members of Parliament. Notably missing from the casualties was Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. With Khomeini's blessing, Rafsanjani formed a new triumverate of himself, Rajai as Prime Minister and the Ayatollah Ardehil as Chief Justice.

Street fighting and a virtual civil war erupted as the new regime severely dealt with opposition groups. Within two weeks of the IRP bombing, 120 members of opposition groups were summarily executed. As Mohammed Montazari said the day before he died in the IRP explosion, "faced with a similar situation, the French revolutionaries, like us, showed no mercy toward their enemies."⁶⁴

Rajai was soon elected to replace Bani Sadr as President, and a new triumverate of Rajai, Rafsanjani as Prime Minister and Bahonar as Chief Justice was created. This triumverate lasted only until another powerful bomb killed both Rajai and Bahonar on 30 August 1980. The repression and terror intensified as a result, and from 24 June to 1 September, over 800 summary executions were recorded. Court officials were "urged to speedily end the lives of all traitors to Islam"⁶⁵. After 18 months of this terror, the cleric regime succeeded in consolidating its grip on power by having systematically eliminated all viable opposition groups. Finally, the intense rage of terror was spent, and the people were exhausted.

During the Accession of the Extremists and the Reign of Terror and Virtue, Brinton's interwoven variables were present in Iran. The use of violence to crush opposition groups was widespread. Violence was an acceptable means to power for hardened revolutionist leaders, many of whom had survived

bombings or assassination attempts. The pressure of the civil war and Iraq's invasion further narrowed the band of acceptable ideology and justified a strongly controlled nation.

Khomeini went to great lengths to project a vision of a just theocracy engaged in moral war against the "wicked" nations of Iraq, the U.S., the Soviets and Israel, and their "agents" in Iran. Khomeini's rather xenophobic ideology took on a religious righteousness that not only condoned, but made a virtue of extreme measures taken, ostensibly, to promote and to protect Islam:

The French, Russian and other popular revolutions were inspired by purely secular worldly ideas, Khomeini stated. But, he said, the Iranian revolution 'has been for Islam; it was not for the nation; nor to establish a state.' Rather, it was to save Islam from the evil of the Superpowers, of the foreign criminals.⁶⁶

Under Khomeini, the clerics exploited class antagonisms to gain and to entrench their power. To build an extensive support base, they capitalized upon the traditional values and stronger Shia faith of their lower class supporters, the dispossessed and downtrodden "mostazafin". In the struggle between the moderate secularists and the extreme fundamentalists, the extremists enjoyed sheer numbers and fanaticism on their side. The clerics offered the people salvation through faith and martyrdom, in lieu of material betterment that the war and civil strife made impossible. Fanatical belief dulled the pain of the suffering masses for a time. The moderates, who were supported by the middle classes, bureaucrats and technocrats, lacked the ability to generate passion. All they offered was a lackluster vision of a practical and westernized secular regime, which inspired no one.

Thermidor Stage

The Thermidor comes as naturally to societies in revolution as an ebbing tide, as calm after a storm, as convalescence after fever, as the snapping-back of a stretched elastic band.⁶⁷

The slow uneven return to quieter times is known as the Thermidor reaction, taken from the ninth Thermidor of the French calendar on 27 July 1794, the day Robespierre fell from power.⁶⁸ Relapses occur during the Thermidor as in convalescence from a fever, but the trend toward recovery is definite.

The fanaticism needed among large numbers of people to achieve "heaven on earth" cannot be sustained for long. When the religious energy of the Terror has consumed itself, a forceful leader then must emerge to take over the centralized power structure- witness Cromwell, Bonaparte and Stalin.⁶⁹ The drastic changes the extremists have imposed on society give rise to this kind of strongman, or tyrant. Ferrero eloquently observes that when the fabric of society is torn, or "when the silken threads of habit, tradition, (and) legality are broken, men must be held together in society by the iron chains of dictatorship."⁷⁰ Usually, the "iron chains" used to control social and political chaos are military and/or security troops. A resulting hierarchy of obedience often culminates in a military man seizing power, such as had Cromwell, Napoleon or Generalissimo. In Stalin's case, he held the reins of power minus the saddle and horse.

Politically, the trend is from left to right during the Thermidor. Politically proscribed individuals and groups receive amnesty as ideological parameters broaden. The rule of law

returns and civil rights are reinstated. Special tribunals and revolutionary police become less radicalized as they are absorbed into the more established institutions of justice and police departments. Summary executions are reserved for the more dramatic criminals and for the extremists who threaten state interests even as prisoners.

The power of extremist ideology dissipates and Utopian ideals are largely abandoned as true believers die or are exiled. However, the people normally demand a plebiscite to legitimize the foregone revolution, and a unified showing of will signals a Thermidor stage of relative stability and internal security. The new governing class is composed of pragmatic, strong and adaptive individuals who have emerged as the fittest survivors of the violence and political attrition of the revolution. As society sloughs off its fanaticism, nationalism begins to fill the ideological void. Ongoing wars begun during the revolution either cease to be fought or are waged as nationalist conflicts.

The abandonment of revolutionary ideals leads to continued and even greater economic chaos. Economic distinctions between the classes become even more pronounced. The upper ruling classes indulge in gratifications previously forbidden by extremist zeal, and the poorer classes suffer the pain of inflation during the government's drive to resuscitate a failed economy.⁷¹

In the end, the Thermidor stage ushers in a modified restoration of the old regime in which the culture is marginally transformed. Much of the change occurs in the design of more efficient laws and social institutions. The most striking difference lies with the new government's better management,

insofar as many of the failures of the old regime have been corrected. However, in none of the revolutions Brinton studied were the former ruling classes completely replaced or the old regime's economy fundamentally restructured.

The Thermidor Stage In Iran

Eventually overtaxed by the fanaticism of the rule of Terror and Virtue, Iranians withdrew their support and longed for more relaxed days. By late 1982 the clerics' regime had silenced all opposition groups, most notably the leftist Mujahedin who had instigated a virtual civil war upon Bani Sadr's fall from power. By the end of the year, the regime's leader felt so confident of his power that he signalled the end of the Reign of Terror and Virtue. From his unique position as the all-powerful "Faqih", Khomeini had remained above the day to day tumble of politics. He could trigger the Thermidor stage in his own revolution.

In December 1982 Khomeini started the Thermidor reaction by issuing an "Eight Point Declaration" which curbed and implicitly admitted the revolution's excesses. Khomeini wished to stop the brutalities of the "Komitehs" and Revolutionary Guards. He now desired that all power reside within official instruments of the state.⁷² Even civil rights that had been suspended for nearly two years were to be reinstated. The Eight Points called for:

1. Islamization of the judiciary
2. protection of peoples' rights in the courts, emphasizing the need for legal competence
3. independence of the judiciary
4. prohibition of unlawful arrest
5. prohibition of unlawful usurption of property
6. prohibition of unlawful entry into private homes, places of business, etc.
7. exceptions to the above six rules in cases of conspiracy against Islam or the Republic

8. the duty of the Prime Minister and Chief Minister of the Supreme Court to implement these provisions faithfully⁷¹

As the "Faqih", or the all-powerful Jurisprudent, Khomeini effectively reshifted power back toward the more "moderate" extremists which he now countenanced. After the declaration of the Eight Points in 1982, the government regularized revolutionary institutions and absorbed them into traditional state organs. "Komitehs" were placed within the Ministry of the Interior and a cabinet officer put in charge of the Department of Revolutionary Guard affairs.⁷⁴ Because of its potential to destabilize the government, the Islamic Republic Party was disbanded in 1987. There was no further need of a political organization capable of mobilizing the masses. Its dissolution reflected a single polarization of Iran's political spectrum.

The strongman of the Thermidor stage in Iran has turned out to be the Speaker of the "Majlis"- Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani has been a member of all the Triumverates since Bani Sadr's ouster. Alone of all of Khomeini's followers, he has stayed at the center of power. Even Khomeini's hand-picked heir for the position of "Faqih", the Ayatollah Montazari, has fallen from power.

Rafsanjani's rise to predominance resembles that of Stalin and not of the military man Napoleon. Like Stalin after the passing of Lenin, he has required time to consolidate power after the death of the revolution's spiritual and ideological guide, Khomeini. However, Rafsanjani has cleared the major hurdles in his bid for sustained power. Khomeini blessed a Rafsanjani presidency before dying on 3 June 1989 and leaving a power vacuum for a new strongman to fill. Iran finally concluded her bloody

and draining war with Iraq, allowing Rafsanjani to use national resources more constructively and to political advantage. The constitutional consolidation of President and Prime Minister into the office of President coupled with Rafsanjani's 85% majority in the July 1989 presidential elections, also, have propelled him into the dominant role in Iran.

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Rafsanjani's success represents a victory for the blended moderate/extremist. He replaced the remaining hard-liners on his Cabinet with mostly technocrats because he sees a need to rebuild his war-torn nation. He has rejected the radicals' vision of economic egalitarianism for Iran and supports private enterprise, instead. Rafsanjani wishes to normalize foreign relations, including with the Soviets and the U.S., which is a pragmatic objective in light of Iran's massive economic needs. Rafsanjani is more statist and nationalistic than the extremists who still hope to export their fundamentalist revolution.

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The government's admission that Iran needs outside help for reconstruction is matched by its call for internal reconciliation with the secular moderates. The exiled experts have been asked to return home with Rafsanjani's personal guarantee of safety. Shapour Bakhtiar, the last Prime Minister appointed by the Shah, has been contacted by the Iranian ambassador to France and invited to return to Iran. Reportedly, Bani Sadr has also been contacted. Bazargan, the first revolutionary Prime Minister and now leader of the Iranian Freedom Movement of secularist moderates, recently registered his party with the government.

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This restoration process in Iran signals their Thermidor stage. However, as the government and society normalize, "fits

and starts" are to be expected during their convalescence. Violence often occurs, but its use is more selective in that it does not directly affect the man on the street. That the leader of the current Thermidor still resorts to violence should come as no surprise. In January 1989, large scale executions of political prisoners took place. Several thousands were killed prior to a general amnesty marking the tenth anniversary of 26 February. Notable among those killed were the far left Mujahedin, Tudeh and Kurdish nationalists, as well as the extremist supporters of Rafsanjani's political enemy, the Ayatollah Montazeri.

Implications for Strategists and Operational Planners

As an analysis of the stages of the Iranian Revolution demonstrate, Brinton's 1938 model still holds true. His patterning of predictable stages is a valuable tool for strategists and operational planners, who need to understand the phenomenon of popular revolution to meet our political and military objectives abroad. A state of revolution imposes certain constraints upon an operational setting, just as do other strategic, geographical, economic and political considerations. The operational planner must determine if objectives, means and ways match the dynamics of the revolutionary environment in which the military may operate.

At the operational/ CINC level, the employment of power depends upon context. The application of power by one stable nation toward another has more predictable connotations than the same application toward a revolutionary state. Also, a

particular stage of revolt may well determine the applicability of the ways and the means. This implies that, as the stages change, so will the means and the ways.

Within strategic parameters, operational objectives can vary. In the case of revolutionary Iran, we could have aimed to keep the old regime in power to maintain a status quo, however uneasy, in an unstable part of the world. Or, we could have attempted to moderate Iranian policy toward the U.S. for more positive relations and greater leverage. Meeting the latter objective, for example, might help secure the release of the American hostages in Lebanon.

By definition, a revolution fundamentally changes the operational environment within which planners work, often prompting a change in operational objectives, as well as in the ways and means to achieve them. Even if an operational objective were to remain unchanged, an environmental change may force the planner to use different means and ways. For example, the Russian Revolution obliged the Germans to change their means and ways of forcing Russia out of World War I.

The dialectic between ways and means within a revolutionary environment tends to be predominantly in one direction- the ways dictate the means. The primacy of the "way" holds especially true when we engage in limited war, a case where the U.S. has virtually unlimited means, but limited effective ways. In a skewed power conflict this relationship of ways and means may change frequently as ways change. The use of a single way and single means is bound to fail in the changing revolutionary environment.

However, when the relative standing between the U.S. and an adversary is closer to parity, as in non-revolutionary environments, then a two-way dialectic of ways and means comes into effect. This theoretical construct is useful to the operational planner in postulating multiple and simultaneous means in a changing situation.

The application of ways and means to any revolution is unique, and a "cookie cutter" approach toward different revolutions is not useful. But, a model that reliably predicts stages and their general uniformities would greatly aid an operational planner at the CINC's level in setting objectives, planning operational phases and maximizing the ways and means. For example, if the recent Eastern European popular revolts can be matched to Brinton's model, then contingency planners must prepare for the Accession of Extremists and the instability of the Reigns of Terror.

In the case of the Iranian Revolution, we can evaluate the effectiveness of our ways and means for achieving objectives by analyzing our response to significant events during its course. Appendix A examines the application of U.S. power in revolutionary Iran during each stage as defined by Brinton's model. The assumption is made that the U.S. strategic end-objective regarding Iran has remained fairly constant since 1978: that the Iranian government be western-oriented and favorably disposed toward U.S. interests, or at least not be aligned with the Soviets.

Appendix A

Iran: a Case Study of Operational Ways and Means

Prodromal Stages

U.S. application of power during the prodromal stages of Iran's revolution falls under the nation building, or Foreign Internal Development (FID) concept of operations, and will not be discussed at length. Brinton stated that, of all the stages, this is the most difficult to identify. Ambassador Sullivan has admitted that the U.S. Embassy did not extend its "antenna" into the dissidents' network until the spring of 1978.⁸⁰ By this time, the first stages of revolt were underway.

Most U.S. intelligence agencies discounted the prodromal signs in Iran. Anyway, any overt FID operations would have signalled a lack of confidence in the Shah. Still, the outbreak of revolt a few months after President Carter's visit to Iran would mock his words, "Iran is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."⁸¹

First Stage of Revolt- January 1977 to 4 February 1979

In the first stage of Iran's revolution, the U.S. initially projected a lot of power to support the Shah. This projection was mostly political and military in order to shore up the Shah's rule and maintain the status quo.

But in November of 1978, Ambassador Sullivan sent a cable to Washington, entitled "Thinking the Unthinkable".⁸² Sullivan believed the new military government under General Azhari was the last chance for securing the Shah's survival. He proposed to

strike a deal with the clerics to retain a secular constitution in exchange for the exile of the Shah and one hundred of his most senior military officers.⁸³

Washington rejected Sullivan's "Realpolitik" solution which ignored political loyalty and constraints of national politics. Politically, Washington had to support the Shah until he gave up power. Militarily, the U.S. would support the Shah or his military with the more than 10,000 U.S. military advisors already in the country and with any additional support short of force.

With the Shah's coming abdication and departure on 26 January 1979, the Carter administration sent General Robert Huyser to Teheran. His mission was to convince the military to support the Bakhtiar government and, failing this, to explore the option of supporting a pro- U.S. military coup.⁸⁴ Huyser was to urge the military leaders to remain in Iran with assurances of U.S. support.

Huyser arrived in Iran on 4 January 1979 and, although he stayed for just over a month, his mission was doomed to fail. He points out in his book, Mission to Tehran:

What was the use of my delivering my half of the objective, a coherent military leadership with a workable plan of action, if the Ambassador was making no attempt to deliver his half, a political leadership confident of American support?⁸⁵

Prime Minister Bakhtiar's failure to use military force in the confrontation with the revolutionists may, indeed, support Huyser's accusation. Sullivan's thinking never did jibe with Washington's objectives or with Huyser's mission. As late as the day before Huyser arrived, he was discussing the names of the top one hundred officers to be exiled with revolutionary

representatives. Many of the officers on this list eventually heeded Huyser's call to stay, but with unfortunate results.

The conflict between the State Department and DOD was decisive in defeating the political goal of Huyser's military/political mission. The "ways" in this incident were political and military, but they were in opposition to each other due to strategic guidance. "The consequence was that Washington not only conceived, but actually implemented conflicting policies simultaneously."⁸⁷

Our failure to have a unified command for these plans allowed Huyser's mission to become a propaganda tool for the revolutionists. Bakhtiar's association with Huyser, coupled with the speculation that Huyser was there to instigate a coup, stripped away any legitimacy Bakhtiar had. The label of "American puppet" seemed too real for him to overcome. The slide toward extremism had begun with clumsy American prodding.

Khomeini's return to Iran on 1 February 1979 was soon followed by rioting that intensified on 10 February. The next morning the military withdrew to their barracks and abandoned Bakhtiar's government.⁸⁸ By 12 February, Bakhtiar was in flight to Paris, and Bazargan was the new nominal head of state.

U.S. participation in Bakhtiar's downfall was a study in how to paralyze and undermine our chosen party. Our actions and application of power should have supported the moderates, while not undermining their basis of legitimacy. A given assumption in a revolution is that the claims to legitimacy by both moderate and extremist revolutionists are based on their prior opposition to the old regime. Operational and strategic planners must bear

in mind that the moderates' need to reinforce their revolutionist legitimacy is as important as preserving the old regime's state structure.

Rule of the Moderates

In his model, Brinton describes a slide toward extremism during the Rule of the Moderates. This shift toward the radicals is due to the dual sovereignty they establish, as well as to the rule of law which the moderates uphold and the radicals use to advantage. If U.S. policy had aimed to support the Iranian moderates, then it follows that our support should have helped their state machinery oppose that of the extremists.

U.S. strategists, who did not accept that the Iranian uprising was a popular revolt and who initially saw it as a Soviet plot or a coup of some sort, did not apply an appropriate model to analyze it. In fact, U.S. reaction to the Shah's overthrow was initially to lament his departure while sorting out who was who in the revolt. The State Department did not even know who the players were. The Iranian desk officer Henry Precht wrote as late as July 20, 1979:

We simply did not have the bio's, inventory of political groups or current picture of daily life as it evolves at various levels in Iran. Ignorance here of Iran's events is massive.⁸⁹

We demonstrated our ignorance by admitting the Shah into the U.S. on 22 October 1979. Providing the Shah a refuge in the U.S. in the overthrow period between December 1978 to January 1979 would have been seen as an assist to the revolution which minimized bloodshed. Revolutionists and State Department officials had even agreed on this concept. But, admitting the

Shah much later that year was interpreted as a rejection of the revolution and even as a threat. The net result was that we subverted the secularist moderates we had hoped to support over other leftist and cleric revolutionists.

Extremists used the Shah's visit to the U.S. as the excuse to seize the U.S. Embassy and its personnel in Teheran. Actually, the militants had planned to seize the Embassy to discredit moderates like Bazargan who were publicly dealing with the Americans. Just days before the takeover, Bazargan and his Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yazdi met Brzezinski in Algiers to discuss U.S.- Iranian relations. Simultaneously, the radicals mounted revolutionary demonstrations in Teheran protesting the Shah's sanctuary in the U.S. As two million demonstrators shouted "Death to America!", Iranian national television showed pictures of Brzezinski shaking hands with the Iranian delegation. ⁹⁰ Bazargan was fatally wounded politically. On 4 November 1979, the American Embassy and hostages were seized. When Bazargan attempted to secure their release, he was rejected by Khomeini. Bazargan resigned on 6 November 1979 and with him went most of the moderates into discredit.

Khomeini controlled the revolution in Iran more than did anyone else. Guiding the revolution was his characterization of it as a struggle between the powers of good and evil, or between the Islamic fundamentalists and the Superpowers, Iraq, Israel and their "agents" in Iran. Khomeini diverted attention away from domestic problems with his morality play. He wielded leverage over the secular moderates by projecting such a Superpower threat that alignment with either East or West became an untenable

political option. Revolutionists associated with any U.S. interests were summarily delegitimized as pawns of the evil imperialist, as were Bakhtiar, Bazargan and eventually as Bani Sadr would be.

Bani Sadr, the most extreme moderate, succeeded Bazargan as President of Iran and became the U.S.'s best hope to stem the radicals. Unfortunately for Bani Sadr and the remaining moderates, the seizure of the Embassy produced CIA documents that would continue to dog them. Apparently, the CIA planned to develop a liason with Bani Sadr, as well as to develop close working relations with the moderates, notably the offshoots of the National Front.⁹² The militants pieced together captured American documents that commented on U.S. contacts with Bani Sadr and the moderates. They selectively published them in a successful drive to discredit the moderates.⁹³

The Hostage Crisis came to dominate U.S. operational thought at the expense of longer range strategic objectives. We abandoned diplomacy in favor of attempting a military rescue of the hostages. This fundamental change in ways and means, linked directly to the re-election bid of President Carter, meant that we were going to forsake the moderate Iranians. A successful rescue during Bani Sadr's presidency would have ensured his overthrow by extremist, anti-American factions.

The Hostage Crisis prevented the U.S. from using the Iraqi invasion of Iran in September 1980 as an opportunity to moderate U.S.-Iranian relations. As President of Iran and leader of the armed forces, Bani Sadr was in critical need of military hardware to use against the Iraqis. The U.S. controlled sizeable Iranian

assets, including \$400 million in spare military parts, which were frozen immediately upon the embassy seizure. Our releasing the spares and the desperately needed funds would have enhanced Bani Sadr's prestige, if not forestalled his overthrow. While this tack would have been in the U.S. interests, especially since Iraq was a client of the Soviets, the Hostage Crisis made this impossible. Iranian-American relations were poisoned by public reaction to the embassy takeover, and the media and politicians in both countries made reconciliation most difficult.

Reign of Terror

Upon Bani Sadr's departure, the extremists seized power and the Reign of Terror began. The U.S. responded to this stage by implementing a policy of disengagement. We did not participate in Iran's internal politics, electing, instead, to embargo Iran and isolate it internationally.

Thermidor Stage

U.S. inactivity toward Iran during the Reign of Terror and early stages of the Thermidor stands in sharp contrast to our last five years of direct military, political and economic application of power. On the receiving end of these U.S. actions, both intentionally and inadvertently, was Rafsanjani, the "moderate" in extremist's cloak. Although not by design, the controversial arms for hostages deals of 1985 and our combat role in the Persian Gulf War of 1987-88 would bolster Rafsanjani's political standing within his country.

By blessing Rafsanjani's bid for the presidency, Khomeini acted as kingmaker in the Thermidor stage. Rafsanjani, now the

virtual dictator of Iran's "republic", attempted to de-radicalize Iranian politics with Khomeini's guidance. He called for a rule of law, an end to the war with Iraq and for better relations with the West, including the U.S. His pragmatic agenda reflected more moderate objectives, as well as his political confidence and strong position within Iran.

Khomeini supported Rafsanjani in all three critical areas of policy reform, including the easing of Iran's isolationist standing in the world community. He stated in October 1984 that "it is inadmissible to common sense and humanity" not to have relations with other governments. In November 1985 Khomeini further said, "We do not want to live in a country which is isolated from the rest of the world."⁹⁴

Taking advantage of Iran's shift in international relations from isolation to "interdependence", the Reagan administration secretly attempted to establish relations with Iranian moderates in 1985. Despite the official State Department's efforts to impose an arms embargo on Iran, a small group of National Security Council officials, at the behest of CIA Director William Casey, sought to sell Iran badly needed arms and spares. In exchange, the U.S. was to expect help in the release of the American hostages in Lebanon and, more importantly, the establishment of better U.S.- Iranian relations.⁹⁵

Strategically, the opening of communications was in U.S. interests. It would facilitate our goal of getting Iran back into the U.S. camp or, at least, into the anti-Soviet camp. Operationally, the attempt was disjointed, as State and NSC efforts were not coordinated. Tactically, the sale of weapons

and, as it turned out, the Contra connection, fatally flawed the NSC operational plan. The ways and means lacked synchronization.

Unfortunately for relations between the two countries, the radicals in Iran found out about the U.S. arms for hostages deal and, worse yet, the central role Rafsanjani played in it. Seeking to discredit Rafsanjani and to win the release of their imprisoned leader Mehdi Hasheani, they leaked the news of the meeting between Rafsanjani and U.S. NSC advisor Robert MacFarlane to the Lebanese press.⁹⁶ But the radicals' ploy backfired and Hasheani was executed, since Khomeini had sanctioned Rafsanjani's dealings with the U.S. Still, U.S.- Iranian relations suffered as a result of negative press coverage in both countries.

U.S. public reaction, still colored by preconceptions of the Iranians from the earlier Hostage Crisis, was highly critical of the U.S.- sponsored initiative. Despite Saudi Arabian efforts in 1985 at rapprochement with Iran, the Arab Gulf states similarly denounced U.S. overtures toward Iran.⁹⁷ They exerted pressure along with U.S. public opinion to force the U.S. administration into a decidedly anti-Iranian policy.

At the height of the Iran-Contra hearings in May 1987, the USS Stark was hit by an Iraqi missile and 37 American sailors were killed. The U.S. responded ultimately by blaming Iran for the hostilities in the Persian Gulf. We called for an end to the Gulf War with terms favorable to Iraq, even in light of Iraq's role in the USS Stark tragedy. Our response was calculated to appease Iraqi's Arab allies.

That same year, we undertook the reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers, rather than let the Soviets step in and encroach upon the Gulf. But U.S. reflagging and patrol efforts in the Gulf led to an Iranian - U.S. naval confrontation in 1988. Surprisingly, Rafsanjani would benefit from the hostile U.S. actions. Rafsanjani parlayed the tense situation into political capital that bolstered his standing domestically. He distanced himself from the U.S. and used the crisis to strengthen both his political and administrative control. His success was due, in part, to Khomeini's backing in his struggle with the radicals, as well as to his control over the Iranian national television.

Finally, Rafsanjani was able to discredit the radicals who supported continuation of the "wars" with Iraq and the U.S., when, in 1988, both countries had simultaneous victories against Iran- on the Faw peninsula and in the Gulf. Failure on the war front and economic collapse at home politically strengthened Rafsanjani who was able to consolidate power and take charge in the name of preserving revolution.

Summary

The case study of U.S. power projection in Iran from 1978 to 1989 reveals several lessons for the operational planner. First, and foremost, is that power consists of political, military and economic ways which the CINC, or whoever is in charge, must coordinate in their application. Specifically, when the State Department and DOD are under some joint command structure, they must implement National Command guidances in a complementary manner, and not as done in the Huyser mission or arms-for-

hostages deal.

Secondly, operational objectives must be consistent with the strategic aims, as was not the case in the hostage rescue mission. Last, we must realize our overt actions may not be perceived in the same light as we intend them. They often hold a subtly different or even markedly different meaning for the revolutionist. Understanding who the moderates and radicals are and the extent of their support is critical. The "kiss of death" dilemma of our backfired support for moderates like Bakhtiar, Bazargan and Bani Sadr needs more analysis.

The reality of political constraints means that the operational planner is constantly reacting and changing his ways and means to maximize political opportunity, as well as to mitigate political damage. For example, in a regrettable occurrence on 7 September 1989, rather than orchestrate support for the Iranian moderates in power, 186 U.S. Congressmen signed a Congressional petition supporting Iranian opposition forces, including the monarchists!⁹⁸ Somehow, the strategic and operational planner must cope with the contradictory and ambiguous conditions of "real life politics".

Appendix B

James C. Davies' "J Curve" Explained

When expectations are not met by socio-economic conditions, an intolerable gap occurs which fosters revolutionist sentiment. James C. Davies graphed the expected and actual "need satisfaction" of a general population, showing how their divergence over time will create a "J curve" (see Figure 1 below) that may presage imminent revolt. To avoid revolution, a regime must maintain a tolerable gap between expected and realized needs either by increasing output or by degrading expectations. For example, recent events in Poland reflect how promised economic reforms were coupled with political reforms to maintain a tolerable gap. Iran, on the other hand, is a case where the J curve of "actual need satisfied" gapped intolerably with expected needs and resulted in the overthrow of the Shah.

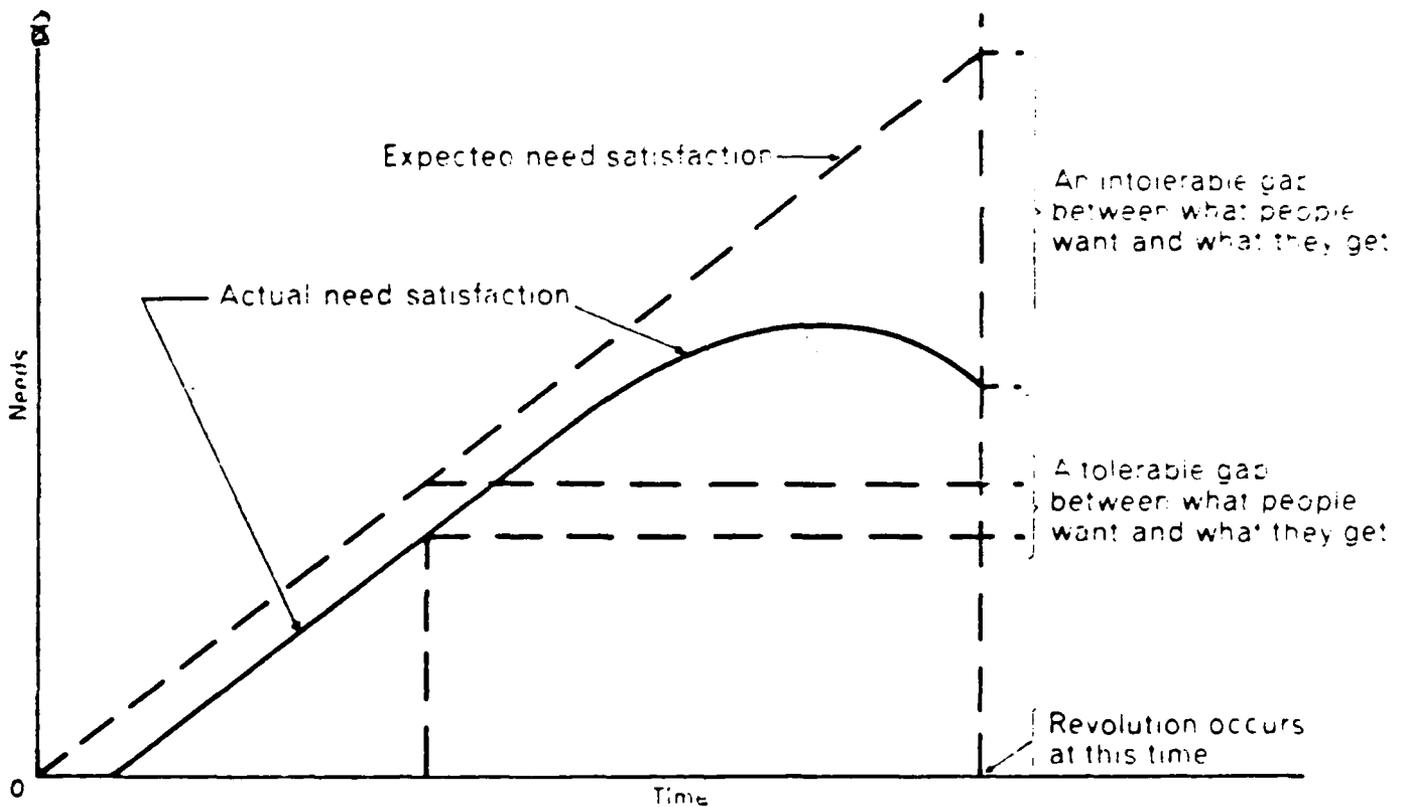


Figure 1. Need Satisfaction and Revolution.

(Figure 1 taken from James C. Davies' "Toward a Theory of Revolution," When Men Revolt and Why, New York: The Free Press 1971, p. 135.)

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