



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE RULE OF MOHAMMAD REZA  
PAHLAVI IN IRAN (1953-1979)***

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PAHLAVI IN IRAN (1953-1979)**

**By**

**MARYAM KARIMI**

**Thesis Submitted to the school of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Science**

**February 2015**

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Abstract of Thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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**By**

**MARYAM KARIMI**

**February 2015**

**Chairman: Associate Professor Sarjit Singh Darshan Singh, PhD**

**Faculty: Human Ecology**

This thesis seeks to explore the process of political development in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi from 1953 to 1979. This period represents the age of Iran's modernization. The Pahlavi regime's attitude and practices regarding political development had raised much criticism in domestic and international circles and subsequently brought about the 1979 Islamic Republic Revolution in Iran. While Pahlavi's regime had its own plan of development for Iran, it was the very same plan which helped to prevent the simultaneous genesis of a distinct process of political development in Iran. This study assesses events which were direct outcomes of conflicts between Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's development plan and factors of political development in Iran from 1953 to 1979. This was to be the salient problem at the root of the issue of Iran's political development. This research is conducted on political development process during the pre and post-1953 event in Iran. Perspectives of universality, monarchy, and nation-building have been important in this study. Just as any thesis is constructed upon theories, this research has presented the theories of, nationalism, modernization and institutionalization but the nationalism is applied theory of this research. The approach and method of this study is qualitative content analysis. This study also examines the political development changes and progress plans under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's rule and his attitudes on political development. If not for the deficiencies in his measures, there would not have been so many weaknesses in the process of political development that consequently led to the Revolution of 1979. The findings of this study determine the factors of political development, analyzing and challenges to Iran's political development during the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, since 1953 to 1979. This study examines the impact of political development actors and elites upon internal and external affairs that undermined challenges of Iranian regime attitude upon the political development process in Iran during 1953-1979.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

**PERKEMBANGAN POLITIK BAWAH PEMERINTAHAN MOHAMMAD  
REZA PAHLAVI DI IRAN (1953 – 1979)**

Oleh

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**Februari 2015**

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Tesis ini mengkaji proses perkembangan politik di Iran semasa pemerintahan Mohammad Reza Pahlavi dari tahun 1953 hingga 1979. Tempoh masa ini adalah zaman modenisasi Iran. Sikap dan cara pemerintahan rejim Pahlavi telah menimbulkan kritikan dari dalam dan luar negara dan membawa kepada Revolusi Islam Iran pada 1979. Meskipun rejim Pahlavi ada mempunyai pelan pembangunan untuk Iran, namun pelan tersebut menjadi batu penghalang kepada proses perkembangan politik negara. Kajian ini menilai insiden-insiden yang berpunca secara langsung daripada konflik di antara pelan pembangunan Mohammad Reza Pahlavi dan faktor-faktor perkembangan politik di Iran antara tahun 1953 hingga 1979, dan inilah yang menjadi masalah yang paling menonjol dalam perkembangan politik di Iran. Kajian ini merangkumi proses perkembangan politik sebelum dan selepas insiden tahun 1953 di Iran. Perspektif kesejagatan, monarki dan pembangunan negara adalah penting dalam kajian ini. Kajian ini mengemukakan tesis berdasarkan teori nasionalisme, pemodenan dan institutionalisasi, tetapi nasionalisme merupakan teori utama. Pendekatan dan kaedah kajian ini adalah analisis kandungan kualitatif. Kajian ini juga menghalusi perubahan pembangunan politik dan pelan-pelan kemajuan di bawah pemerintahan Mohammad Reza Pahlavi dan sikap beliau terhadap perkembangan politik. Tanpa kepincangan-kepincangan di dalam langkah-langkah yang diambilnya, tidak akan terdapat begitu banyak kelemahan dalam proses perkembangan politik yang akhirnya mengakibatkan Revolusi 1979. Penemuan-penemuan kajian ini mengkaji faktor-faktor perkembangan politik, analisa dan cabaran kepada perkembangan politik Iran semasa pemerintahan Mohammad Reza Pahlavi dari tahun 1953 hingga 1979. Kajian ini meneliti impak penglibatan pihak-pihak yang terlibat dalam perkembangan politik, serta penglibatan golongan elit, terhadap hal ehwal dalaman dan luaran yang telah melemahkan rejim Iran terhadap proses pembangunan politik dari tahun 1953 hingga 1979.

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Maryam Karimi

February 2015

## APPROVAL

I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015 to conduct the final examination of Maryam Karimi on her thesis entitled, "POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE RULE OF MOHAMMAD REZA PAHLAVI IN IRAN (1953-1979) in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the University Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the (Name of relevant degree).

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MRP	Mohammad Reza Pahlavi
AIOC	Anglo-Iranian Oil Company
APOC	Anglo-Persian Oil Company
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service
NRM	National Resistance Movement
CSCE	Conference Security and Cooperation in Europe
UNICCPR	United Nations International Convention Civil and Political Rights
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
SAVAK	Sazeman-e Amniat va Ettelaat-e Keshvar
NIP	New Iran Party
PR	Pahlavi Regime
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
IMF	International Monetary Fund

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Rise and Fall of Political Development in Iran

The twentieth century witnessed many changes in political ideologies, systems and institutions. Political themes took on new aspirations in line with this political development. In the second half of the twentieth century, political development appeared to be proceeding at an accelerating rate of its own. Iran, as with many other nations, was in transitional phase after the Second World War. Iran has been called the 'oldest of the new nations'. With its rich culture and long history, it had always been striving to avoid being colonized and thus she was eagerly in search of greater economic and socio-political development in its bid to safeguard her freedom.

The political development factors in Iran are explained to provide better understanding of this process in this study. In fact, political development began in Iran just before the twentieth century. This process took place in three phases which have been outlined in this research. The first phase began with the constitutional movement (1906-1911), the second was marked by the emerging political forces and political parties between the years 1941 to 1946, and the third phase was brought about by the nationalization of Iran's oil in 1951-1953 by Dr. Mohammad Mosaddiq during the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The first period coincided with the reign of Reza Pahlavi (founder of the Pahlavi monarchy, 1926-1941) while the last two phases occurred during the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Reza Pahlavi's son, who ascended to the throne in 1941 as Iran's monarch. The political development process that was going on at this time was the liberalism and pluralism approach, and between the years 1951-1953 there was accelerated nationalism, specifically nationalization of Iran's oil industry. After this period, challenges to the political development in 1953 were encountered by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi leading to the overthrowing of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddiq (E. Abrahamian, 1982).

One of the most important part of this study is the 1953 coup which had affected on political development process of Iran. The oil nationalisation was the center stage of national politics during the dr. Mosaddiq's premiership in 1951-1953 (W.B Fisher & Avery, 1991). The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) was an agreement between Iran and Britain. The control of this company for London was very important because this was related to the raw materials for british factories. Masaddiq created the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) transferred control of company from Britain to Iran. Abrahamian (2008), in this way, he had support from different political groups especially from the clergies side such as the prominent one was Ayatollah Seyyed Abdul-qassem Kashani, the politically active cleric of his day (E. Abrahamian, 2008). Mohammad Reza Shah as a monarch had been forced to back down and got weakness by Mosaddiq's plan of Nationalisation of oil. Mosaddiq demanded extra powers from the Majlis to enable him to balance the budget and initiate many fundamental reforms. MRP who had feared of strong-minded prime minister such as Mosaddiq, proceeded to plan of overthrowing Mosaddiq with collaboration of Washington and London. In this

sense the CIA and its British counterpart had the same target in this strategy to make a plan for the 1953 military coup.

Iran had a traditional economy, traditional religious ideology and traditional society, as did many countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The impact of the West during the nineteenth century affected the relationship between Iran's government and Iran's society, as witnessed in the political history throughout the world, wherein political development issues had been significantly influenced by economic development. The ties between economic growth and political development experienced heightened interaction due to this wave of influence from the West. Therefore, the aspects utilized in the consideration of political development in Iran are constitutionalism, pluralism, liberalism, and nationalism.

## **1.2 Reza Shah Pahlavi and Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911)**

In fact, constitutional revolution was in the war ministership of Reza Pahlavi, founder of Pahlavi Dynasty. The aim of the constitution was the establishment of a liberal regime in order to bring a constitutional revolution, safeguard the particular interests of the social classes, and the political ideologies maintained by those classes paved the way for the arrival of different political parties. This revolution supported by merchants and guildsmen (Keddie, 1980). Moreover, after the revolution, there had been four ideologies, namely: liberal conservatism, democracy, non-liberal clerical fundamentalism (political Islam) and popular socialism (Bashiriyeh, 1984).

The constitutional movement emerged in the reign of Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar (1896) who permitted the import of such liberal newspapers as *Habl Ol Matin* (The Firm Code) from Calcutta and *Parvaresh* (Education) from Cairo. He appointed some liberals, moreover encouraged the formation of commercial, cultural, and educational associations, hoping that his policy of liberalism would satisfy the political opposition, the traditional middle class and the modern intelligentsia. The tide of constitutionalism, nationalism and secularism was rejecting the past, questioning the present and espousing a new vision of the future. Through the constitutional movement, the Constituent Assembly was convened and elections were also held for the National Assembly. Political organizations, diverse societies and newspapers also sprang up throughout the country (E. Abrahamian, 1982). Anyway, the constitutionalism had become a part of the background of political scene and first step of political development process of Iran in the early twentieth century.

### **1.2.1 Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and Emerging Political Forces and Parties (1941-1946)**

Reza Pahlavi was succeeded to the throne by his twenty-year-old son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941-79). In spite of the emergence of authoritarianism, the work of constitutionalism was accomplished. Now was the beginning of transformation from the traditional authoritarian regime of Reza Pahlavi to the modern authoritarian regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was a modernizing monarch. As Huntington (1968) said, "Traditional politics do not have political parties; modernizing policies need them

but often do not want them". Inevitably, in most modernizing countries, the government follows a policy of suppression of parties and severely restricts them. In Iran as well as Thailand, parties have had a fragile existence (Hungtington, 1968).

Party pluralism in Iran rose between 1941 and 1946 under the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Of course, this was far too short a period to reach the political development goals. Most significantly however, nationalism reached its peak during 1950-1953 in Iran under Dr Mosaddiq and his party, the National Front. Dr Mosaddiq came from one of the oldest and most distinguished Iranian families. He was highly educated, a politician and a true nationalist. Mosaddiq's premiership was between the years of 1951 and 1953. Clearly, the cornerstone of nationalism during this period was established by Mosaddiq through nationalization of Iran's oil industry where he played a key role (E. Abrahamian, 1982).

Constitutionally, the supreme commander of the army was Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Prior to the consolidation of his power, powerful prime ministers had sought to usurp the control of the army from the Shah. Therefore, the critical issue which led to direct confrontation between the Shah and Mosaddiq had been control over the armed forces which had been supported by the US ((Bashiriyeh, 1984)). Even more, Mosaddiq asserted his demand that the King reign, and not rule. He had the policy of negative nationalism which was in confrontation with the positive nationalism of the Shah. But as a matter of fact, nationalism as one of concepts of political development, has come to mean social reform, free elections, individualization, land distribution, the exclusion of foreign influence and the nationalization of oil. It also meant ending corruption, reducing religious influence on politics, and achieving global recognition. Nationalists in Iran were looking for their goals fulfilment in political progress. Political development in this period, 1941 to 1953, reached to the highest level of its progress during Mohammad Reza pahlavi's rule.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

The problem identified in this research is shortage and deficit in political development process in Iran under the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi since 1953 to 1979. Political development after the 1953 coup had not sufficiently functioned in response to Iranian interests and demands for transition from the political system of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi from 1953 till the 1979 Islamic Republic Revolution of Iran. Political developments just prior to 1953 and the very 1953 event itself were attempts by Iranian nationalists to usher in greater political development. Political development in Iran started from 1941 and could have been accomplished by 1950 but Iran's authoritarian regime under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi did not have any plan for development in the political front. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi pushed towards gaining absolute power of monarchy especially after 1953. Needless to say, absolute monarchy is incompatible with political development, but apparently Mohammad Reza Pahlavi chose the former option. The problem of Political development is between the political culture, the authoritative structures and the general political process (Pye, 1966). Political development had been seen more in terms of challenges between different political and social groups under Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's regime. As will be discussed in this research, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had focused on socio-economic development far

more than in political development. He endeavored to have a successful monarchy but also promoted his own political agenda. Political development during 1953-1979 faced many challenges, especially after the 1953 coup.

A major hindrance to political development process is the coup of 1953 which consequently led to the overthrowing of the Prime Minister of that time and marked the beginning of the absolute monarchy reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. At that time, there was a national movement which could have been an important part of the political development process that had attempted to establish Iran's rule of law within, and full control of natural resources, without external intervene. After that, however, the focus was once again placed on absolute monarchy and this altered the path of development in Iran. Hence, the 1953 coup that had challenged the sovereignty of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi related to political development crisis, including legitimacy issues. In this way, the Shah attempted to have his own version of political development - until the Iranian revolution of 1979. Therefore, designing a new strategy of development was formulated by the Shah but it was in the area of socio-economic development - not at political level. Development of absolute power caused to weak political participation and political competition as the main obstacle to lack of Political development of Iran (Bashiriyeh, 2001b). He consolidated his own power to prevent attacks on his position by various groups. Despite the scholars' and political parties' consistent demands to fulfill vital goals of political development, the monarchy remained unchanged in its views. On the other hand, it consolidated its own power through bolstering the armed forces and bureaucracy. Also, the intervention of foreign forces in economics and internal politics posed another problem in this process. In addition, the schism between the two segments of modernists (minority) and traditionalists (majority) started to build gradually.

Presumably, the situation after the 1953 coup put an end to the political activity of nationalists and started the authoritarian regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. This in turn, led to the emergence of radical fundamentalism which overthrew the dictatorship through the revolution of 1979. Therefore, the problem identified in this research requires an in-depth understanding of how the political development process in Iran had been affected by the 1953 coup and changed its process. It is therefore fair to say religious radicalism was a direct outcome of the 1953 crisis of sovereignty and caused the ongoing crisis of participation and competition as well. In other words, this study seeks to investigate the contribution of Iran's monarch and his role in the increasing of political development shortages in reaching its goals.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

Based on the statement of problem outlined for the present study, the following research questions have been created:

1. What were the major factors of political development in Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's rule during 1953-1979?
2. How did Mohammad Reza Pahlavi contribute to political development during 1953-1979?

3. What were the challenges of political development during Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign in the period 1953-1979?

### **1.5 Research Objective**

The present study addressed the following objectives:

1. To determine the influencing factors of political development of Iran, relevant to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi from 1953 to 1979.
2. To analyze Iran's political development arena during Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's rule from 1953 to 1979.
3. To examine the challenges encountered by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in the political development of Iran from 1953 to 1979.

### **1.6 Significance of Study**

It is important to mention that the 1953 coup and 1979 Islamic revolution were unique events in Iran, which is one of the pivotal countries in the Middle East. Thus, the significance of this study is the uniqueness of these two historic events in the political history of Iran. In this regard a lot of research had been done on the 1953 military coup and the role of Mosaddiq in Iran's political development. There have been many studies on the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran and its impact up till now but this study aims to define the issue of political development in Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's reign and identify its problems and deficiencies from different viewpoints.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the aspect of foreign intervention during both of these events, that is, the 1953 coup to overrule Mosaddiq and the 1979 Revolution of Iran to overthrow Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. As a matter of fact, both of these events have affected not only Iran's internal political development scenario but it has reflected on the external affairs of Iran and the international society because of the Shah's strategy while ruling over the country after 1953. Iran not only lost its way in the political development path but it also consequently changed the political system of Iran to another different phase. Thus, the significance of this study is in the analysis of these two events of the 1953 coup and the 1979 revolution and the years in between, to help understand better the process of political development under the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The scope of this study is the political development process in Iran from 1953 to 1979 under the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Clearly, it was the 1953 event that led to the 1979 revolution, and the impact of these two events on the political life of Iran (E. Abrahamian, 1982) . and its political fate is the main focus of this research. Therefore

this study has had to analyze the pre-1953 coup period too, in order to scrutinize the influencing factors of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign in the political development in Iran and to demonstrate that the coup had certainly failed to achieve its intended goal.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive political development study would be beyond the considered problems and scope of this research but it will largely determine what this study intends, and how it sets out to achieve its goal. It might seem that the issue of political development has been done by many researchers till now, but new revelations continually arise from the depths of every theory. To apply these arguments to Iran's political development, this study needs to interview officials and politicians to provide information regarding the subject of this study. To date, officials from the Pahlavi period are mostly not available and also difficult to be interviewed. Moreover, as the new regime moved on to different goals from the previous regime, it is very hard to access information through face-to-face meetings, or even to get answers via e-mail. Despite all these limitations, this study has attempted to find out the needed data to fulfill the purposes of this research, and to reach the best outcome.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This thesis is presented in six chapters. Chapter One presents the introduction, which involves the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of this study. Chapter Two presents literature review about the main theories related to the subject of the study; main concepts and perspectives also be explained here. In Chapter Three, namely Research Methodology, will be explained the principal methods of conducting this research and research analysis of collected data.

This study will give an overview of Iran from 1953 to 1979 and it will be explained in three periods within this time frame. Moreover, there is some assessment of important issues relevant to the subject of this study. Chapter Four aims to clarify major factors of Iran's political development after 1953. Political systems of Iran and also the political elites will be elaborated on in this chapter. Further, to assess the barriers to political development and its impact relating to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's power tools, a step-by-step approach has been taken to answer this second issue and this forms another part of Chapter Four, that is, the analyzing of Iran's political development under the rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Meanwhile, answers to the third question of this research are discussed in Chapter Five. For the most part, it focuses on Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and changes in the political development process from 1953 to 1979. This section seeks to understand how the Shah was confronted with different challenges in the political development of Iran from 1953 to 1979. Chapter Six, comprises the summary, conclusion and also recommendations of this study.

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