

Examining Nonviolent Case Studies

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The Iranian Revolution

1977-1979

Background to the Movements

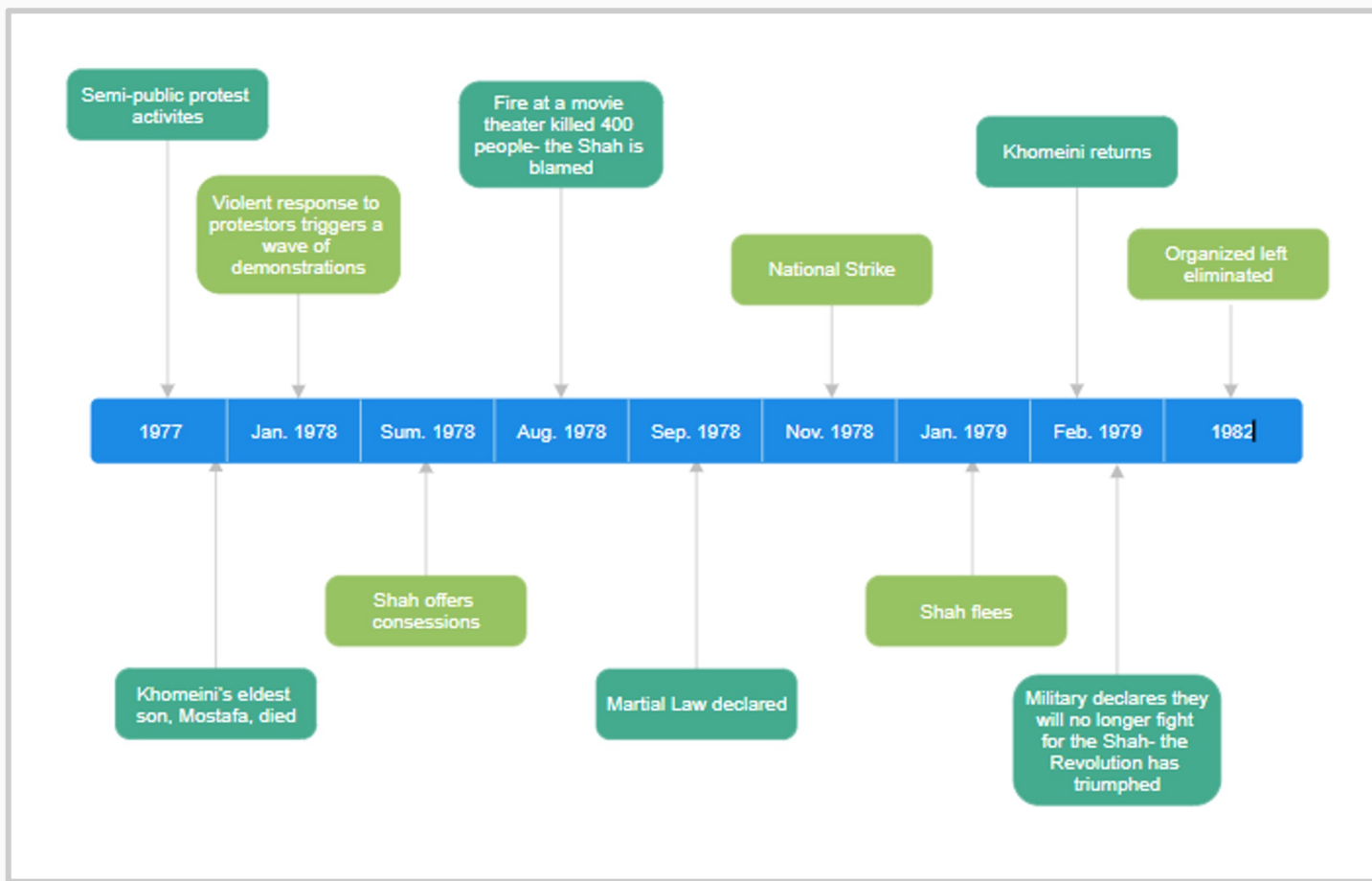
- Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi came to power in 1941
- His combination of corruption, repression, and unpopular religious and economic policies led to opposition beginning in the 1960s
- The first attempt at organized dissent was initiated by the Iranian middle class and liberal intellectuals, but this was suppressed in 1963
- Religious movement began among the grand ayatollahs representing the top Shia religious leadership in Iran - their leader was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
- Khomeini's arrest in June 1963 led to the first massive outbreak of riots throughout Iran
 - These were brutally suppressed



The Violent Movement



- Sparked after the violently repressed protests
- The fedayeen, a Marxist-Leninist group formed in 1971, conducted mostly urban attacks from 1971 to 1979
- The hope was to use small attacks with minimal resources to ignite a revolutionary movement
- After some bad failures, the movement conducted a series of assassinations and the Shah responded in turn
- In 1976, the Shah launched a major counterinsurgency campaign that devastated the guerrilla movement.



Timeline of Nonviolent Resistance

Tactics Used

Violent Movement

- Armed attacks
- Assassinations
- Collecting small arms, with the aim to attack state-run banks to secure funds

Nonviolent Movement

- Semi public protest activity
- Political poetry readings
- Using Mourning Ceremonies as political gatherings
- General Strikes
- Political Speeches
- Turning annual religious processions into mass political demonstrations
- Distributed tape cassettes featuring recorded speeches and specific instructions
- Ramadan changed to a month of political protests
- National strike
- Entreated security officials (flowers, pathos)

Major contributors to the Movement's Success

Mass protests, the national strike, and organized noncooperation

- Networking movements through the ulema-bazaari
- The snowball effect of mass mobilization
- Mass mobilization prohibiting large arrests due to lack of adequate forces and prison space
- Fraternization with the Shah soldiers and police
- Diverse application of nonviolent tactics

Nonviolence vs Violence: Why Nonviolence won

- Only a tiny percentage of the Iranian population fought as guerrillas—mostly young men from urban areas—the masses became the vanguard in the nonviolent resistance
- A less-rigid ideology and lower barriers to participation gave nonviolent resistance an advantage over armed struggle in the area of recruitment
- Further, nonviolent resistance has lower physical, moral, informational, and commitment barriers
- Had the campaign turned violent, the troops likely would not have defected

Essentially:

- Nonviolence is better for recruitment
- Getting security forces on their side was helpful

The First Palestinian Intifada

1987-1992

Beginnings of the Resistance

- Israel captured West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Six Day War in 1967

- Began December 1987; uprising against Israeli occupation of West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem

- Characterized by “diversity, scope, intensity, and mass participation,” as well as “relative nonviolence”

“over 97 percent of campaign activities reported by the Israeli Defense Force were nonviolent, including mass demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and other acts of defiance and civil disobedience (King 2007; Pearlman 2009, 14).”

Resistance Begins - what kind?

*According to Israeli law at the time, “terrorist activities” included everything from **painting slogans and graffiti to singing national songs to making the victory sign, displaying the Palestinian flag, throwing stones, burning tires, demonstrating, and forming political gatherings.** Authorities arrested or detained close to half a million Palestinians for these reasons prior to and during the First Intifada (Benvenisti 1987).*

Resistance actions: West bank school strike, consolidated leadership into the PLO

Four factions of the PLO, even though it later consolidated: Fatah, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP).

The PLO

- PLO began with armed struggle, but later reversed its position and became more moderate

- Masses recognized that PLO nor outsiders could liberate them from Israeli occupation

“At the November 1987 Arab Summit held in Amman, Jordan, Arab leaders snubbed the PLO and dropped the Palestinian issue from its priority list.”

- Four Palestinians killed and eight injured when an Israeli military vehicle struck a car carrying Palestinian laborers in the Gaza Strip, sparking mass demonstrations, flag burnings, and confrontations with soldiers; spreading to the West Bank and other parts of Gaza.

The UNLU

-PLO factions came together and formed the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), with the leaders of each faction creating the UNLU.

-Distributed leaflets promoting revolutionary activities and directives for people

“During the early months of the intifada, said one Palestinian, “the leaflets were followed word for word by everyone in the West Bank and Gaza—they were like a sacred text.”

Use of force

-650 Palestinians killed by Israel in first 18 months of First Intifada

Policy of “Force, power, and blows.”

Israeli army chief of staff Dan Shomron explained the policy: “They will not go to work, they will not earn a living, and they will not receive permits and business licenses until they realize that peace is as vital for them as it is for us” (Hunter 1991, 91).

Prevention of Terror act: “law that forbade any Israeli citizen, Israeli official, or Palestinian resident to meet a PLO member in any capacity or context.”

Beit Sahour

- Small Christian-Palestinian village launched six weeks of total civil disobedience
- Burned ID cards and refused to pay taxes
- Troops seized city, called a curfew, ransacked homes and shops, and didn't allow anyone to enter or exit.
- Attracted international attention, and only lasted six weeks because of this
- Simultaneously, increasing violence had begun to slow the intifada and reduce participation

Peace Talks

- Madrid Conference: First conference for peace between Israel and Palestine, but PLO was not present
- Oslo Accords: Created the Palestinian Authority - a governing body of the Palestinian Territories, to control parts of Gaza & West Bank - and led by PLO leaders
- Intifada overshadowed by violence and fizzled out through international peace efforts

Specifics of nonviolent resistance

Every part of Palestinian society was involved in the Intifada, like sewing flags, gardening, defying curfew, illegal classrooms, and boycotting.

Palestinians created alternate mechanisms of existence to resist Israeli oppression, like the popular committees

The Intifada could not be easily combated because it was unexpected, but failed to change the relationship between Israel and Palestine completely.

Mixing of violent and nonviolent sanctions weakened the Intifada, even if firearms were banned, other violent means were used, like stone throwing.

Questions

- Looking at the list of tactics used within these movements, which do you see reflected in political movements of today? Are there any you don't see? Why do you think that might be, and do you think those tactics would be worth including in current struggles? Why or why not?
- Do you think the small percentage of violence committed by Palestinians was truly what undermined the Intifada as Chenoweth and Stephen argue, or was there more at play? Was rock-throwing really the problem?
- Within a movement, what is an appropriate balance of strength of ideology vs mass appeal? (Given the repressive and brutal end result of the Iranian movement)