

Iran

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Iran is considered authoritarian from 1920 through 1945. We lack Geddes authoritarian regime type coding from 1920 until 1945. According to Morby, Iran was ruled by the Qajar dynasty from 1795-1925 (Morby 2002). The country should be considered a monarchy under the Qajar dynasty. Ahmad (also known by: Soltan Ahmad Qajar) ruled the country during this period.

However, since the effective control under the Qajar dynasty ended in 1921 when Reza Khan took power, we code the country as being monarchy until 1920 and a few years of no regime until 1925 when the Pahlavi dynasty was established. We code monarchy again starting in 1925.

The US Dept of State states that in 1921 “Reza Khan, an Iranian officer of the Persian Cossack Brigade, seized control of the government. In 1925, after finally ousting the Qajar dynasty, he declared himself Shah and established the Pahlavi dynasty.” We code SOLS change on Feb 21, 1921 when Raza Khan came to power (although Archigos codes Reza Khan as a leader starting in 1922, it seems an error). His SOLS might be considered as military until 1925, and then the Pahlavi dynasty. In 1941 Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, also of the Pahlavi dynasty, succeeded his father as shah. This is not a SOLS change.

Iran is coded as a monarchy from 1945 until 1979 ruled by Mohammad Reza of the Pahlavi dynasty (Morby 2002). According to Archigos, there is an interruption if Reza’s rule from 1951 to 1953 when Mossadegh, the PM (National Front – NF), is considered the effective ruler by Archigos. Given that we follow Archigos coding of effective ruler and given that Mossadegh was not member of the Pahlavi dynasty or the Shah’s pre-designated successor, we code a SOLS change for 1951 when Mossadegh assumed power and 1953 when the Shah resumes his rule. Note that we follow Archigos instead of Geddes and code the Mossadegh interlude a break of the Pahlavi regime. This is an exception to our rules based on the fact that we believe that Mossadegh was really in power and that Geddes is coding the Shah’s rule as a monarchy, not Mossadegh’s.

In 1979, the Islamic Revolution brings Khomeini to power as Supreme Leader. This is a SOLS change since Khomeini is supported by Shia’ clerics rather than any dynasty. The country is considered an “other” authoritarian regime from 1979 through 2008, which means that it did not fit into one of the main regime types Geddes coded. Iran is a tricky case to code. Based on the rules as stated in the codebook, we should apply the pre-designated successor rule. However, it is also the case that even if a leader is not a pre-designated successor, he is still fundamentally responsible to the same group of Shia’ clerics. For consistency with the coding rules, we follow the pre-designated successor rule.

When Khomeini died in 1989, his successor was Khamenei, who was chosen to be the new Supreme Leader by the Assembly of Experts. Later that year, after a constitutional change in Iran, Archigos codes the President, Rafsanjani, as leader.

Khamenei was a somewhat unusual choice for Supreme Leader because he did not possess the religious authority of Khomeini and, in fact, only became an ayatollah shortly before the latter’s death (Sciolino 2000, p.86). According to Sciolino (2000), Khamenei had been a confidant of Khomeini’s since the days of the revolution and he had held high positions in the regime (p.85). He was President under Khomeini between 1981-1989. Arjomand (2009) points out that when Khamenei became supreme leader, he received all of Khomeini’s titles, minus the title of Imam. “This appears to have been in accordance with Khomeini’s wish (Arjomand 2009,

p.36).” Khomeini originally had pre-designated another cleric, Montazeri, as his successor, but in late March 1989, on his sick bed, decided otherwise. Khomeini met with Khamenei and the Vice President of the Assembly of Leadership experts and, during that meeting, “pointed to [Khamenei] as his successor (Arjomand 2009, p.36)”. The Constitution actually foresaw a three-men leadership council, but the clerics voted in favor of just appointing Khamenei.

“Constitutionality is not a mark of revolution, and the spirit of the move was probably to divide Khomeini’s power between his two closest lieutenants, one of whom, President Khamenei, was selected by the clerical Assembly as the Leader of the Islamic Republic; the other, Majles Speaker, Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, was duly elected as its President by popular vote on July 28, 1989. Dual leadership seemed quite appropriate for the emergent system of post-charismatic, collective clerical rule. Early on, the new President Hashemi-Rafsanjani, who was considered the more astute and competent of the two by many, appeared as the dominant party in the diarchy (p.37).” This suggests that neither the transition to Khamenei nor to Rafsanjani are SOLS changes. Both were pre-designated successors.

According to the U.S. Department of State, when the country became an Islamic republic the constitution was ratified to allow for the president to act as head of government. The Supreme Leader’s role, which Khamenei plays to this day, is head of state. Thus, the president who is elected by the people of Iran, according to Archigos, became the leader of the country beginning with Rafsanjani’s election in 1989, even though this leader is still ultimately answerable to the Assembly of Experts. Rafsanjani was reelected in 1993. Then, in 1997, Hojatolislam Mohammad Khatami, Non-Party, won elections to become president.

The relationship between Rafsanjani and Khatami is somewhat ambiguous. There is some indication that Rafsanjani may have supported Khatami, but Khatami was probably not a pre-designated successor in any strict sense. Rafsanjani has been called both a conservative and a pragmatist (Hauss and Haussman 2009, p. 382; Skelly 2010, p.169), while Khatami is consistently referred to as moderate/reformist. “Although a cleric himself, Khatami was widely known as a moderate (Hauss and Haussman 2009, p. 383).” Khatami was a member of the “Society of Militant Clerics, a reformist movement within the clergy (Mattair 2008, p.160).” He was Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance between 1982 and 1992. Then he was National Library until 1997, when he ran for the presidency. “Khatami ran for the presidency in 1997, advocating social and economic reforms, and was the surprise winner, receiving support from Rafsanjani, reform-minded clerics, the middle class, students, and women (Mattair 2008, p.160).” Brownlee (2007) discusses the relationship between Rafsanjani and Khatami in more detail: “As the end of Rafsanjani’s term approached, Iran faced a three-way fight between the traditionalist right of the SCC, the modernist right of the Executives of Reconstruction, and the Islamic left of the ACC. When members of the Executives failed to amend the constitution to enable Rafsanjani to serve a third consecutive four-year term (the limit was two consecutive terms), the group opted to support the Islamic left’s nominee for the position, former minister of culture and Islamic guidance, Seyyed Mohammed Khatami.” Khatami, one traditionalist and two others had been approved by the Guardian Council, which wanted to increase turnout in the elections as a sign of regime support and thought that the conservative candidate would easily win. When Khamenei realized that Khatami might win, he and his traditionalist group used “fraud and thuggery to halt Khatami’s advance (p.165).” When there were signs that the election would be rigged, Rafsanjani intervened. “In 1992, the president had supported the regime’s exclusion of ACC candidates and assured voters that the leftists had been lawfully disqualified; in 1997, by contrast, he protected the ACC’s standard-bearer and ensure that Khatami had a

genuine chance of victory (p.165).” This suggests that while Rafsanjani helped Khatami, the support was more indirect. Thus, Khatami was not Rafsanjani’s pre-designated successor and we code a SOLS change here. Khatami was re-elected in 2000 and got a lot of support especially from women and young people (Hausss and Hausssman 2009, p.383).

In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who ran for the post as part of the Abadgaran-e Iran-e Islami party, won elections to become president. According to Mattair (2008, p.163), Ahmadinejad “is considered a leading figure in a new generation of hard-liner followers of Ayatollah Khomeini.” He was a province governor until Khatami chose to replace him in 1997. He then became mayor of Tehran “by a new city council dominated by hardline members of Abadgaran, or the Association of Builders of Islamic Iran, an ultraconservative movement wanting to return Iran to the vision of Khomeini and shaped by the Iran-Iraq War (p.163).” In the 2005, presidential election he defeated other hardline candidates as well as the Rafsanjani. “The Basij, or Mobilization resistance force, a paramilitary force under the National Guards, worked actively to mobilize votes for him, especially in poor and rural areas of Iran, and conservative clerics in Iran’s mosques also did so (Mattair 2008, p.163).” “It is not clear whether Ahmadinejad has an independent base of supporters in the Revolutionary Guards or whether he depends on Khamenei and Mesbah-Yazdi for the support of the Revolutionary Guards (Mattair 2008, p.163).” Ahmadinejad certainly was not Khatami’s pre-designated successor, as the latter removed him from his office as governor, and the two had conflicting political orientations, with Khatami being a reformist and Ahmadinejad a conservative. This is a SOLS change.

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