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# Comparative Study of Transition to Democracy in Portugal and Iran

## Abstract

The thesis compares the period of transition to democracy in Portugal and Iran after the collapse of the authoritarian regimes through revolutions in 1974 in Portugal and 1979 in Iran. Despite the similarities the cases share, the outcome of the transition in Portugal was a political democracy while Iran faced the rise of authoritarianism. The research compares the similar and dissimilar variables between Portugal and Iran such as the form of the break with authoritarianism and holding of initial elections, institutional design, involvement in wars, and popular mobilization. By keeping respecting factors as control variables, the thesis argues for the role of Ayatollah Khomeini, and elite decisions, as the most determinative factors influencing the political outcome. In Portugal, in the absence of a leader uniting the elite and inability of political factions to solely consolidate their power, the Portuguese elite had to compromise. In contrast, in Iran, a charismatic leader, who favored the Islamic Republican Party over other factions, played the most determinative role in directing Iran toward authoritarianism.

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Comparative Study of Transition to Democracy in Portugal and Iran

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By

Loosineh Markarian Senagani

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis compares the period of transition to democracy in Portugal and Iran after the collapse of the authoritarian regimes through revolutions in 1974 in Portugal and 1979 in Iran. Despite the similarities the cases share, the outcome of the transition in Portugal was a political democracy while Iran faced the rise of authoritarianism. The research compares the similar and dissimilar variables between Portugal and Iran such as the form of the break with authoritarianism and holding of initial elections, institutional design, involvement in wars, and popular mobilization. By keeping respecting factors as control variables, the thesis argues for the role of Ayatollah Khomeini, and elite decisions, as the most determinative factors influencing the political outcome. In Portugal, in the absence of a leader uniting the elite and inability of political factions to solely consolidate their power, the Portuguese elite had to compromise. In contrast, in Iran, a charismatic leader, who favored the Islamic Republican Party over other factions, played the most determinative role in directing Iran toward authoritarianism.

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## **Introduction**

Following the third wave of democratization and despite the dominance of the discourse of democratization at the international level, the persistence of various forms of non-democratic regimes, reveals an interesting paradox for further elaboration of theories of political regime change. In this light, this thesis compares the period of transition to democracy in Portugal and Iran with the intention to find possible hypothesis explaining the differences in the political trajectories of countries. The elaboration on the role of Khomeini, the leader of Iranian Revolution, and elite decisions during Iranian transition as two major hypotheses forms the central concern and argument of this thesis.

The transition periods in both countries share similarities that make the comparative study of the cases possible. Those similarities are break with authoritarian past through a revolution, commitment of elite to hold initial elections, adoption of a semi-presidential institutional design, defining a veto-player in constitution, and involvement in wars. Along with similarities, there are differences in terms of popular mobilization and the amount of institutional power granted to the veto-players in each country that can be considered as intervening variables but not necessarily causal ones.

Therefore, the thesis explains how and why respective intervening variables are not causes for different outcomes. Subsequently, it suggests that the most convincing

causal explanation relates to the different decisions made by the political elite, and also the crucial role of Khomeini as a strong political leader in the case of Iran. The result of respective differences was two different outcomes for each country, i.e. democracy in Portugal and the rise of authoritarianism in Iran.

The first section of the thesis is devoted to a brief historical overview of the events in both countries. The second section addresses the similarities that cases share and argues why the resemblance of cases in various terms had a non-causal quality on transition phase. In this section, the first discussed variable is the form of the break with authoritarianism, i.e. revolution. In both countries, the authoritarian elite failed to peacefully transfer the power and the outcome was a revolution. In the case of break through a revolution, the holding of initial elections becomes the important moment influencing the future course of the transition. In the both cases, the constituent assembly and later presidential elections were held. However both the results of elections and outcomes of transitions were different in each country.

The Institutional engineering has been identified as another similar variable. In both countries, following the collapse of the old regime, the semi-presidential system of governance was adopted with president holding a considerable amount of power. Moreover, in both countries, some factions of elite could guarantee a veto-player role for themselves through the institutionalization of a monitoring body over legislature. In the case of Portugal this monitoring body was the Council of Revolution consisting the communists (Portuguese Communist Party) and leftist military elite involved in initiating the coup d'état in 1974. In the case of Iran, clerics and members of the Islamic

Republican Party formed the Guardian Council. Although both countries adopted similar institutions, by the time that the transitions terminated, the institutions in place in Portugal were democratic while the Iranian ones were non-democratic.

Ultimately, the third similarity is involvement in wars. Both countries experienced war during their transition period, i.e. Iran-Iraq war and continuation of wars in the colonies during the interim government of Spínola. The wars were similar in terms of being costly and embracing an ideological dimension. Despite similarity in terms of involvement in wars, Portugal democratized and Iran didn't.

The third section addresses the differences between the cases that are linked to the outcomes but do not have an endogenous or causal quality. The popular mobilization and the amount of power that was granted to veto-players are two variables that differ between cases but are not causal. In terms of the popular mobilization, Iran faced the mobilization of the population around Khomeini and the Islamic Republican Party (IRP). People started forming revolutionary committees and during elections voted for Islamists. In contrast, in Portugal there was a split between the population in the north and the south and the population voted in favor of the moderates. Despite the difference, the argument can be made that the mobilization of the public in Iran around the Islamists was not the reason behind the rise of authoritarianism. The popular mobilization became an asset in the hands of the Islamist elite (IRP) to follow their political agenda. Moreover, there have been cases when Khomeini as the leader of revolution and member of the IRP claimed absolute authority in decision-making process by dismissing other factions and the people.

Another difference between cases is the amount of power granted to the veto-players. In Portugal, the Council of Revolution had the power to monitor legislature. In Iran, in addition to monitoring the parliament, during the transition period the Guardian Council was granted a watchdog role over elections. Thus, it gained the power to limit the competition. In this section the argument will be made that despite the difference in the amount of power of veto-players, the Guardian Council as an institution did not exercise its power autonomously during the transition period and Khomeini as the political leader was the most important decision-maker. The argument suggests that Guardian Council became important after the termination of the transition. It helped the consolidation of power by Islamic Republican Party who could successfully provide the party members an office outside of the electoral legitimacy.

Ultimately, the last section of the thesis is devoted to the arguments regarding the most determinative variables, i.e. the role of actors, in directing the phase of transitions in each country. The section will discuss how the constitution, and subsequently, the civil-military relations were reformed in Portugal through the pacts signed between Armed Forces Movement (MFA) and civilian parties. Thus, in 1982, by the abolishment of the Council of Revolution, the Portuguese democracy was consolidated. In Portugal the power division and inability of each elite section to consolidate the power led them toward pact-making. In contrast, in Iran, Khomeini could obtain the support of the elite and the population and actualize his political ideology. Therefore, in the case of Iran the elite disagreements were resolved through Khomeini who held charismatic power. As a strong leader, Khomeini was influential in almost every phase of the Iranian transition.

In addition to the role of Khomeini, the miscalculation of leftists (Islamist Marxists such as *Mojahedin-e Khalgh*) also will be argued as another crucial factor influencing the outcome. The alliance of leftists with Islamists (IRP) for their anti-western ideological character left the liberal forces (The National Front and the Freedom Movement) alone. The outcome was inability of liberals to manage the political chaos that ended in their isolation from power. Islamists acquired power with the help of the leftists and later betrayed them. Consequently, the persecution of leftists and the isolation of liberals left the political scene open for Islamic Republican Party that consolidated its power and formed a new authoritarian rule in Iran.

## **Methodology**

This research attempts to test the applicability of different theories of democratic transition by comparing the cases of Iran and Portugal. The research question focuses on the reasons behind the failure of democratization in Iran with respect to Portugal's success. The question regarding the conditions that favored Portugal's democratization versus those that constrained Iran's democratization process is the central concern of this paper. Thus, despite the similarities both countries' share, what different variables in Iran had the most determinative impact on Iran's return to authoritarianism?

The major hypothesis suggests that while Portugal lacked a strong leader, the existence of a charismatic leader in Iran was the most determinative cause influencing the transition path. Thus, Khomeini, the leader of revolution in Iran, was the key player uniting the elite and mobilizing the public. In contrast, in the absence of a leader in Portugal, the elite had to make consensus and cooperate within the democratic rules of the game. By the adoption of the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) method, the thesis will investigate how and why Khomeini and members of his Islamic Republican Party had the determinative impact on the processes of institution crafting, constitution making, influencing elite decisions, and mobilizing the public.

The MSSD is a method “to compare political systems that share a host of common features in an effort to neutralize some differences while highlighting others” (Landman 2003, 29). This method is in search of those variables that cause different political outcomes, despite the similarities the cases under study share. The MSSD takes the cases that share similar circumstances except one for comparison. Subsequently, if a phenomenon occurs in one case and does not occur in the other, that different circumstance is either “the effect, or the cause, or an indispensable part of the cause, of the phenomenon” (Faure 2009, 310).

In explaining causation, “the method of concomitant variation” argues that the manner that varies differently in two different phenomena is “either the cause or effect of that phenomenon, or is connected with it through some fact of causation” (Faure 2009, 310). The above explanation means that by taking similarities as control variables, the researcher attempts to find those differences that best explain the causal relation. Based on this method, this thesis analyses the transition period in Iran and Portugal by comparing the following variables:

- The form of breakdown with authoritarianism (revolution)
- The elite role during the transition period
- The involvement in war
- The institutional engineering and constitution-making processes
- The popular mobilization

## **Historical Background**

Modern history of Portugal and Iran over past fifty years has been the stage of constant change within domestic politics. Passing through revolutions, Portugal in 1974 and Iran in 1979, both countries set the start for the formation of a new regime. The uncertain period of transitions in both countries was tied to the undemocratic elements in constitutional engineering that was jeopardizing the democratic consolidation. Fifteen years of struggle by the political elite and the population in Portugal ended in the reformation of the constitution and democratization. In contrast, Iran's political trajectory took the path of the return to another non-democratic regime and a constant struggle for reform that continues up until today.

The process of "dissolution of authoritarian regime", known as transition, occurs through the liberalization of the political atmosphere by some actors within the regime. The liberalization in forms of granting some socio-political rights to individuals and groups has effective consequences on transition phase. The liberalization and transition have been identified as a "double stream" process by the liberalization as the determinative moment in the commencement of transition. Once the transition is in place

the period of uncertainty starts and the future of the regime form is at the stake (Maxwell 1986, 6-10).

Adam Przeworski argues that usually the liberalization process starts when there is a split among the elite inside the authoritarian regime, or there is some pressure from civil society, or both respective factors are present. However, depending on the pace of the liberalization, the level of organization of civil society, and the structural and institutional capacity of the state to channel the new demands, the political outcomes can vary. In this light, in cases where liberalization fails to control the discontent or peaceful transfer of power, the society faces the emergence of “mass movements”, “unrest and disorder” (1991, 54-58).

The investigation of the Portuguese and Iranian history confirms the significant role of the limited liberalization, the failure of those liberalization policies, and subsequent eruption of mass movements. Partial liberalization opened the space for the formation of civil society organizations in both countries. However, the states could not tackle the social changes. Subsequently, the leaders were caught by revolutions that overthrew the decades of authoritarian rule, i.e. the Revolution of Carnations in the aftermath of a military coup in Portugal in 1974 and the Iranian Revolution following in 1979. The following sections are devoted to a historical overview of the breakdown of the old regimes in Portugal and Iran respectively. Thus, the forces involved in both the commencement and directing of the transitions, as well as the major decisions and events conditioning the political outcomes in each country will be addressed briefly.

## *Portugal*

The comprehension of modern Portugal's political trajectory is tied to the understanding of civil-military relations within the context of wars with the colonies. Caetano, the dictator of Portugal before the coup of 1974, was nominated as the new leader of Portugal after Antonio Salazar in 1968. Salazar received his power with the help of military in aftermath of a coup in 1926 and formed the Second Republic known as Estado Novo (New State). Once in power, Salazar drafted a new constitution in 1933 with "antiparliamentary" and "anticommunist" features. With the economy under the control of the state and the police persecuting the communists, Portugal under Salazar, turned to a corporatist state without tolerance for opposition forces. In the case of the Salazar the economic modernization to fund the wars benefited the state and a few families on the top leaving the majority of the population poor (Anderson 2000, 144-146).

The transfer of power to Caetano in 1968 opened a new phase in the Portuguese history since Caetano liberalized both economic and political spheres. In a relatively open political environment and within the context of wars with the colonies, opposition anti-regime activities and especially labor strikes were organized (Anderson 2000, 156). Caetano allowed the return of the previously exiled opposition elite like Mario Soares. The regime also allowed the entrance of liberals into the National Assembly's elections. However, despite the willingness of liberals to cooperate with Caetano to gradually democratize Portugal, Caetano swung to the right of the political spectrum discontinuing the liberalization (Maxwell 1986, 113). Another mistake made by Caetano was the

rejection of General de Spínola's plan to end the war in Guinea through negotiated settlement with Guinea's liberation movement<sup>1</sup> (Maxwell 1986, 112).

Caetano, who in early 1960s was supportive of the federative system of governance for Portugal and its colonies, gained his power with the support of right-wing military officers with the condition of continuing wars in the colonies. The fear of being overthrown by the right-wing military officers who were aware of Caetano's early theories of creating a confederative state with the colonies pushed him toward cooperation with the right-wings. Thus, he continued the war, as well as terminated his own liberalization policies. Caetano fearful of the right-wing elite miscalculated the threat of the leftists in military. These leftist senior officers formed the Armed Forces Movement and terminated Caetano's rule through a military coup in 1974. The coup was followed by a revolution that ultimately overthrew the old regime (Maxwell 1986, 112).

The Armed Forces Movement (MFA) in Portugal was originated in the context of losing the wars and shifting policies of government in expanding the armed forces. The lack of forces and the need for recruitment led to the adoption of poorer standards for admission. Middle ranks were unsatisfied with the exclusionary system of promotion benefiting mainly seniors. Moreover, the new policies in favor of new combaters who were not reliable but were necessary to continue the wars antagonized the middle-ranked officers. The middle-rank military officers formed the MFA; senior officers also supported them. General de Costa Gomes, the chief of the general staff, and General

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<sup>1</sup> PAIBC: Partido Africano de Independencia para Guine e Cabo Verde

Antonio de Spínola, the deputy chief also joined the movement. The result was the military coup in 1974 (Maxwell 1997, 110-111).

Ideological leanings of parties formed in Portugal ranged between right, center, left-leaning and liberal parties. During Salazar's regime in 1960s and 1970s, there was limited tolerance for some right and center leaning opposition groups. However, given the anti-communist nature of Salazar's regime, the leftists (socialists and communists) were persecuted and went underground. Besides underground organizations, there were some exiled opposition leaders who returned to Portugal in aftermath of revolution and formed their own parties (Wiarda & Mott 2001, 130-131).

The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) was at the very end of the left spectrum with Alvaro Cunhal, a Leninist communist, as the leader. The Socialist Party (PS) was more moderate and less radical than the PCP and had Mario Soares as its leader. The moderate Social Democratic Party (PSD<sup>2</sup>) was in the center of the political spectrum. There were also right-wing parties such as Social Democratic Center (CDS) of Amaral that turned into Popular Party (PP). The right parties were affiliated with the authoritarian regime, and thus, were marginalized in the political game (Wiarda & Mott 2001, 132-138).

Following the collapse of the Caetano's regime, the Junta of National Salvation (JSN) with the leadership of conservative General de Spínola was formed. While there was an interim government (JSN) in charge of the country, the MFA that had carried out

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<sup>2</sup> The liberals of the National Assembly who had resigned in 1972 had formed the People's Democratic Party (PPD). This party adopted social democratic ideology and changed its name to Social Democratic Party (PSD). It defined itself as a non-Marxists leftist party (Opello 1991, 89).

the coup adopted the watchdog role over political decisions. The high-ranking conservative officers formed the JSN, while the MFA's elite were low-ranking officers with leftist tendencies. In the environment of ideological disagreements between JSN and MFA regarding the continuation of wars, the PCP with the leadership of Cunhal sided with leftist MFA. The confrontation of conservatives and leftists ended in the failure of Spínola's government, and subsequent power take-over by the MFA and its communist allies (Opello 1991, 87-90).

Following the dominance of radical leftists, the Council of Revolution consisting of the chiefs of three branches of the armed forces, the president and prime minister, and officers assigned by MFA gained the control. They started the process of the militarization of the governing. These radical leftist policies antagonized moderate civilian leaders such as Soares. In the context of disagreements regarding the future of the regime, the elections of Constituent Assembly was held. The Result illustrated the divided nature of the Portuguese society with industrial Lisbon in favor of PCP<sup>3</sup>, and conservative north in favor of PSD<sup>4</sup> and CDS<sup>5</sup>, and PS<sup>6</sup> with a national support (Opello 1991, 93-94)

The persistence of the PCP and the MFA to exercise veto power and implement nationalization policies alienated both the winning parties and the population of mainly

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<sup>3</sup> PCP collected 12.5 percent of the votes (Opello 1991, 94)

<sup>4</sup> PSD collected 26.4 percent of the votes (Opello 1991, 94)

<sup>5</sup> CDS collected 7.7 percent of the votes (Opello 1991, 94)

<sup>6</sup> PS collected 37.9 percent of the votes (Opello 1991, 94)

northern regions. The outcome was the withdrawal of the PS and the CDS from the provisional government, the mobilization of the peasant scared of the nationalization policies in northern regions, and the commencement of a guerrilla warfare by underground right-wing organizations<sup>7</sup> (Opello 1991, 95).

At the verge of a possible civil war by mobilized publics, General Eanes, the representative of the moderate faction of MFA took over the power through a counter-coup (Graham 1992, 284-287). Eanes played important role in future political developments that resulted in the reformation of the constitution. In Portugal, the uncertain situation and constant power take-over by various factions and leaders forced them to compromise and redefine the civil-military relations. A compromise among elite occurred due to the inability of the leaders of each section to exclusively consolidate the power and also the likelihood for a civil war. In the absence of a single strong governing power, the MFA and civilian elite signed pact agreements to normalize the relations between MFA and civilian parties. The pacts redefined and relatively limited the responsibilities of the Council of Revolution and also the role of MFA. The democracy in Portugal did not consolidate until the revision of the constitution in 1976 that abolished the Council of Revolution (Graham 1992, 286-290).

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<sup>7</sup> Democratic Liberation Movement of Portugal (MDLP) and Portuguese Liberation Army (EPL)

## *Iran*

Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, the last successor of Pahlavi dynasty, faced the emergence of the oil nationalization movement with the leadership of Mohammad Mussadegh in early 1950s. The attempts of a democratically elected Prime Minister who to nationalize the Oil industry were prevented through a coup backed by the US in 1953. Mussadegh's government was overthrown and the Shah returned to power. The Shah consolidated his power and created a monarchical authoritarian regime. The state that the Shah established was centralized with technocratic apparatus and had a powerful military (Momayesi 2000, 45-47). Shah was obsessed with the construction of a strong state both internally and externally. Thus, he expanded the military and centralized the administrative hierarchy. The memory of his father's acquisition of power through a military coup, and the history of Mussadegh's election, made the Shah fearful from losing his power. The strategy he chose was the creation of a strong state to protect his dynasty from all sorts of threats (Motalle 1995, 8-9).

The rule of the Shah coincided with the oil boom in 1970s. The Shah's economic policies from 1960s to late 1970s were influenced by growth in oil income and were geared toward rapid modernization of the country. However, the economic policies implemented by Shah favored few rich at the top leaving those at the bottom poor. Special support of foreign investors and reducing the foreign competition, tax cuts and low rate loans to few big industries, credit policies favoring large industries and agricultural business, were some of the reforms favoring few in the top (Keddie 1980, 221-224). Despite Shah's reforms known as White Revolution, the literacy rate was still

low and major development plans were centralized in major cities like Tehran while the countryside was left poor and underdeveloped (Abrahamian 2008, 142).

The creation of a strong autocratic state and the adoption of US-sponsored economic policies benefiting the rich antagonized the people and the elite. In addition to the discontent caused by the economic policies, the reformation of family laws also was perceived as anti-religious and mobilized the clergy and religious sectors of the society. The left and intellectuals also supported the clerics against the Shah (Mottale 1995, 5-6). People saw the Shah as a dictator acting against Iranian people's interests autocratically and irresponsibly.

The discontented opposition forces in Iran were divided along the ethnic and class lines. Among these opposition movements were the nationalist movement of Kurds in northwest, Beluchis in southeast, and Arabs in oil-rich province of Khuzestan. These independence movements were involved in armed struggle and were tied to the ethnic groups in neighbor countries. However, the regime could suppress them. Besides the ethnic unrest, there were strikes organized by factory workers, especially in oil industry. Student strikes and bazaries' semi-religious gatherings were among other opposition forces (Keddie 1980, 231-233). Within the context of strikes and civil discontent, as well as following the criticism of Iranian regime by the international society and Carter's policy of perusing human rights, the Shah allowed partial liberalization. However, the Shah miscalculated his level of popularity in the public, and thus, his hope for mitigating the discontent did not work in his favor. In contrast, it opened the space for the organization of the opposition (Abrahamian 2008, 157).

The Shah forced the establishment of a single-party system in Iran with his *Hezb-e Rastakhiz* as the sole legitimate party in Iran. However, throughout several decades Iran had faced the establishment of various parties with leftist, Islamist, and secular ideological inclination that later played major role in the revolution. There were overlaps along the lines of ethnic identity, leftist ideology, secular/liberal, and Islamist tendencies.

The communist Tudeh Party was persecuted harshly by the regime after the coup of 1953. Hence, the party went underground and later was split into three different factions<sup>8</sup> (Abrahamian 1982, 451-454). Among leftist groups there were also militant Marxist/Islamist organizations like *Cherikha-yi Feda'I Khalq-I Iran* (Fedayeen Khalgh) and Islamist Marxists like *Mujahedin-I Khalq-I Iran* (Mojahedin-e Khalgh) that were involved in military opposition (Abrahamian 1982, 481).

Among the liberal-leaning parties, the National Front consisting Mussadegh's supporters like Iran Party's Karim Sanjabi, Darioush Foruhar of Mussadegh's National Party, Mehdi Bazargan and Ayatollah Talieghani as members of the Freedom Movement. In 1960s the regime started to persecute the party members and party split due to some disagreements. The outcome was the formation of the Second National Front with mainly Iran Party's members. The rival block included the Liberation Movement, the National Party, and the Socialist Society and named itself Third National Front and established good relations with religious leaders in exile, specifically with Khomeini. The National

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<sup>8</sup> The ethnic Kurdish circle of the party formed the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran with the political project of establishing an autonomous Kurdistan. The senior members of Tudeh formed the Marxist-Leninist Tofan organization. The third faction was the student organization abroad that established Revolutionary Organization of Tudeh Party Abroad (Abrahamian 1982, 451-454).

Front leaders had the goal of bridging the old gap between secular-religious and modernist-traditional elite forces (Abrahamian 1982, 457-459).

The Liberation Movement was another significant party operating both underground and abroad that reorganized itself during the revolution. With leaders like Bazargan and Taleghani, and exiled elite like Ibrahim Yazdi and Mustafa Chamran, as well as Sadeq Qotbzadeh and Abdul Hassan Bani Sadr. The Liberation Movement could maintain close links with Khomeini and after the revolution gained the control of the provisional government (Abrahamian 1982, 462-464).

The clerical opposition had three major factions. The first faction consisted of apolitical clerics but they essentially sympathized with the rest and joined the revolution. The second faction included ulamas like Ayatollah Shariatmadari, Golpaygani, and ethnically Azeri cleric, the supporter of Mussadegh and National Resistance Movement, Zanjani. This faction was moderate and used its links to Shah's government to lobby for change but Shah antagonized them by insulting the bazaries and seminaries. And finally the third faction involved cleric like Ayatollah Khomeini, Montazeri, Hashemi Rafsanjani, and Ali Khamenei with militant tendencies. The last faction was the most radical of the religious clergy since Khomeini was in exile and had no reason for compromise (Abrahamian 1982, 473-475). The last faction that formed the Islamic Republican Party was the most Islamic fundamentalist party was made up of lower clergy with the support of the bazaar. Most of its members were in favor of Khomeini's theory of incorporation of Islam into the political system. Islamic Republican Party (IRP) later succeeded to consolidate its power over other factions (Bashiriyeh 1984, 128-129).

As explained before, Shah adopted some liberalization policies. However, similar to Caetano in the case of Portugal, Shah also failed to cooperate with the weak and mainly liberal-dominated opposition forces during the 1977 liberalized atmosphere. Therefore, Shah lost the chance to democratize the regime and persisted on his one-party system of governance. Subsequently, the opposition mobilized in support of Khomeini, the cleric in exile, as the major opponent of the regime. At this stage the liberals who were aware of their lack of popularity allied with Khomeini. The clashes occurred between the public and the regime's forces and in 1978 the opposition was radicalized. The regime was under pressure, and thus, allowed the legal participation of parties in parliamentary elections. Following this new decision, Bazargan of the Liberation Movement and Sanjabi of the National Front attempted to participate in elections but Khomeini refused and called the regime illegitimate. Khomeini did not compromise, and thus, no peaceful form of power transfer occurred. The outcome was a revolution in 1979 (Chehabi 1995, 128-130). The role of the Guerilla organizations like *Mojahedin* and *Fadayeen* who supported the pro-revolutionary air-force cadres' rebellion in February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1979 has also been influential. Through the support of respective leftists groups, the Imperial Guards were defeated and in two days the power was transferred to revolutionaries (Keddie 2006, 238).

After the collapse of the old regime in 1979, two competing bodies were formed. One body was the provisional government with the leadership of Bazargan and the other one was the Guardian Council with majority clerics. This body had been formed before the entrance of Khomeini to Iran (Chehabi 1995, 132). The two institutions consisted of

two ideologically different groups with Khomeini being the supporter of Islamists (IRP) in the Guardian Council. The radicalization of the society and the chaos due to the unstable revolutionary circumstances hindered the task of the controlling the country for the provisional government. Following the US embassy take over by the radical Islamist students known as “Followers of Khomeini’s Line” in November 1979, Bazargan’s provisional government resigned. The following president, Bani Sadr also was forced to leave the office in 1981 due to his rivalry with Islamic Republican Party. Once the liberal forces were defeated, the Islamic Republican Party of Khomeini took over the power and consolidated its base in government since 1983 (Keddie 2004, 625).

The consolidation of power was tied to the institutionalization of the Guardian Council as the body consisting of clerics who had the veto power over the constitution. Khomeini was given the Supreme Leadership position for life. The Assembly of Experts was formed with the charge of replacing Khomeini with a new leader after his death. Despite the existence of elections for parliament and presidency, the religious authority was granted some power outside of the electoral legitimacy (Abrahamian 2008, 164-165). The new political system, i.e. the form of the Islamic Republic, was consolidated and Iran up until today operates within the same undemocratic framework.

## **What do Portugal and Iran Have in Common?**

### *Commencement of Transition*

In comparing the point of departure in both cases, the form of the breakdown of authoritarianism through revolution is a major similarity both cases share. Transition in Portugal occurred in April of 1974 through a military coup d'état carried out by the middle-rank military officers known as Armed Forces Movement (MFA). The coup was followed by a revolution known as the Revolution of Carnation. The mobilized public marched in streets putting flowers on the barrels of rifles and put an end to the dictatorship of Caetano. In the case of Iran, the Shah's regime faced the emergence of public demonstrations and the criticism of the various factions of civilian elite. The Shah's regime became illegitimate, and following the departure of the Shah in the winter of 1979 and the return of exiled cleric, Khomeini, people toppled the old regime through a revolution.

The breakdown of authoritarianism occurs through various causes. Pacts, imposition, reform, and revolution have been identified as the possible procedures causing the collapse of the old regime (Karl & Schmitter 1991). In pacts there is a "multilateral compromise" among elite demanding a regime change. The imposition refers to the collapse of the old regime through the unilateral usage of the force by elite.

The reform occurs when elite compromise in response to a mass mobilization and there is no usage of violence. In contrast to reform, revolution is an armed upsurge of the masses that ends in the victory of people over authoritarian leaders (Karl & Schmitter 1991, 275).

As discussed before, the failure of Caetano and the Shah to cooperate with the forces of opposition hindered any prospect for regime led transition. In Portugal, Caetano lost the political momentum when he refused the demand of the liberal elite to democratize the regime (Maxwell 1986, 113). In Iran, similarly, Shah lost the moment to transfer the power and initiate a transition. If Shah had made a coalition government with the National Front during the first half of 1978, a transition would have been possible. However, Shah continued the persecution of the opposition. Later, the Shah offered some of his opponents like Sanjabi a premiership but they refused. Hence, there was no chance for a regime led transition (Chehabi 1995, 128).

The form of the break with authoritarian regime suggests specific socio-political features tied to the character of the authoritarian regime. The arrangement of social and political forces differs in various authoritarian regimes, and subsequently, influences the form of the break, as well as the path of the transition. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996) propose a typology that draws a relation between the prior nondemocratic regime's form and the form of the break with authoritarianism. The typology identifies authoritarian, totalitarian, post-totalitarian, and sultanistic regimes with their distinct civil and political features.

In the case of authoritarian regimes, if the regime is in its late stages there is a chance for the existence of a civil society and a culture supportive of the

constitutionalism and the rule of law, as well as a stable bureaucracy and institutionalized economic society. In such regimes, there will be a chance for the formation of an autonomous political society in favor of democracy. In contrast, in sultanistic regimes, the sultan holds and exercises power. Hence, there is not enough room for the formation of an autonomous civil and political society in the form of a democratic opposition. Thus, following the collapse of the regime, the democracy-crafting will be tied to the reconstruction of all social, political and economic institutions (Linz and Stepan 1996, 55-65).

The above-explained characteristics of civil and political society condition both the possible forms of the break and the future political trajectory during the transition. In the light of their typology, Linz and Stepan explain that in those cases where the breakdown of the old regime has occurred either through a non-hierarchic military or popular upsurge, the holding of initial elections is a crucial decision for democratization. In comparing the sultanistic and authoritarian regimes, the authors argue for the possibility of the existence of an organized democratic opposition pushing for elections in authoritarian regimes. Otherwise, in the absence of an organized society, the interim government can exercise a revolutionary power and delay the transition. In the case of sultanistic regimes, there is a high chance that the interim government acts on behalf of people and defers the elections, unless the democratic elite succeeds to hold elections (1996, 59).

In the both cases of Portugal and Iran, despite the dissimilar regime types, i.e. Portugal an authoritarian regime and Iran a sultanistic one, elite could succeed to hold

elections. In the case of Portugal, the written commitment of the Armed Forces Movement made them to hold elections. In the case of Iran, the secular elite who had connections with Khomeini succeeded to convince him and get the permission for the holding of elections. Thus, In Portugal, the first election was held a year after revolution, in April of 1975, to elect the constituent assembly. There was also a date for the election of the Parliament and President one year after the Constitution Assembly finished its duty (Linz and Stepan 1996, 120-121). In Iran also liberal elite pressured for the holding of constituent assembly's elections in the summer of 1979. Following that the presidential and parliamentary elections were held and the government was formed.

Linz and Stepan argue for the essential role of initial elections in Portugal's case. The holding of elections brought new democratically oriented forces into power. In contrast, in Iran the holding of elections brought those Islamists into power that weren't supportive of democracy. The difference in outcome despite the similar procedure suggests the assumption that the holding of initial elections during the transition period per se cannot be an explanatory variable for the cases under study. Therefore, despite the fact that elections in Portugal brought democratic forces into power and Portugal democratized, in Iran elections brought Islamists into power.

Therefore, based on the typology one can conclude: the previous regime types were different; Portugal was autocracy whereas Iran had a sultanistic regime. The form of the break with authoritarianism was similar. In both cases elite committed to hold initial elections. However, the political outcomes were entirely different. The resemblance of the mode of break and the expected procedure leading to democracy, i.e. holding of

elections suggest that the prior regime type and the subsequent level of civil and political organization cannot be considered an explanatory variable. The similarity in the form of the break and also holding of elections allow for the exclusion of regime type as a determinative variable. Subsequently, the level of the organization of civil and political societies in each country can also be considered a control variable and excluded from causes influencing the transition phase.

### *Institutional Engineering*

Despite the holding of the constituent assembly's election explained in the previous section, another interesting point of correspondence was the lack of sovereignty of assemblies in crafting the constitution. The institutional engineering in both Portugal and Iran took place within a framework that was proposed by forces involved in the revolutions prior to the crafting of constitutions. In Portugal, the MFA revolutionary forces prior to the elections of the constituent assembly, could guarantee themselves supremacy in hierarchy of power. This meant that through a pact signed between MFA and political parties, MFA had superior position in respect to the national assembly. The MFA also guaranteed itself an equal voice with national assembly to elect the president (Maxwell 1885, 112).

In Iran, a referendum was held prior to the election of the constituent assembly that defined the form of the state as an Islamic Republic. The referendum that was pushed by Khomeini and his Islamist followers gave the public the chance for a yes-no vote for the single option of Islamic Republic as a state form. Various elite factions opposed this

decision and suggested the addition of more options, like democratic republic, or only democratic. Despite the disagreements, the referendum with a single choice of Islamic Republic was held. The yes vote by the public mobilized around Khomeini and his IRP defined the form of the state as Islamic Republic and the constitution was crafted within the framework of the Islamic Republic (Bakhash 1984, 72-73). Determining the form of the state logically expected some form of institutional arrangement assuring that the state reflects its expected Islamic character.

In both cases, one faction of elite (Islamists in Iran and radical leftists in Portugal) set the conditions for the formation of a veto-player to exercise power outside of the electoral legitimacy. The literature of comparative politics has devoted a vast attention to the institutional engineering, i.e. presidentialism, parliamentarian, or semi-presidentialism and the influence of these institutional forms on democratic sustainability. The literature, specifically in the field of rational-institutionalism, stems from Madison's argument in federalist 10 where he discusses the selfish motivations of actors, and subsequent necessity to install institutions to control those motivations (Shugart 2005, 328). In this regard, Matthew Shugart discusses that for Madison the method for monitoring the objectives of various agents involved in political game were through an institutional model based on hierarchy. In adding to Madison's discussion, Shugart argues for the necessity of both "hierarchical and transactional authority patterns between institutions" (2005, 328). In this light, the arguments regarding the benefits and shortcomings of various institutional forms in terms of guaranteeing vertical and horizontal accountability, as well as reducing the space for manipulation becomes relevant.

Hence, when there is any form of institutional engineering through which specific factions of elite can exercise power outside of the electoral accountability, the regime is not democratic. The existence of what Pzeworski calls a “second tier” can grant some elite more power outside of the electoral legitimacy (1991,9). If these elite could institutionalize and consolidate the mechanism of exercising power outside of the electoral legitimacy, the result of the transition will be either some form of new authoritarianism or a façade democracy. George Tsebelis, similarly, talks about the institutional and partisan veto-players. The author explains that “[i]n order to change policies-or, as we will say henceforth, to change the (legislative) status quo—a certain number of individual or collective actors have to agree to the proposed change. I call such actors *veto players*” (2002, 2).

From Tsebelis’s point of view, the good way of understanding the nature of both non-democratic and democratic (presidential and parliamentary) systems is comprehension of the law-making process. He asks for four major questions that have definitive consequences on the regime’s form. The questions are as follows:

“How are veto players selected?  
Who are the veto players? (Who needs to agree for a change of the status quo?)  
Who controls the legislative agenda? (Who makes proposals to whom and under what rules?)  
If these players are collective, under what rules does each of them decide (simple majority, qualified majority, or unanimity)? ” (2002, 76)

The aforementioned explanation is relevant for the cases under study both in terms of their institutional design and previously discussed veto-players. In Portugal, a semi-presidential system was adopted and both the parliament and president were

popularly elected. Despite the division of power between the president and the parliament, in Portugal the president could exercise an extensive power. S/he could form or dismiss governments, specifically during the times when no party could win the majority of parliament seats (Bruneau 1997, 9-10). In Iran also a semi-presidential system was implemented by having both popularly elected parliament and a president. The prime minister would lead the cabinet. However, the president had the duty of assigning the prime minister and the cabinet and the parliament had the duty of confirming the prime minister (Bakhash 1984, 83). Thus, similar to Portugal, in Iran also the president held a considerable amount of power.

The implications of semi-presidential systems on democratization have been discussed in the literature. However, the argument regarding the role of the institutional engineering determining the governing system, and subsequent behavior of political actors is irrelevant to the cases under study. The semi-presidential institutional design in both countries suggests that the institutional design during the transition phase per se cannot be considered the determinative cause explaining the different outcomes.

While both cases had similar institutional engineering, they resembled also in terms of defining veto-players. Hence, the power of Islamists in Iran and the leftist military elite in Portugal were institutionalized through a veto-player institution known as the Guardian Council in the former and the Council of Revolution in the latter one. As already has been explained, in both cases the councils had the role of monitoring the legislature outside of the electoral accountability. The resemblance in the existence of a veto-player in both cases is another control variable justifying the comparability of the

cases. The institutional similarities discussed so far suggest that the consolidation of democracy in Portugal or the rise of authoritarianism in Iran is not endogenous to semi-presidential systems and veto-players. The fact that both adopted similar institutions but the outcomes were different shows that the form of the institution during the transition is not the most determinative variable. Therefore, the institutional design can be considered a control variable since during the transition phase, not the institutions but the actors who craft the institutions are the important players directing the process of transition. This logic applies to both cases of Portugal and Iran since the crafting of institutions during the transition period is uncertain and depended upon the elite decisions.

#### *Involvement in War*

The similarities between cases in terms of the form of broke with authoritarianism, elite decisions, and institutional engineering has been argued so far. The last subject to address is the involvement in wars. The uncertain period of the transition coincided with the involvement in wars that intensified the political instability. The broke with authoritarianism in Portugal occurred during Portugal's war with colonies. Iran's war started one year after the revolution in September of 1980 and continued for eight years. However, the wars with the colonies in Portugal continued during the transition period when General de Spínola was in charge of the interim government. Thus, both countries experienced wars during their transition period.

There is a consensus among scholars regarding the positive relation of war with transition toward democracy (Bermeo 2003, 159). The increase in the possibility of elite

settlement in the cases of “costly and inconclusive” wars has been recognized in the discipline. Thus, if the wars are costly and the outcome is not certain, there is a high chance for elite settlement to manage the chaotic situation of the country. The investigation of Portuguese colonial wars and Iran-Iraq war demonstrates similarities in terms of the nature of wars. However, despite the similarity in involvement in wars, the cases did not share similar political trajectories.

Both countries suffered due to the costly wars in terms of both human casualties and economic damage. Portugal’s wars in colonies of Mozambique, Guinea, and Angola were extremely costly. High percentage of Portuguese population participated in wars due to the pressure of the government. At the time of the termination of wars, Portugal had around 28,000 wounded and 7,700 only-combat related deaths (Bermeo 2009, 391,392). Similarly, Iran-Iraq war that began in September of 1980 by Iraqi invasion of Iran left around one million human casualties during eight years (Ansari 2003, 238).

In the case of Portugal, in four years 6.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was devoted to defense expenditure. There was an increase in military labor service from 6.5 per cent to 8.0 per cent during the years of 1970-1973 (Bermeo 2009, 391-392). Similarly, Iran’s economic infrastructure embraced massive damage. The war coincided with the economic embargo subjected by the US and Western countries, and caused great deficits to Iranian economy. For instance, there was \$10.6 billion budget deficit and the government’s spending on war consisted of 16 per cent of annual budget of \$44 billion (Moghaddam 2008, 32).

In addition to being costly, both wars also embraced an ideological expansionist dimension. General de Spínola as the president of the interim government was in favor of the continuation of wars in the colonies. He and his conservative camp had the belief that Portugal will be able to keep its control over the colonies in Africa. Spínola had the goal of resolving Portugal's economic crisis through adoption of a political democracy and integration into European Community. Besides this, Spínola had also the belief that the adoption of respective policies will help to unite Portugal with its colonies. This conservative approach toward the colonies became a point of dispute between him and MFA's members involved in the coup who later forced him to leave the office (Graham 1992, 284-287). In the Iranian case, despite the fact that Iraq started the war, there was an ideological dimension put forward by Khomeini. The underlying idea was that the values of revolution belonged not only to Iran but human kind and Muslims. Subsequently, the revolution was perceived as an ideology not limited to Iran but as a political project that could be pursued universally (Moghaddam 2008, 32).

The similarity in wars and difference in outcomes of transitions suggests that the political outcome is not linked to the nature of wars for the cases under study. The nature of wars in Portugal and Iran resembled. Thus, nature of wars in both cases is not causal to the political outcomes and can be considered as a control variable. It will be explained in third section that how the Iran-Iraq war was used as an excuse by the Islamist elite to build a state with Islamic identity and the war continued for eight years.

### **What Don't Iran and Portugal Have in Common?**

The dissimilarities between cases can be considered possible causal variables determining the outcomes. However, not every difference is endogenous or causal in explaining the results. Regarding the transitions in Portugal and Iran, there are differences in the institutional design, the form of the popular mobilization, as well as elite decisions. However, the argument can be made that among respective variables, the difference in the popular mobilization and the institutional design are not causal variables in explaining the failure of democratization in Iran.

The mobilization was around Khomeini, and his Islamic Republican party, and thus, was linked to Khomeini's speeches and decisions. In other words, the popular mobilization in Iran did not necessarily follow the lines of policies and political projects proposed by the factions and parties, and thus, did not provide a space for political compromise. In the case of institutional engineering, the ill-defined institutions in Iran did not determine the phase of the transition but were the outcome of the transition. The non-democratic elements in institutional engineering helped the persistence of the new autocratic rule after the termination of the transition directed by Khomeini and the political elite. In this section each of respective variables will be discussed in detail.

### *Popular Mobilization*

The difference in the form of the popular mobilization, i.e. polarization in Iran and split of public along two lines in Portugal, can be considered a possible explanation for different outcomes. In Portugal, the popular mobilization in the south and the north, and subsequent support for different factions played an important role in pushing elite to compromise. In contrast, Iran faced the elite and popular polarization, and subsequent consolidation of the power by the Islamic Republican Party that had the support of the public.

The mobilization is what Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter call a "popular upsurge". It is the moment of the unification of the "trade unions, grass-roots movements, religious groups, intellectuals, artists, clergymen, defenders of human rights, and professional associations" that pressure for more liberalization (1986, 54). O'Donnell and Schmitter draw a theoretical scenario elaborating the consequences of the popular upsurge on the transition. It suggests that the emergence of a massive popular mobilization can reduce the chance for the formation of an oligarchic democracy. Moreover, the fear from a civil war due to a highly mobilized society reduces the likelihood of the coup or the consolidation of the power by one faction. Whereas, if the public and elite polarize, there will be a chance for the consolidation of power by one faction (1986, 55).

In Portugal, the formation of 16 provisional governments during 15 years illustrates the highly mobilized and pluralized nature of the society after the collapse of

the Caetano's regime (Maxwell 1986, 203). It also illustrates the inability of the elite to consolidate the power due to the emergence of what Graham calls a "power vacuum" (1992, 284). The mobilization occurred along two social classes, industrial class in the south in favor of communism and poor peasants in the north unhappy with nationalization policies. Graham discusses that in the aftermath of revolution the probability of an armed conflict was high. This is because the population in the center and the south had been mobilized along the lines of revolutionaries in favor of radical nationalizing reforms in the system. In contrast, in the north, the tendency was against the radical reforms and the population was mobilized along the lines of counterrevolutionaries (1992, 286).

If in Portugal there was a split between the north and the south, in Iran the public was mobilized around Islamists with the leadership of Khomeini. The populations started the formation of organizations operating parallel to the government such as revolutionary committees, courts, and revolutionary guard (Bakhash 1984, 55). The most important of the organization emerged through popular mobilization were revolutionary committees (*Komitehs*). These organizations were formed around mosques in various cities, were armed, and started monitoring the revolution by purging the old regime's actors. "These committees are everywhere", stated Bazargan, the Prime Minister and the head of the provisional government at time expressing his frustration for the committees' unauthorized actions (Bakhash 1984, 56-58). These forces have been identified as influential actors directing the course of the transition and gradually gained the support of the clerics and the Guardian Council (Bakhash 1984, 56).

Although the popular mobilization seems a plausible story in explaining the different outcomes of the two countries, the failure of the democratization in Iran is not linked to popular mobilization but the role of the elite, particularly Khomeini and IRP members who could use it in an effective manner. The mobilization in the case of Iran was not the cause of the formation of the undemocratic institutions. The popular mobilization was just an asset in the hands of Khomeini and Islamists to actualize their political project. In the case of the formation of revolutionary committees, the method of confronting those committees helped the institutionalization, and subsequent reformation of them to the assets of the clerics.

For instance, Mahdavi Kani, a cleric in the Revolutionary Council, was assigned by Khomeini to manage the committees. Kani approached the committees and ordered them to subject themselves to the provisional government. However, he also allowed the establishment of some committees, including his own committee. He allowed these committees an exercise of power like “arrest of political and ordinary criminals, members of former regime and counterrevolutionaries, the resolution of neighborhood disputes, and the identification of profiteers” (Bakhash 1984, 58). Therefore, the Islamists with the support of Khomeini could take advantage of the mobilized public and institutionalize their control.

O’Donnell and Schmitter identify the importance of the popular mobilization on the phase of the transition. In the context of highly mobilized situation, the authors state that “one event plays a more important and immediate role than all others: the convocation of election” (1986, 56). As already has been explained the process of the

holding of elections in both countries is a control variable. However, it is worthwhile to mention that the popular support in elections of Portugal and Iran had different characteristics.

In Iran the population was in support of the Islamists. The result of elections, both the referendum deciding the form of the state and later constituent assembly's election shows the popularity of the Islamists. While in the aftermath of revolution, the referendum was held to decide the form of the state, 98.2 per cent of the Iranian public voted yes for the Islamic Republic. After the referendum, during the constituent assembly's elections, the Islamist forces could collect the majority of the votes. In spite of the role leftists and liberals played in the triumph of the revolution, Islamists were the winners of the political game who occupied the positions, subsequently, crafted institutions based on their Islamic ideology beyond the control of the official provisional government.

While in Iran the undemocratic forces were elected for constituent assembly, in Portugal, the popular support brought the moderate elite into power that challenged the monopolization of the power by the communists. The question is why in Portugal public voted for democratically inclined elite while in Iran public supported Islamists. In explaining the reasons behind the votes in Portugal, Wiarda Howard & MacLeish Mott argue that the loss of legitimacy of right, and division between the center forces, made the communists and socialists as the plausible options for the public. Between socialists and communists, the public unsatisfied with policies of communists also voted for socialists. The center voters also preferred socialists to communists. The result was the

victory of Soares of PS in elections (2001, 133). Thus, in Portugal the divisions amongst elite influenced the voter behavior and pushed them for the election of moderate forces.

In Iran also, the result of the elections were outcomes of elite alliances and Khomeini's role in mobilizing the public. In terms of electing the president, after the fall of Bazargan's government once Khomeini supported Bani Sadr, the liberal technocrat educated in France, the public voted for him. From the moment that Khomeini withdrew his support, Bani Sadr's government fell. Another example is Khomeini's speeches after triumph of revolution. Some statements illustrate how he was aware of his popularity and presenting his personal visions and decisions as the needs and requirements of the nation. The role and influence of Khomeini will be addressed in detail later in this thesis.

#### *Difference in the amount of Power Veto-Player Could Exercise*

Despite the similarities both countries share in terms of the institutional engineering, there are differences in the amount of the power veto players could exercise that can be considered a causal variable. However, since the Guardian Council did not exercise his power without Khomeini's permission, the argument can be made that the institution per se was not determinative variable during transition but Khomeini who was the key player.

The Council of Revolution in Portugal and the Guardian Council in Iran exercised monitoring power over legislature outside of the electoral legitimacy. However, the amount of the power granted to the Guardian Council was more than the power of the Council of Revolution. In the case of Iran, unlike Portugal, the Guardian Council not only

was granted the power to monitor the legislature but also was given a watchdog role over the elections. Thus, it had the duty of qualifying the candidates to run for elections of executive and legislative branches. This means that the Guardian Council was given the power to decide whether or not a given individual fits to the arbitrary drawn qualities of a good candidate. Hence Guardian Council can decide whether or not a given candidate is morally a good Muslim and committed to the regime of Islamic Republic, and thus, could run for elections<sup>9</sup>.

Besides the guardian Council as a veto-player, the exclusion of women and non-Muslim from running for presidential elections was another difference between cases. In Iran, there is a debate around the usage of Arabic term “*Rejal-e Siasi*” (literally meaning Male Politicians) in constitution and whether or not the word *Rejal* can be used for both men and women. Despite disagreements around the meaning of the word, the usage of the word *Rejal* (men) in the constitution gives the Guardian Council the excuse and authority to exclude women from running for presidential elections. Moreover, there is also discrimination against non-Muslims in running for higher offices and presidency in Iran. Non-Muslims who are known as religious have given the right to present a representative of their minority in the Parliament. However, they are excluded from occupying other political offices in Iran (Mayer 2007, 106).

In defining the democratic regimes, scholars took a minimalist definition explaining democracy as “the regime in which those who govern are selected through contested elections (Przeworski et al, 2000, 15). Contestation features three necessary

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<sup>9</sup> “Iran-Constitution”, International Constitutional Law. [http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000\\_.html](http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/ir00000_.html)

assumptions as follows: “(1) ex-ante uncertainty, (2) ex-post irreversibility, and (3) repeatability” (Przeworski et al. 2000, 16). In the light of above definition, the Iranian constitution granted the power of reducing the chance of uncertainty in elections, i.e. the first basic requirement of a democratic regime, to the Guardian Council. The power to exclude some factions in elections is against the rules of the contestation. This process limits the sovereignty of the people by giving power to the clerics headed by the Supreme Leader. In contrast, the Council of Revolution in Portugal had no power in monitoring the electoral process. Therefore, in the case of Portugal the changing results of elections, i.e. entrance of various factions into the parliament who challenged the monopolization of power by one faction, led to the elite pacts and the reformation of the constitution. The result was the abolishment of the Council of Revolution.

This comparison allows for the introduction of the institutional differences as a cause behind the failure of democratization in Iran. However, the investigation of political dynamics during the transition phase in Iran suggests the implausibility of the above-mentioned hypothesis. This is because the Guardian Council did not exercise its power exclusively. Khomeini created the institution for himself, and thus, during the first years after revolution, he became the sole decision-maker. For instance, during the Iran-Iraq war, there was dispute between the Prime Minister, Mir Hussein Musavi, and the Guardian Council. In this dispute, Khomeini supported the government against the Guardian Council. Ansari discusses that the decision of Khomeini was a “pragmatic rationalization” and was seen by many as opportunistic and was criticized by the clerics (Ansari 2003, 240). This explanation suggests that the Guardian Council as an institution

existed; however, the power it could exercise during the period of transition was not independent of Khomeini's control.

Therefore, a distinction can be made between the transition phase and the termination of transition. Transition terminated after the consolidation of the power by the clerics and the Islamic Republican Party. The institutionalization of the clerical power occurred during the transition phase due to the role of actors like Khomeini on constitution-making. Despite the institutional power granted to the clerics, they did not exercise the power during the transition period since the major decision-maker was Khomeini and IRP elite who could influence him and not the institution per-se. The political rules of the game, either democratic or undemocratic, were crafted during the transition period.

Therefore, the veto-player variable is not a causal one. This is because the variable is subject to change and reformation until the transition is terminated. Subsequently, as already has been explained, the formation of the institutions per se, like veto-players, do not direct the mode of the transition. The transition is the result of the elite's decisions that are involved in the formation of those institutions. Once the political system was established, either democratic or undemocratic, the defined laws in constitution and also the institutional design become relevant in determining either the quality of the democratic regime or the persistence of the new autocracy.

### **Why Did Iran Fail to Democratize?**

The actor-centric literature of comparative politics considers the actor-centric analysis and elite decisions as the most decisive variables in directing the transition. The literature of democratization elaborates on the nature of the political elite involved in the breakdown of the old regime, as well as those who control the transition as variables forming the process of the transition (Linz & Stepan 1996). Linz and Stepan classify four groups of hierarchic military, non-hierarchic military, civilian, and sultanistic elite as the major actors initiating a transition (1996, 66). In transitions initiated by nonhierarchical military elite, the chances of consolidation are higher since the military-as-institution will tolerate the purges and punishments of non-democratic actors. This is because only some actors within the military will be subjected to attack and not the military as an institution.

In civilian-led transitions, the prospect for the consolidation of democracy is more likely. The civilian leaders are considered more capable of holding negotiations since they have more linkages to the society. However, the exception is in societies without previous democratic experience where there is a possibility for the usage of a nationalistic discourse by the top nomenklatura, and subsequent “ethnography building” instead of a “democracy building”. In these cases, the absence of a civil society and a

competitive political society, the nomenklatura has a greater chance of consolidating the power through elections (1996, 68).

Based on above-mentioned theoretical framework, the first major variable that can explain the difference in transition trajectory in Iran and Portugal is the character of those elite who initiated the transition in each country. In Portugal the elite who initiated the transition were non-hierarchic military who later compromised with the civilian elite. In Iran civilian elite led the course of the events. The Islamist elite, who had more linkages with the society and were supported by Khomeini, could use the discourse of religious nationalism to consolidate their power.

The study of two cases so far allows for the proposition of a hypothesis regarding the role of elite as the determinative variables. From Graham's (1992) point of view, the elite pacts in Portugal during the peak of the social mobilization and constant counter coups by military elite were significant decisions leading Portugal toward consolidation of democracy. In the case of Iran, the thesis suggests two major causes explaining the different outcomes between Iran and Portugal: (i) the existence of a charismatic leader in Iran, i.e. Khomeini, who played the crucial role as a decision-maker in almost every step and (ii) the alliance of the leftist and the Islamist elite in Iran, and subsequent isolation of the liberals from the political game.

The outcome of Iranian elite decisions and Khomeini's exercise of power was the incorporation of Khomeini's ideological political agenda into the building of a new state identity, i.e. Islamic Republic. This followed by the institution crafting during the transition based on an undemocratic model of government proposed by Khomeini.

Therefore in the case of Iran (i) a new state identity was defined based on an Islamic and anti-western rhetoric, (ii) the Iran-Iraq war and the US Hostage Crisis were used as means of state identity building with Islamic character, and (iii) the parallel institutions were created in order to revolutionize the state.

### *Elite Settlement versus a Charismatic Leader*

In analyzing the role of the elite in democratization, Burton, Gunther and Higley discuss the possible outcomes of the elite settlement. The authors explain that elite settlements illustrate their installations with the society and the role of the mass mobilization as a variable influencing the elite settlements. By keeping the variable of mass mobilization in the picture, the authors present several scenarios through which either elite settlement leads to some form of democracy, or a failure in the settlement ends in the establishment of a new authoritarian regime (1992, 20-21).

In the model they present, democratic transition can follow two major paths as follows: (i) elite settlement and mass democratization followed by the institutionalization and the stabilization, and ultimately the consolidation of democracy. (ii) No settlement during the first stage and continuation of the mass mobilization, which results in the elite and mass polarization followed by two possible outcomes: either unconsolidated democracy/some form of pseudo-democracy or reestablishment of an authoritarian regime (1992, 23). In the cases of Iran and Portugal, elite played the major role during the transition period. While Portugal experienced elite pacts, in Iran elite and society were

divided and Khomeini became the key decision-maker mobilizing the population around himself and Islamic Republican Party.

Graham identifies two pacts signed between MFA and the political parties in April 11, 1975 and February 26, 1976 as “partial agreements regarding issues of participation and representation” that ended in constitutional revisions (1992, 294). Spínola signed the first pact during the peak of the social mobilization after the failed counter-coup. This pact was signed during an institutional vacuum. It defined the civil-military relations under the pressure of various forces involved in the formation of the new state. People were guaranteed the right to elect a parliament of representatives. Meanwhile the MFA could institutionalize its position through the Council of Revolution. This pact established a framework to mitigate the conflicts (1992, 278-288). The second pact was signed after a counter-coup carried out by Eanes against the radical leftists and brought the socialists into power. Following this event, the power of the Council of Revolution was limited to solely monitor the legislature. The public also was granted the universal and direct suffrage to elect a president. According to Graham, these pacts occurred because civil and military elites realized that they are unable to solely consolidate the power (1992, 288-289).

General Eanes, Mario Soares of the PS, the PSD’s leader Carneiro, and Amaral of center CDS parties were major players in the reformation of the constitution. First, two pacts allowed for the regulation of the civil-military relations and partially limited the role of the military exercised through the Council of Revolution. Second, after the institutionalization of the parliamentary and the presidential elections, the support of the

public brought the moderate forces into the office. Consequently, they used the leverage they had gained to reform the constitution in 1982, thereby, consolidating democracy. In this context, the role of the current Prime Minister Soares was crucial in making the agreement pact with Eanes. Through this pact they could guarantee the right of the confidence vote for both executive and legislative branches for the election of the general staff of the armed forces. In this regard, Amaral as the head of the CSD also had a significant role in holding negotiations among the PSD, the PS and the CSD parties and helped them reaching agreements with the military (1992, 291).

For example, Portugal's dual executive institutional setting accommodated changes by reelection of Eanes as the president in 1980. In this case, Eanes willingly gave up the power of controlling the armed forces and transferred it to the Parliament (Graham 1992, 289). The constitutional reforms were suggested by the national assembly to abolish the Council of the Revolution and proposed a new National Defense Law. In this case, president Eanes disagreed with the new defense law for transferring the power to the National Assembly to elect the military head. However, Eanes's commitment to the decision of the National Assembly made him accept the new proposal.

Graham explains that Eanes had the idea of a professionalized and depoliticized military. Subsequently, he started to isolate the radicals and work with officers who were supportive of his idea. Therefore, he could marginalize radical military officers. Along this, a party-based government also was developed in 1982. Since then, the role of the Council of the Revolution, which had the responsibility to prevent the political power swing toward the right military officers, became insignificant (1992, 290). Therefore,

Graham concludes that through consensus among different political elites, the process of transition ended in the consolidation of democracy. An agreement had been made on representation of different interest groups and contestation was seen as the base for the political game. In Portugal, the entrance of moderate groups into the game aligned with the fragmented mobilization helped the process of consensus-building and elite settlement.

Similar to Portugal, In Iran also the anti-Shah coalition of various left, liberal, and Islamist forces broke after the collapse of the regime. In the absence of a common enemy, the ideological differences of elite forces were intensified. In this context, the radical Islamist faction (specifically IRP) became the winning party erasing all their former allies through the course of various events. If in Portugal the split led to elite pacts, in Iran Khomeini became the mediator among elite, and thus, the figure with the final voice in making crucial decisions in favor of IRP. The Khomeini's position was essential both in bringing the old regime down and also directing the phase of the transition. Thus, one can conclude that Khomeini was the key leader who (i) had a great leadership capacity, and thus, his word was taken into consideration by the political elite in decision-making processes, (ii) could speak with the language of the masses and mobilize them, and (iii) could combine anti-western and Islamic rhetoric effectively and put forward an ideology that became the base of the state identity formation.

The centrality of Khomeini's position in Iranian politics goes back to the pre-revolution period. Khomeini as the exiled cleric living in France was giving speeches against the Shah's and his policies. Khomeini became one of the major political figures

symbolizing the opposition against the Shah's regime (Ansari 2003, 211). Many civilian leaders of various political parties traveled to France and expressed their solidarity with him. Despite the media censorship, Khomeini's speeches were distributed among people through cassettes. At the age of the collapse of the old regime and the Shah's departure, the return of Khomeini to Iran was perceived as the entrance of a political figure symbolizing the spirit of the revolution.

Khomeini along with his Islamic Republican Party pushed for the adoption of the concept of the "Supreme Rule of Jurist" in constitution. Khomeini succeeded to grant an institutional power to clerics as the mediators between the parliament and the president in the form of the Guardian Council. He also defined a new state identity for Iran as an Islamic Republic. In order to clarify the role of Khomeini in the transition period, this section will address the key events of March 1979 referendum and constitution making process. It will also be discussed how events like the US Hostage Crisis and the Iran-Iraq war provided Khomeini and his followers the opportunity to consolidate political control.

#### *The referendum of March 1979*

In Iran, after the collapse of the old state, the question of a new state form became the topic of debate. Khomeini during his exile in France had already introduced the necessity for the establishment of an Islamic state. In January of 1979, Khomeini issued a decree asking the head of the provisional government, Bazargan, to hold a referendum in order to replace the monarchic system with the Islamic Republic. The referendum would

ask people for a yes-no vote for the Islamic Republic. The liberal parties and leaders of moderate Islamist factions like Ayatollah Shariatmadari opposed this idea. They asked for the insertion of other choices or the possibility to vote between Islamic and democratic choices. In the context of disagreements among elite, Khomeini became hostile to the usage of word democratic next to Islamic and pushed for the holding of a referendum with a single yes-no choice for the Islamic Republic (Bakhash 1984, 72-73).

An important speech by Khomeini in March 1<sup>st</sup> illustrated the controlling character of Khomeini. It also showed Khomeini's awareness of his charismatic power among the people and the elite that allowed him to talk on behalf of the nation:

“What the nation wants is an Islamic Republic: not just a republic, not a democratic republic, not a democratic Islamic republic. Do not use this term, ‘democratic.’ That is the Western style” (cited in Bakhash 1984, 73).

The Islamic Republic model was confirmed by 98.2 per cent of electorates. The Islamists and Khomeini encouraged the public for a ‘yes’ vote. Besides this, the opposition to the referendum also was divided. Thus, some of the opposition elite factions against the referendum also asked for a ‘yes’ vote. Therefore, among the opposition groups, only the National Democratic Front, *Fedayeen*, and also some ethnic Kurdish groups boycotted the referendum. However, other groups like *Mojahedin-e Khalgh* (Marxist Islamists) conditionally approved the referendum. The National Front, The Freedom Movement, the Islamic People's Republican Party (IPRP), Islamic Republican Party, and Tudeh essentially urged for a ‘yes’ vote (Bakhash 1984, 73).

The yes vote to the referendum was perceived as a reaction to the monarchic regime and not necessarily a vote for a state form. The abolishment of monarchy as the purpose of the revolution encouraged many to vote yes. For some Islamists the vote was the confirmation of the state model introduced from the top. In contrast, for other factions the vote was the reestablishment of state-society relations and the illustration of popular origins of the revolution (Ansari 2003, 221). Whatever the reasons behind the ‘yes’ vote were, Khomeini succeeded to push his own model of the state with majority support of the both public and the elite factions.

#### *Constitution-Making Process*

Khomeini also used his political leverage to influence the constitution-making procedure. The draft of the constitution crafted by the first provisional government with mainly secular features created two extreme factions. One faction was in favor of insertion of Islamic features and other factions were secularists who opposed it. In the environment of raising tensions between two sides and hot debates around the inclusion of Islamic elements in the constitution, Khomeini supported Islamists who were in line with his model of governance introduced in his book. Khomeini stated, “the constitution of Islamic Republic means the constitution of Islam” and called for the necessity of revising the draft by the radical Islamists groups (Bakhash 1984, 78).

In the context of the political unrest and anarchy, the terror of some political elite, and incapability of Bazargan’s government to resolve the chaos, Khomeini allied with Islamic Republican Party members who pushed for the institutionalization of the concept

of *velayat-faghih* (the vice-agency of jurist). This scheme that was introduced in Khomeini's "Islamic Governance" book, stemmed from the idea that solely jurists had the capacity to interpret the law and guide the society. Despite the split among even clerical elite, Khomeini used his popularity and charisma to push for *velayt-e faghih* model that was supported by IRP (Ansari 2003, 225-226). Thus, the IRP could use the power of Khomeini and gain his support to institutionalize its position as a veto-player.

In explaining the role of Khomeini in Iranian institutional design, Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr explain that both offices of the president and the prime minister were granted strong power in constitution. In the context of Khomeini's charismatic power tied with the introduction of necessity of inclusion of Islam in the state-building process, the offices of the Supreme Leader along with Guardian Council were defined as the "ultimate arbiter in the tussles between the president and the prime minister" (Gheissari & Nasr 2006, 91). The tensions between the republican structure of Iran and the role of Islam created a dual state with both elements of Islamism and Republicanism. In this regard, Brown explains that Khomeini as the leader of the revolution became the person with the responsibility of resolving the tensions between ill defined institutions in Iran (Brown 2008, 71).

In the case of Iran offices were made specifically for some individuals and Khomeini was written by name in the constitution and gained a lot of authority (Brown 2008, 70). Drawing on Weber's notion of charismatic personality as a great revolutionary force in bridging the gaps, Alsaif also discusses the role of Khomeini as the reconciler of religion and the state. Subsequently, the author explains how in the context of rising

tensions between religious faction and provisional government, Khomeini proposed his idea of “superiority of ruling *faqih*” as a solution to problem through incorporation of Shiat paradigm into the state (Alsaif 2007, 49-51).

The position of Khomeini in Iran’s political life is evident through the power he had in assigning Bazargan as the head of the provisional government or inserting changes in the draft of the constitution designed by the provisional government. Khomeini ordered the exclusion of women from candidacy for presidency office, as well as becoming judges (Bakhash 1984, 72-74).

The comparison of Portugal and Iran shows how in the case of Portugal the rising tensions forced the elite to compromise and reform the constitution. In contrast, in Iran, the existence of a charismatic leader who was not in favor of democratic rules of governance, directed the process toward the consolidation of power by the radical Islamist faction who were in line with Khomeini’s ideology. Thus, the Guardian Council and the office of Supreme Leader as the trendsetter of conflicts were granted power in the constitution making the new regime an undemocratic one.

The ideological attitude of Khomeini in defining the identity of the new state as an Islamic state became his political project. The events that occurred during the transition were used by Khomeini to push his political agenda. For instance, the US Hostage Crisis that occurred due to the entrance of Shah to the US inflamed the public unrest. Because of the fear from interference of the US in Iran based on the memory of 1953 coup, a group of students, known as “Students Following the Line of Imam”, entered the US embassy and took 70 diplomats as hostages. This event provided the

momentum for Khomeini and IRP to play the populist politics. Inability of Bazargan's provisional government to mitigate the crisis and subsequent resignation and fall of the government was tied with anti-imperialistic and nationalistic rhetoric that was used by Khomeini to mobilize the public. As already has been explained, within the context of nationalism, the process was set to redraft the constitution that essentially institutionalized the clerical power (Ansari 2003, 224-225).

The Iran-Iraq war also became another event benefiting Khomeini and his radical Islamist followers to build an Islamic state. Gheissari and Nasr introduce the importance of the interrelation of state identity building process in Iran and war. The authors draw on Charles Tilly's statement of "war made the state and the state made war" and argue that war became "an important determinant of the ebbs and flows of revolutionary politics, and the pattern of state-building" (2006, 98). In this light, after the collapse of the old regime, the war with Iraq became an excuse for the mobilization of the population for the cause of the state-building tied with the Islamization. Therefore, the form of the mobilization of the populous during the war was not directed toward the restoration of a new form of social contract between the state and the people, but a mobilization for Islamic ideology. As the author puts it:

The Iran-Iraq war was important in determining the shape of the state and national policies, and it extended the life span of ideological policies by diverting attention from socioeconomic concerns and interests, it allowed the more militant faction of the revolutionary leadership to consolidate power and vested greater powers in the more radical wing of the faction (2006, 99).

Iraq started the war by occupying some territories from Iran. However, in 1982 Iran succeeded to recapture those territories, specifically Khoramshahr. The liberation of Khormshahr played an important role in inflaming the nationalism. Ansari explains that although many states believed that the war would weaken the Islamic republic, the outcome was vice versa. Despite the lack of the military equipment and regardless of the advice of military generals, the leaders in Iran decided to continue the war after the recapture of territories. This time, the reasons for maintenance of war, specifically for Khomeini were domestic. The military triumph could be presented as a victory for the Islamic Republic, the model that Khomeini had created (2003, 237-238).

Khomeini persisted on the continuation of war with the goal of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and fighting with infidels. However, finally he agreed to cease-fire proposed by the United Nations Security Council in 1988. Khomeini, who was blocking all attempts to stop the war, essentially accepted the cease-fire due to the advice of the military and civilian elite with stating, “taking this decision was more deadly than taking poison. I submitted myself to God's will and drank this drink for his satisfaction.”<sup>10</sup>

The revolutionization and Islamizaion of the state also were continued through the formation of parallel institutions. After the Iranian revolution, two major factions, i.e. liberals and non-liberal fundamentalists, took the power. While Khomeini appointed liberal parties like the Freedom Movement in the charge of the provisional government with the presidency of Bazargan, parallel revolutionary institutions were being formed

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Pear, “Khomeini Accepts ‘Poison’ of Ending the war With Iraq; U.N. Sending Mission”, NewYorkTimes.<http://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/21/us/khomeini-accepts-poison-of-ending-the-war-with-iraq-un-sending-mission.html>

from the below through the masses. Gradually, the liberals were overpowered by fundamentalists who had the support of the both Khomeini and the masses (Bashiriye 1984, 132-139). The outcome was the formation of two mutually exclusive institutions. One was the Guardian Council appointed by Khomeini consisting Ulamas and the revolutionary activists. The other was the provisional government of Bazargan. While the latter one was in charge of maintaining the order through operating within democratic institutions, the former was concerned with managing the full potential of the Revolution.

The outcome was the formation of a ‘dual state’ where parallel institutions were operating simultaneously.

“Revolutionary court ran parallel to the judiciary; Revolutionary Guard parallel to the military; revolutionary committees to the police; networks of Friday Prayer leaders and representatives of Khomeini to governors, mayors, and municipal authorities; parastate foundations with economic and social services agencies of the state; and the Reconstruction Campaign network (Jahad-e Sazandegi) to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development” (Gheissari 2006, 89).

The formation of a ‘dual state’ with institutions that were drawing their legitimacy from two different sources hindered the functionality of the regime. Once Islamists could consolidate their power, these institutions helped them to operate without accountability, and thus, maintain their control.

### *Elite decisions in Iran*

Along with the essential role of Khomeini in Iranian political life, the decisions made by the elite during the critical periods also played a significant role in helping

radical Islamists to consolidate their power. The most effective decision made by liberal elite was their push for the election of the constituent assembly to discuss the draft of the constitution. After defining the form of the state as the Islamic Republic, the parties started to craft the constitution. The first provisional government with the leadership of Bazargan had the responsibility to draft the constitution. This constitution was drawn based on Iranian constitution of 1906. Following Gaullist model, the constitution granted a strong power to the president and the religious clergy no special authority. There was no mention of vice-agency and the Guardian Council had only limited veto power over legislature. Khomeini approved the draft of the constitution and demanded to put the draft to a referendum. The call to put the draft on referendum without the election of a constituent assembly faced the opposition of liberal and moderate forces (Bakhash 1984, 74).

Despite the fact that decision of Khomeini wanted to put the draft to referendum the opposition succeeded to convince him for holding of constituent assembly's election. The ultimate result of the election was mobilization of the public by Khomeini and entrance of Islamist forces in to the assembly. The radical Islamists, especially members of the Islamic Republican Party, redrafted the constitution and granted extensive power to the Guardian Council (Bakhash 1984, 75). The liberals miscalculated the popularity of Khomeini and the Islamist rhetoric among people. The outcome was the push for the constitution assembly's election that brought radical Islamists into power and ended in the reformation of the draft of the constitution in favor of the Islamic Republican Party.

The alliance of leftists with Islamists was another decision helping Islamic Republican Party to consolidate its power. The resignation of Bazargan's government during the Hostage Crisis led to the isolation of the National Front and the Freedom Movement. Ansari explains that after the resignation of Bazargan's government, "Islamic Marxists" consisting of *Mojahedin-e Khalgh* and their allies, as well as their "Islamist" allies including the Islamic Republican Party acquired more power. These latter groups, unlike provisional government's liberals were in support of the occupation of the US embassy. Thus, both the alliance between the leftists and radical Islamists against the democratic and liberal forces, as well as the decision of liberals to withdraw from the political game, helped the consolidation of power by Islamists (Ansari 2003, 226-229).

In Portugal, the elite compromises and pacts favored the democratic rules of the game. In contrast, in Iran the alliances between leftists and Islamists served the isolation of liberals, and later consolidation of power by radical Islamists who were not in favor of democracy. Leftists who found the collectivization policies of Islamists, as well as their anti-Western rhetoric close to their beliefs entered into what Mottale calls "opportunistic alliance" (1995, 31). The pragmatic calculation of the leftists in supporting Khomeini against the liberals during the critical moments helped the inflammation of the conflict among respective factions. The outcome was the seclusion of pro-democratic forces, and later oppression of leftists from the political scene by Islamic Republican Party and Khomeini.

The anti-Western ideology became the reason for the cooperation of leftists with Islamists. For example, Mottale discusses that after the collapse of the Shah's regime, the

concern for purges and removal of older regime's elite became first agenda. After purges, IRP started to isolate the liberal nationalists. In this process the cooperation of leftists, Marxists, Communists, and Islamic Marxists (*Mojahedin*) with the radical Islamists played crucial role in attacking the liberal nationalists by labeling them as pro-Westerners (Mottale 1995, 31). The split among left occurred after the resignation of Bazargan's government, and subsequent push for the doctrine of *velayat-faghigh* (vice-agency of jurist). Thus, *Mojahedin* branch of leftists expressed disagreements and opposed the Islamists (Ansari 2003, 229). Following the attacks on elites, bombings, and demonstrations carried out by *Mojahedin*, IRP with the leadership of Khomeini started to execute *Mojahedin*, and later other communist forces (Mottalle 1995, 33-34).

The liberals' lack of popular support, weak organizational power, and the shortage of resources, did not benefit them. Similarly, leftists also did not have rural and urban mass support, and thus, could not present serious treats. In contrast, the fundamentalist party (IRP) could keep the population mobilized through its network of bazaar and mosques, along with the power of clergy in popular organizations (Bashiriye 1984, 126-129).

Therefore, the argument can be made that the coalition of leftists with Islamists was beneficial solely for Islamists. In other words, the Islamists were not in need of leftists' support to put their political and ideological agenda forward. However, the fact that leftists sided with the Islamists left the liberals isolated and alone in the political game. Consequently, the liberals were unable to manage the disorder, and resigned from the power. Following their resignation, the democratically inclined faction of elite who

had succeeded to gain Khomeini's support and enter the provisional government was defeated. The liberals lost their political power in decision-making process and IRP exclusively used the support of Khomeini to consolidate its control.

## **Conclusion**

The comparison of transition phase in Iran and Portugal allows for the examination of theories of transition. In confirming the actor-centric approaches in explaining the transition, the study illustrates how the specific decisions of actors are endogenous to the political outcomes. The crafting of constitution and institutions is the outcome of the elite divisions, alliances, their installations with the society and their capacity to mobilize. Once the transition terminates, the established institutions and crafted constitution become frameworks for the operation of newly formed regime. The cases under study well illustrate the process through which the actors build the new political system. The elite alliances during the uncertain period of popular mobilization and political chaos have been identified as the most important elements shaping the course of transitions.

In Portugal the MFA and civilian elite unable to manage the situation agreed on power sharing. The result was the creation of ill-defined institutions where both MFA and parliament/president could exercise power. The compromise they made was considered a positive step to limit the absolute exercise of power by the MFA. In the following years, the character of the elite in the office, like Eanes, and their willingness to democratize the

system allowed for the reformation of the constitution leading to the consolidation of democracy in Portugal.

Similarly in Iran, the political and civilian elite directed Iran to authoritarianism. The alliance of leftists with radical Islamists for ideological reasons isolated the liberals. With liberals having been marginalized, the Islamists who could gain political leverage by the support of the charismatic leader, Khomeini, managed to persecute leftists pushing them outside of the political game. The outcome was the ability of Islamists to maneuver over the Hostage Crisis and the Iran-Iraq war and build a system with undemocratic features.

Despite the fact that during the transition phase both countries had ill-defined institutions, in Portugal the absence of a charismatic leader forced the elite to operate within the constitutional framework. In Iran the constitution was crafted and the government was formed. However, the charismatic leader, Khomeini, could exercise extensive power bypassing the institutions. In the case of Portugal, the operation within the legal framework and respect for the vote of the population helped the elite to reform the constitution. In Iran, Khomeini became the major decision maker bypassing the legal mode of the decision-making.

The course of events in Iran helped the elite in support of Khomeini to impose their political ideology. The Hostage Crisis and the Iran-Iraq war provided the IRP with excuses to rationalize Islamic ideology and isolate their opponents. Playing on the rhetoric of nationalism and anti-imperialism, the Islamist elite took the best advantage of radical mobilized public and helped the establishment of parallel institutions and the

formation of a dual state. During the transition phase, these parallel institutions hindered the efficient performance of the government. Having the support of the Khomeini and Islamists, those revolutionary institutions legitimized their own performance. Following the death of Khomeini and termination of the transition they turned to the assets of revolutionaries to enforce and maintain the Islamist political agenda.

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