

# Four stages of the Islamic Revolution of Iran

By Our Staff Writer

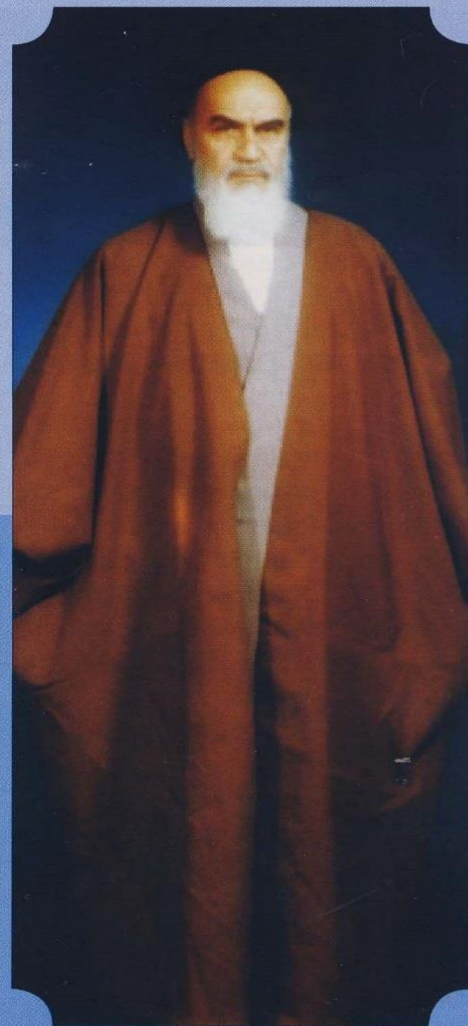
Among Islamic scientists and philosophers, the late martyr Ayatollah Motahhari, calls revolution, "the rebellion or uprising of a region or country against the prevailing rule and rulers in order to establish the desired order and system of governance."

In the Holy Quran, revolution is defined as a total upheaval turning everything upside down. Likewise, from a sociological standpoint, any fundamental, deep change in a society and its social structures—especially if it occurs suddenly and is accompanied by violence—is called a revolution. Also, in both political science and history of revolutions, the word is defined as fundamental changes in political system, administration, and symbols of power. Political scientists have also offered their various definitions of revolution, of which we can mention two most frequently used by contemporary scholars: "successful or unsuccessful violent efforts to effect fundamental change in the basic structure of a society". Crane Brinton defines it as the "sudden and violent replacement of the ruling establishment by a group which had hitherto been bereft of any political power."

Generally, revolutions succeed in a place and at a time when the society is polarized into two opposing camps. In situations like this, most social groups leave the ruling establishment and join the opposition, leaving the society with the precarious situation of having two centers of power. The process usually begins with popular doubts about the political legitimacy and the right to power of the ruling establishment. Eventually, following a period of widespread disappointment of the people

at their political system, social power begins to take shape and assert itself. At this juncture, conditions resemble efforts by the ruling establishment trying to suppress the varied social groups opposing its rule; a process, which undermines the ruling political system and its structures, rendering it unable to meet the people's minimum demands. As conditions deteriorate, gradually the ruling system loses the administrative control of the society, and almost concurrently, the opposition begins to gain increasing confidence and trust in its own abilities to effectively oppose and depose the ruling system and take its place. Very soon, the situation becomes unbearable because of the ever-widening chasm between the "political power" and the "social power". A clash of these two, at this stage looks inevitable.

This is what social scientists mean when it is said that a society is in a revolutionary situation. What exacerbates the situation even further and aggravates the revolutionary conditions is a clash and antagonism between the set of values that ruling establishment follows with values cherished and believed in by the opposition social groups. A phenomenon which social Scientist, Wilbert Moore, describes as the "distance between a society's ideals and the prevailing realities and conditions."



In a way, one can liken the phenomenon of a revolution to molting; because revolutions are really the crystallization of the process of the collapse of dialogue and contact between the government and the governed in a political system. This process only becomes comprehensive and complete if it comprises the following two conditions, with one preceding the other and serving as a prelude: 1- Total destruction of all prevailing political institutions; 2- Establishment and formation of new social groups and political institutions.

Therefore, the above hypothetical "revolutionary conditions," initially is a process of destruction, in the sense that formerly loyal citizens of a political system begin to consider rebellion and uprising against the government as their most natural right. Conditions

such as these are usually accompanied with derision and lack of respect for the ruling system and proceed to become firm belief of the opposition that the status quo is simply senseless and useless; and they usually

develop a firm, popular belief that an alternative situation must be actively pursued. Complex elements interact to bring about such revolutionary conditions, which can generally be divided into four stages.



■ **Undoubtedly, values played a crucial role during all these stages. Hence the Islamic Revolution of Iran is a value-based revolution.**

## Stage of preparation

These include all elements that make it easier to comprehend the existing situation and offer critiques in the cultural-intellectual areas. In other words, it includes the set of elements and factors, which together present a picture of an entirely undesirable and unbearable situation.

At this stage, among various tools available to agitators working for change to engage the people better in their goals and aims, perhaps the best is one is "comparison," meaning, discussing, posing – both to oneself

as well as others – and highlighting the following question: "where is our society as compared with others?"

This critical question is usually followed by rather impressive and massive amount of people's mental efforts directed to find an answer to the inevitable big question of "why [things are the way they are]?" Gradually, in this way, critical views force their way into the public discussion and prosper quickly, since the number of the questioners waiting for answers grows by day. Of course, inherent in a clever,

big question like this in a critical pre-revolutionary situation, lies the stark contrast and contradiction between a society's demands and ideals, and the dark reality – which the ruling establishment seems incapable and unable to change even in face of high popular demand – for which the people inevitably blame the governing system and structure. All that is needed at this stage is the proverbial revolutionary spark to inflame a people to take steps to cause the overthrow or total collapse of the, now, *ancien régime*.

## Stage of criticism

This situation encompasses the elements that include those enabling the people to better comprehend and criticize the existing conditions in their society. For instance, a gradual opening in the political atmosphere, or the common experience of a weak

economy can cause, among other things, the majority of the people better understand the prevailing realities of their society.

Also, increasing knowledge of conditions in other societies – helped immensely by recent communications

advances – together with deeper and more widespread knowledge and understanding of a society's national identity by the people, and the weakness of forces protecting the ruling system, are among other factors which facilitate this process.



## Stage of acceleration

This stage encompasses a set of elements that hasten and quicken the revolutionary process. For instance, unforgivable and irreparable mistakes of the rulers at times of crisis, a weak or unfaithful or undisciplined military, which is usually followed by some retreat by the ruling establishment, the inability of a weak or shattered economy to provide the basic, urgent and short-term needs of the people, and attempts at suppression and further

oppression of the people which only serves to arouse their passions further, all contribute to a highly emotional, revolutionary atmosphere which is only conducive to even more insistence of the people for their rightful demands. Other catalysts include the collapse of the military forces after a defeat at foreign hands, rebellion and insubordination among military personnel, internal differences within the ruling elite, the collapse of economic and monetary

infrastructures and systems, as well as psychological elements such as a belief in the inability of government forces to face or deflect opposition attacks. This particular belief might itself include a belief in supernatural help in the struggle, strengthening of the opposition morale by the belief that once revolutionary determination has become clear, foreign help will come to their aid, or the simple, solid belief that united masses are simply undefeatable, etc."

## Stage of culmination

Here we can specifically name two important elements of "leadership" and ideology. The conformity of these two elements with popular demands leads the people to organize themselves in order to "destroy" the regime, and once this is accomplished, they enter the stage of "establishing" a new one. In this way all efforts for building new social, political, and economic structures are completed. The key to this complex process is

coordination and congruence between the leadership, ideology, and the people, which together make possible a forward movement toward pre-determined common goals. Therefore, the leadership is not only the sponsor of the common ideology but an active practitioner of it. In addition, not only ideology is here akin to a set of written guidelines, but by accepting it and following the leadership they set foot on the path of

pursuing their demands and ways to achieve them. In this way, the revolution's slogans are formed also, and in a way, the ideals and identity of the revolution are given voice by the revolutionaries.

In the course of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, we came across all the four stages. Undoubtedly, values played a crucial role during all these stages. Hence the Islamic Revolution of Iran is a value-based revolution.

