

Doctor of Political Science

Why Do Dictators Collapse?
An Analysis of the Overthrow of the Shah of Iran and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt'

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Abstract

This research is an effort to explain the causes of revolution in Iran and Egypt. Eight chapters have been designed to provide a methodological approach to the problem. The key question of the research is: why did Iran in 1979 and Egypt in 2011 experience revolution? To answer this question, a two-layered analyticaltheoretical framework with five hypotheses was designed. Historical analysis of the course of revolution in Iran and Egypt shows that all the five preconditions had existed in both countries in the path towards revolution. The fall of Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi and Hosni Mubarak was the product of their sultanistic rule and their dependence on both rentier revenue and foreign powers. These three key structural factors gradually led to the formation of a state independent from society and social classes, which consequently made the state vulnerable. I have also taken agency-based factors into consideration and have demonstrated how social movements and ideology succeeded in overthrowing the vulnerable states.

Thus, the revolutions in Iran and Egypt were the joint product of five factors. In the meantime, we have showed that despite similarities, these two regimes, i.e. the Shah's and Mubarak's, had significant differences. The main difference can be attributed to the level and intensity of each of these five factors. The level of sultanism, dependency on rentier revenue, and the strength of ideology were substantially higher in the Iranian revolution compared to its Egyptian counterpart. That is why we witnessed two types of revolution: a grand revolution in Iran, and an interrupted revolution in Egypt.