[A REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE]

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Introduction

The Arab Spring has become synonym with the social upheavals in Northern Africa which begun during the spring of 2011. These popular revolutions culminated in regime changes in Tunisia and Egypt and, a civil war with a regime change in Libya. The people of the region rose up against dictators of whom the majority ruled their country for decades. The majority of these leaders were supported by Western leaders with the justification that these dictators would lead to a more or less stable region. Although several think tanks and other organizations already pointed towards the growing discontent in the region, the revolutions caught the Western world and its leaders off guard.

The beginning of the Arab Spring has been placed at two events; the suicide of Tunisian street vendor Mohammed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010 and the protests surrounding the Presidential election in Iran on June 12, 2009. A question that has intrigued many since is; what was the reason that such a large proportion of the population in these different nations arose against their dictators? Did this originate with the economic crisis? Or did this sudden emerge of unrest came from the rise of new ways of communication such as Twitter and Facebook? Comparing different nations such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Iran is problematic; e.g. the different form of Islam followed by the Iranians. Within this thesis the concentration is on Iran and its national events: the Islamic Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the public protests surrounding the Presidential election of 2009 are looked at. To try to understand these events the theory of Relative Deprivation by Ted Robert Gurr will be used.

Gurr publicized his dissertation in the 1970s, a period in which several post-colonial states were fighting for independence (Gurr, 2011, p1). The following question, comparable with today’s questions surrounding the Arab Spring, rose in Gurr’s mind; why did these people rebel? Since this question is again relevant today Gurr’s theory has received attention once more. Even more since the theory claims to provide the reader a clear cut picture why revolutions occur (Gurr, 1970, px). It provides the reader a stepping stone approach in order to reach a conclusion whether or not a revolution will occur in a nation. The leaders of the Western world did not realize what was happening in Iran and Northern Africa up until the last moment both today and during the Islamic Revolution of 1979. For example, the CIA undertook a study on Iran concluding that it was an “island of stability”, only sixteen months before the revolution of 1979 (Kuran, 1989, p44). The theory will be tested on the two Iranian case studies, where the first case
study led to a revolution and regime change the second to nearly a revolution. In addition the theory has been chosen because it has been an influential work in both political science and international relations (Gurr, 2011, p1). Even though it has been influential it has also received many critiques (Brush, 1996, p524). The critiques predominantly concentrate on the basic mechanism behind the theory and the difference between the individual and the collective level. Gurr’s work has also been called the theory of Relative Deprivation (RD), which is the essence of his dissertation (Brush, 1996, p523). This will be further elaborated on in the first chapter.

A sudden change in 1979 led to a completely different Iran, from a Western looking Iran towards an inward looking religious Iran. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi took over the reign of sovereign in Iran from his father Shah Reza Pahlavi on 16 September 1941 (Polk, 2009, p110). The Pahlavi’s became the sole rulers over the Iranian territory after the Second World War, although the United States did remain an important factor within the Pahlavi regime. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi undertook a reform programme in order to westernize Iran and its people, the White Revolution (Moshiri, 1991, p121). With this programme the shah received opposition from the middle class exemplified in the bazar merchants and the local religious leaders (Moshiri, 1991, p133). In a reaction to the policies of the Shah, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini rose in opposition against the Shah. Khomeini came with his own aims in opposing the Shah but he was able to combine the different opposition factions, and became the leader of the opposition. Even though he was not publicly known before 1978 he was seen as the one who could represent the different factions which divided the opposition (Taheri, 2009, p105). Eventually Khomeini took power after returning in Tehran on February 1 1979, afterwards he quickly based his policies on religion. Khomeini based his policies on a branch of Shia Islam known as Twelver Islam (Taheri, 2009, p21). As a consequence of his concentration on religion he lost the support of the other factions fighting against the regime of the Shah. This led to a government which had a group of fierce opposition and dedicated supporters.

Thirty years after the Iranian revolution of 1979, there was once more large societal unrest in Iran (Polk, 2009, p125). In 2009 the opposition saw in one of the presidential election candidates, Mir Hossein Mousavi, the reformer they thought the country needed (Jahanbegloo, 2011, p127). Immediately after the 2009 Iranian Presidential election, which led to a landslide victory for President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, rumors rose about possible election fraud. Even though, until today there is no hard evidence of fraud but there is data that suggest that the
elections were fraudulent (Ansari, 2010, p350). The potential election fraud led to protests in which millions participated. Even though these protesters were nonviolent due to aggression from the Iranian regime several victims fell among the protesters (Alavi, 2010, p256). Mousavi became the leader of the Green Movement as the entire protest movement became known. As the leader he swiftly announced the strictly nonviolent nature of the Green Movement (Mousavi, 2010, p334). Although it was a widespread movement, leading to millions of protesters in only a matter of days, it did not lead to a removal of the Ahmadinejad government (Jahanbegloo, 2011, p131).

Within this paper the claim of Relative Deprivation and Gurr will be tested on the revolution in Iran in 1979 and why a revolution did not came about in 2009. Therefore the research question is: To what extent can Relative Deprivation explain the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the public unrest in Iran after the elections in 2009? The research question will be given by answering three sub questions. In chapter one RD, the theoretical framework, will be elaborated on. Within this chapter RD is looked at based on the original theory of Gurr as published in 1974 in *why men rebel*. Specifically what the different determinants mean within a revolution situation. The second chapter will deal with what the significant factors of the 1979 revolution were, through the lens of RD. Particularly the influence of the bazaar merchants, local religious leaders, and Ayatollah Khomeini on the revolution is looked into. The third chapter will deal with the second case study and will try to answer what has happened before, during, and after the protests surrounding the Presidential elections of 2009. Specifically the influence of social media and the influence of Mousavi is looked at. Within the second and third chapter the link is made with RD and its possible explanatory value for these case studies. The last section will provide the main and general conclusion of the comparative analysis made in this thesis.

From the theory the societal level is looked at, leaving aside the psychological individual level. Even though this will result in an incomplete look at RD this will probably lead to an answer which will have more explanatory value than when the psychological level is also taken into account. The answer will have more explanatory value because it aims to achieve a higher level of abstraction. When this higher level of abstraction is reached an answer might be found which is applicable in a general setting. This strategy will contribute to a better understanding and application of RD in other cases.
Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Everyone feels frustrated at some point because of disappointments in their lives. From small things to big things this is a reality which people have to deal with on a daily basis. One of the usual responses to these feelings is adjusting to the new situation and thereby internalizing the frustration. The so-called frustration-aggression mechanism takes a different stance. A group of Yale psychologists developed the frustration-aggression mechanism at the end of the 1930s. They claimed that aggression is always a consequence of frustration (Dollard et al., 1939, p1). The theory of Relative Deprivation took it one step further, Gurr claims that any form of frustration will always lead to a form of aggression (1970, p33). Although this does not necessarily mean that the aggressive response is a violent one, it is one in a range of multiple possibilities. Although it is said that if men are frustrated severely for a long period of time they have a natural tendency to strike out at the source of the frustration (Gurr, 1970, p23). Within this thesis RD will be tested, due to the nature of the theory it is used as a method to perform research instead of a theory, as Gurr intended it. Even though Gurr makes some normative claims, overall he tries to give a formula whereby the aim is to provide an explanation for why men rebel (Gurr, 1970, px).

Within this section definitions are given of terms used within the thesis. The local ulama are local religious leaders such as imams who work in close cooperation with the bazaaris. These are the people or merchants who make up the Iranian bazar; bazaaris, petty bourgeoisie, and the traditional middle class. A definition given by Parsa of the bazaaris: “Bazaaris [is] a term referring to merchants, shopkeepers, and artisans …. [They] represent mostly medium and small-sized capital” (Parsa, 1995, p811). The bazaars which are located in the center of the older parts of cities in Iran are a place of commerce and trade. The bazaar entails the cities souks, serails, and boutigues (Mozaffari, 1991, p378). Furthermore, it is a place of gathering information and sociability (Ashraf, 1988, p539). The White Revolution had a big influence on the bazaaris and played a significant part in the 1979 revolution. It was a ruthless modernization campaign in order to westernize the traditional Iranian society and its citizens (Polk, 2009, p117). Ayatollah Khomeini’s political beliefs are influenced by the Shi’a branch of Islam, specifically Twelver Islam. This believes that the world is awaiting the imminent return of the twelfth imam, the Mahdi. When the Mahdi returns to earth Khomeini and his followers believe that Sunni Muslims
and the infidels will be annihilated (Taheri, 2009, p21). The Green Movement has become known as the organization of the opposition during and after the Presidential election of 2009.

Furthermore, RD is defined as: “a perceived discrepancy between men’s value expectations and their value capabilities” (Gurr, 1970, p13). The existence of feelings of RD is a precondition before a revolution could occur as a result of the three primary variables to be found in figure 1. Within the definition of RD there are four elements which need to be explained: Values, value expectation, value capabilities, and perceived discrepancy. Values are defined as: “[values] are the desired events, objects, and conditions for which men strive” (Gurr, 1970, p24). There are three sorts of values; welfare, power, and interpersonal values (Gurr, 1970, p25). Welfare values are values which predominantly contribute to physical well-being such as shelter, food, clothing, and education (Gurr, 1970, p25). These values are all economic in nature. Power values are values that give people or institutions the ability to influence others and avoid unwanted interference by others. Examples are the ability to participate in collective decision making such as voting in elections either passively or actively (Gurr, 1970, p25). Interpersonal values are values which people seek for in interactions with others in order to satisfy psychological needs. For example the search for status, recognition, and companionship (Gurr, 1970, p26).

The second element in the RD definition is value expectations, for each of the three types of values everyone has certain expectations. These value expectations are decided upon at the group level with reference to another group, ‘the reference group’. Based on the ‘reference group’ the own group decides upon its own level of expected value. The ‘reference group’ is perceived to be at the same level as the own group. Even though that the ‘reference group’ is generally on a somewhat higher level. Therefore the choice of ‘reference group’ can influence the level of deprivation (Gurr, 1970, p105). The feeling can exist that a group should be on a certain value level. This is not reached because this level is decided upon based on the ‘reference group’, who are on a somewhat higher level.

The third element are value capabilities, the level of value someone feels capable of. This feeling of value capability is influenced by the perception of someone of their general capabilities (Gurr, 1970, p154). Value capabilities are distinguished from value expectations because everyone has a different look on its own capabilities. The fourth element in the definition of RD is perceived discrepancy. As the previous example shows whenever people feel
that their expectations and their capabilities do not meet due to an external factor they feel relatively deprived. Furthermore, this perceived discrepancy can either arise due to wrong or incomplete information or it is true discrepancy. For the relative deprivation feeling this difference is not of significant importance. Perceived discrepancy is the element which combines all the other elements; values, value expectation, and value capabilities.

The RD theory will be further looked into by using several figures from the *why men rebel*. Figure 1 which can be found below presents the entire RD theory in a single figure.

![RD Theory Diagram](image)

**Figure 1, (Gurr, 1970, p320).**

When feelings of RD are existent the figure continues with the primary variables until a potential violent political revolution. The figure is divided into three primary variables being; potential for collective violence, potential for political violence, and magnitude of political violence. These three primary variables will be explained with the use of the secondary societal variable. Each of the primary variables is dealt with separately by using a figure from the *why men rebel* publication. Each of these figures depict the societal secondary variables with its corresponding determinants of the primary variable.

During this chapter the first links with the case studies are made. Even though, this is done more elaborately within the second and third chapter. Political violence is seen as all collective attacks against objects or agents of the political regime (Gurr, 1970, p4). Political
violence is divided up into three separate forms of violence; turmoil, conspiracy, and internal war (Gurr, 1970, p11). These three different forms are only used at the beginning of Gurr’s dissertation. With regards to popular revolution the final stage within why men rebel is always a violent regime change. Therefore in the current research the difference between the three forms of political violence is of less importance and political violence is taken as a whole. With this final stage in mind the case studies will be looked at.

§1.1 Potential for Collective Violence
Figure 2 visualizes how the first primary variable, potential for collective violence, is influenced by its four societal determinants.

Figure 2, (Gurr, 1970, p325).
Firstly, the influence on the potential for collective violence by the ‘number of group value opportunities’. When there are sufficient possibilities to fulfill a group’s potential the chance that feelings of deprivation come about is minor. Particularly when this is also the case for the group someone feels related too. Whenever the number of opportunities to be able to fulfill this potential are not sufficient a reform programme could help. This could lead to a declining level of discontent although when the reforms are not carried out successfully it could, in the long run, lead to greater discontent (Gurr, 1970, p74). This reform programme could concentrate on either one of the three values or on all of them simultaneously.

The second societal influence on collective violence is: ‘flexibility of value stocks’. Value stocks are the amount of possibilities existent in a society which enables people to fulfill their value potential (Gurr, 1970, p123). These potentials are predominantly concentrated on
economic values such as work opportunities. An example of interpersonal values is respect for other religions. Gurr makes a distinction between societies where value stocks are fixed, zero-sum, or flexible (1970, p123). When value stocks are fixed, the number of opportunities existent in a country does not change. Therefore the chances for someone to change their position in life are slim. Whenever value stocks are characterized as zero-sum this implies that whenever someone changes their position in life this leads to a consequent change in position for another person. A change for the better will lead to a change for the worse for someone else, and vice versa. A flexible amount of value stock leads to a nation where new possibilities constantly emerge and go away without negatively influencing others. Hence actors and groups can change their position and reach a higher value position. Therefore, a flexible amount of value stock declines the potential for political violence (Gurr, 1970, p125). The feeling that someone cannot alter his value position in society because of a lack of possibilities, and the consequent feeling of deprivation, is therefore unlikely.

Now the two other societal determinants of the potential for political violence as shown in figure 2 are looked into; firstly the ‘rate of change in group value position’. The feeling of deprivation originates with a comparison to others who, in the eyes of the group, have a better position than their own group (Gurr, 1970, p52). Value positions are the level of actual achieved value compared to the value position which the group feels entitled too (Gurr, 1970, p27). Looked at from a collective perspective, the rate of change becomes important either positively or negatively influencing the potential for collective violence.

The second determinant, ‘differential increases in other groups value positions’, is somewhat related to the first societal determinant but is in Gurr’s theory seen as an additional element when assessing the potential for collective violence. When the group’s reference group value position augments expectation mounts that the value position of the own group will rise too. If after optimism about rising possibilities in the future the rise in value position does not occur there is a strong tendency to become violently opposed to the regime (Gurr, 1970, p122). The presumption that revolutions occur in periods of rising possibilities and prosperity comes from this assumption. This is the so-called J-curve developed by Davies (Gurr, 1970, p56). When the expected rise does not materialize for their group but it does for their reference group, the likelihood for collective violence grows with potential revolutionary consequences (Gurr, 1970, p106). Therefore this potential is a strong incentive to acts of political violence.
An example for a group who might be susceptible to collective violence is the high number of unemployed university educated youngsters in Iran. This group expect certain opportunities to fulfill their high potential, something that the government cannot provide at the moment (Monshipouri and Assareh, 2009, p6; Jahanpour, 1989, p150). This leads to a fixed set of value stock in their perception, since that they see no other option than to immigrate to fulfill their potential and to achieve their expected value position. Furthermore, because this group feels related to the relatively wealthy middle and higher class within Iran they feel left behind in their group value position. These sentiments could contribute to the potential to act violent as a collective in order to effect political change.

§1.2 Potential for Political Violence
To be able to assess whether the potential for collective violence in a society could lead to political violence the second primary variable of the model proposed in figure 3 is looked at; the potential for political violence has five influencing societal determinants.

Figure 3, (Gurr, 1970, p329).

The first determinant that is looked at is ‘the legitimacy of regime’, which is of significant importance to the potential of political violence. When a regime has a long and stable track record, as most democracies in Western Europe do, generally legitimacy of a nation is considered to be high. As a consequence the majority of citizens of a nation have a normative
inclination against violence towards the regime (Gurr, 1970, p187). Legitimacy of a regime can be strengthened if a government applies sanctions consistently, people know what to expect as a consequence of their acts (Gurr, 1970, p351). If a regime does not act consistently a consequence will be unexpected actions of the regime and that enlarges the likelihood of political violence. In addition, the legitimacy of a nation can be strengthened via other ways but Gurr concentrates purely on the connection of sanctions with legitimacy.

Legitimacy can be strengthened when the regime is able to lower existing feelings of deprivation. This is the element ‘regime effectiveness in alleviating RD’ in figure 3. When a regime implements a reform programme in order to solve feelings of deprivation, this could be concentrated on economic measures but it can also contain reforms for example in the area of public representation. If it does this successfully RD will diminish, the legitimacy of a regime will rise, and therefore the potential for political violence lowers (Gurr, 1970, p327).

‘Historical magnitude of political violence’, the next element, has a strong effect on the potential for political violence, if in a nation, or in bordering nations political violence has proven to be successful. The spill-over effect then applies. For example, if governments have been overthrown by violent revolutions the likelihood of more political violence in the nation strengthens. People anticipate new violence and expect it to be successful for the instigator, it changes their mind set. Consequently dissidents are more likely to turn to the use of violence rather than towards other ways of channeling their discontent. Dissidents know that by using violence their goals are more easily attainable (Gurr, 1970, p170). This also holds in nations where there is a nonviolent tradition. When the use of violence was successful normative inhibitions against violence could be temporarily set aside to reach the goal of political change (Gurr, 1970, p230).

Another determinant which can be used to assess the potential for political violence is: the ‘scope and density of aggressive symbols communicated’. Media plays an important role in whether or not people see political violence as a successful option in order to improve their value position (Gurr, 1970, p224). Through conveying a message where the use of political violence has been successful media can justify the use of political violence, particularly when this is done on a regular basis (Gurr, 1970, p230). In addition, media can communicate the demonstration effect. This means that if others see that a certain strategy has been effective it is more likely that they will use it too (Gurr, 1970, p226). The scope is important because it shows what the
possibilities are. Furthermore the density is of importance because it gives justifications for potential acts of political violence, for those who seek it.

The last element that plays an important role in the potential for political violence is: ‘the utilitarian and affective content of symbolic appeals for political violence’. This is somewhat linked to the previous two elements. One of the strongest justifications for violence is previous success of the use of violence, as the determinant has shown (Gurr, 1970, p218). If this is confirmed by symbolic appeals the utilitarian element of political violence is strengthened (Gurr, 1970, p13). People have seen that political violence can be successful in reaching a political goal and this feeling is strengthened by symbolic appeals in the media. The affective content of the message is important, as has been shown by the reactions on the death of Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi. A potent symbolic act led to a string of events which were not directly enticed by this act but it could be seen as the cue to it. The choices of the media and the way they portrait certain events can have a decisive impact, as seen from the example above.

Prior to the Iranian Islamic Revolution the regime was not able to control the high inflation rate in Iran (Mazaheri, 2006, p406; Skocpol, 1982, p269). Due to the rising price level and the inability of the regime to curb the inflation rate its legitimacy lowered. One of the tactics of the Shah was to blame the bazaaris for the inflation because of price profiteering (Mazaheri, 2006, p407; Skocpol, 1982, p272). In the state owned media the bazaaris were projected as profiteers at the expense of the people. In reaction to the alleged profiteering the Shah started an anti-profiteering campaign. Due to the violent and humiliating way this campaign was carried out the regime lost its support for this action (Mazaheri, 2006, p408). Combined with the ever rising inflation the regime was not successful in alleviating RD. Furthermore, this action together with the way the bazaaris were projected backfired on the regime because it led to a growing number of supporters of the bazaaris who were getting more opposed to the Shah and his policies (Mazaheri, 2006, p414). The potential for political violence was further strengthened because of the historical precedent popular revolutions has set. In the recent history of Iran multiple examples of successful public upheavals have occurred. This will be elaborated further on in the second chapter.
§1.3 Magnitude of Political Violence
Magnitude of violence is the third and last primary variable in figure 1 (page 7) from *why men rebel*. From figure 4 the bottom three societal determinants are first looked at.

**Figure 4, (Gurr, 1970, p333).**

First of all; ‘geographical concentration of dissidents in isolated areas’. Whenever dissidents have somewhat control over an area, they are better suitable to prepare for political violence (Gurr, 1970, p266). Furthermore, when this base area is an area where regime forces have limited access, for example mountainous terrain, the possibilities for the dissidents to strengthen themselves grows (Gurr, 1970, p265). A base area also facilitates easy access for those that want to join the insurgents, thereby strengthening their position.

This determinant has a positive influence on the next determinant: ‘Ratio of dissident to regime scope of organizational membership’. An important element which Gurr explains as whether or not the majority of the population supports either the regime or dissidents by actively participating in activities organized either by regime loyalists or dissidents (1970, p283). By participating in events organized by dissidents or regime loyalists people actively voice their support for either one of them. With regards to the magnitude of political violence the ratio between the regime loyalists and dissidents is important. If the majority of the population
supports the activities of the regime the likelihood of political violence decreases. If the majority of the population supports the activities of the dissidents the likelihood of political violence increases.

Somewhat linked to this is the next determinant which is also positively influenced by the geographical concentration of dissidents: ‘Ratio of dissidents to regime scope of surveillance’. When dissidents are successfully and consistently monitored by the regime this will lead to a lower likelihood of political violence (Gurr, 1970, p238). At the same time, when this is not done consistently it could lead to a diminished likelihood of political violence in the short run but a higher likelihood in the long run. Because unexpected acts of the regime strengthen inhibitions against the regime, as has been seen with regime legitimacy. The successful monitoring and deterring is equally important for regime loyalists who are monitored by dissidents (Gurr, 1970, p238). Although the dissidents are in a considerably worse position to do this effectively compared to the regime. The ratio is important once more. Whenever dissidents are more successfully monitored the likelihood of violence will be lower. When regime loyalists are successfully monitored the likelihood of violence will rise. So for both these elements it is important which faction has the upper hand with regards to the amount of support and the success of surveillance.

A long time before the Islamic revolution took place the bazaaris and ulama were geographically concentrated in the bazaar and its immediate surroundings. Even though this location was not an isolated area it gave them a platform for communication and organization. The dissidents’ support grew significantly after the campaign by the Shah against the alleged price profiteering of the bazaaris (Mazaheri, 2006, p414). Even though overwhelming support for the opposition forces came only after Ayatollah Khomeini managed to unite the dissidents into one opposition faction (Skocpol, 1982, p274; Moshiri, 1991, p127). By doing so he secured the support of a large group of citizens of Iran. At the same time it remains difficult to definitively say whether or not they had the support of the majority.

Now the top three determinants of figure 4 are looked at. First of all; ‘ratio of dissident to regime value stocks’. Value stocks are new possibilities in a society whereby people can climb up the social ladder (Gurr, 1970, p128). If the regime can make sure that the amount of value stock is flexible, the likelihood of political violence diminishes due to less feelings of deprivation (Gurr, 1970, p128). The same holds for dissidents; whenever they can provide (or claim to be
able) a larger and more flexible value stock there will be more support for their cause (Gurr, 1970, p298). As before the ratio is decisive for the influence on the likelihood of political violence. If the ratio is beneficial for the dissidents political violence will become more likely. If the ratio is beneficial for the regime political violence becomes less likely.

The ratio is also important with regards to ‘dissident and regime loyalties of regime forces’ which is the next determinant. The loyalty of regime forces could become a decisive influence in a conflict (Gurr, 1970, p271). If the elite of the forces are loyal to the regime the regime will most likely win in a violent confrontation due to its stronger military position. If the elite of the forces defect and start to support the dissidents this could lead to a decisive turn in the conflict whereby the dissidents could gain the upper hand. For the conflict it is less important if military personnel would defect from the regime but remain neutral in the conflict (Gurr, 1970, p271). If the military begin to support the dissidents the balance of coercion can drastically shift contributing to the likelihood of political violence (Gurr, 1970, p271).

The last determinant is ‘scope of channels for protest of regime organizations’. There is evidence that if there are more possibilities to channel discontent the incentive to join violent dissidents lowers dramatically (Gurr, 1970, p306). As with other elements the predictability is important. When actions of regimes are predictable its legitimacy grows, the same holds for this determinant (Gurr, 1970, p57). When possibilities to protests are given based on false pretexts eventually discontent and deprivation will strengthen and the likelihood of violence will rise. By doing so the regime thus contributes to a higher likelihood of political violence. If there are multiple ways to channel discontent the likelihood of violence diminishes. Therefore, violent revolutions practically never happen in democracies. Discontented in these societies have namely ample ways to circumvent their discontent (May, 1943, p191).

After the elections of 2009 the opposition was loosely organized into the Green Movement. Because this was a new organization it had not yet reached a high organizational level (Acuff, 2010, p225). Furthermore, it also did not have a clear view on how Iran would be ruled by the opposition forces (Mousavi, 2010, p343). Therefore even though the opposition received a great deal of support it remains to be seen whether the Green Movement can deliver what their supports crave for. During the protests it was clear that the loyalties of the regime where with the regime. The regime forces violently cracked down on the protesters even leading to casualties among them (Acuff, 2010, p228). The way the regime handled these nonviolent
calls for more transparency of the election showed that there is no room for public dissatisfaction.

§1.4 Critique
The theory of Relative Deprivation has received a significant amount of criticism. These critiques are all more or less related to the position of theory within international relations theory and the social sciences in general. One of the biggest critiques on RD is that there is little empirical evidence that RD is able to predict why men rebel, it seems that it has only worked in retrospect (Tilly, 1971, p419). This was also acknowledged by Gurr in the revised preface following the 40th anniversary edition of why men rebel. Here he states that he got carried away in his youthful enthusiasm claiming that he had the answer to the question which later became the title of his dissertation (Gurr, 2011, p1). Although this is considered as a serious flaw it remains questionable how this critique should be dealt with and whether it is relevant for the broadening of knowledge of IR theory in general.

Stephen G. Brush, Professor at the University of Maryland U.S.A., undertook a meta-analysis of all the research on RD. He pointed towards a potential essential critique on IR and the social sciences. Within the social sciences the tendency is to look at theories being either right or wrong. In the natural sciences this is done from a different perspective, something is true until proven otherwise. Therefore Brush claims that, the social sciences judge theories to harsh (1996, p538). Because the social sciences and IR are contemplating on matters which are often not possible to measure therefore, the topics researched are in majority not quantifiable. Would this be achieved RD would be looked at from a completely different perspective. Therefore following Brush’s argument, RD must not be looked at as a definitive theory, formula or answer to the question why men rebel. It must be seen as the start of an answer to why popular revolutions occur. This answer, in its current state, needs considerable alterations and further research. That being said, there are elements of RD which are questionable. For example RD does not explain how the individual deprived person becomes part of collective action.

The so-called individual/collective gap is amongst the most prominent critiques on RD. RD explains how individual feelings of deprivation eventually might lead to violent popular revolutions, but RD fails to explain how these individual feelings of deprivation are turned into collective forms of action (Brush, 1996, p535). It is assumed that a leader is needed to be able to
turn the feelings of relative deprivation into collective action. According to Tilly the concentration on deprivation completely is superfluous since there will always be discontented people in a society (1971, p418). Therefore, once more, the concentration should be on how these feelings are turned into collective action, because collective action is not the logic consequence of deprivation. Furthermore, the critique on this way of doing research, where the collective is deduced from the individual, has received numerous general criticisms. These critics do not follow the so-called reductionism and claim that this gap can never be explained using the individual level of analysis. The step to collective action would always be considered a part of factors specific to a society (Skocpol, 1976, p177).

A second critique directed at the base of RD is the contention of Gurr that the determinants are quantifiable and therefore testable. This is not possible because the determinants used could not always be translated in absolute numbers. Laqueur stated that it is impossible to objectively measure the determinants that make up RD (1977, p10). This comes back to the earlier concentration on the standards of the social sciences with regards to theory. Gurr claimed that his elements could be measured objectively and empirical evidence eventually showed that this is not the case. A third critique, following from the previous, are the used definitions for the determinants (Kraminick, 1972, p55). These are indirect and are hard to use, therefore it is difficult to work with them. Furthermore this does not contribute to the possibility of measuring the determinants.

A fourth point of critique is on the use of the frustration aggression mechanism which is at the beginning of RD. It is stated that any form of frustration will lead to a form of aggressive response (Gurr, 1970, p33). A common response to this frustration aggression mechanism is that there are millions of people living in a disadvantaged position, of whom the majority probably feels frustrated, but who do not commit acts of political violence (Victoroff, 2005, p19). RD remains a difficult concept to work with. From how the social sciences and IR look at social phenomena in general to the operationalization of the determinants in research on revolutions and RD. Without discarding these essential critiques it should not lead away from the answer on the question why popular revolutions occur.

On the whole RD remains a debatable concept, with this in mind the case studies are looked at. Taken into account the critiques RD can still be of merit with regards to the two case studies. Because it is a step towards the answer why there was a regime change in 1979 and
why there was not one in 2009. By doing this research the possible first step towards the answer can be made. Even though, more research is probably needed. For the first case study on the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979 academic literature is widely available. With regards to the public unrest in 2009, because it is a recent event there is less academic literature available. To be able to overcome this a wide variety of different sources are used. Sources that find themselves close to the opposition, sources that have assessed the situation academically, and newspaper articles from Iranian based journalists are used. By doing so it is tried to overcome the shortcomings, such as the difficulty to measure the determinants, which RD has. At the same time because of the empirical nature of the theory it remains interesting to project RD on these two very different and similar cases.
Chapter 2: The Islamic Iranian Revolution of 1979

The Iranian society has been subject to a great number of civilian unrests. Within the organization of these unrests the bazaar and its merchants have played an influential role. As recent as in October 2012 Tehran saw protest by black market money changers of the bazaar which led to the deployment of riot police by the government. In support of these black market money changers a mixed group of other bazaaris decided to close down their shops. The tactic of closing down shops has been used successfully in previous unrests and proven to be a powerful mechanism (Mozaffari, 1991, p382). Due to international sanctions and mismanagement of the economy by government, the national currency ‘the rial’ has dropped significantly in value. As a consequence citizens wanted to change the unstable rial to the more stable dollar thereby providing much work and profit for the black market money changers which the regime was opposed to. When the government decided to close down and remove their part of the bazaar, they started protesting which ended violently with the use of the riot police (Erdbrink, 2012).

Within this chapter an answer will be given to the first sub question: What were the significant factors in the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979? Based on this an answer will be given whether or not RD can explain the revolution.

The bazaar has been, and still is, a focal point in the lives of ordinary citizens in Iranian cities. The bazaar and its merchants are seen as a group with strong cohesion and is therefore also seen as a group and location where norms are developed. The Iranian society did not had other groups which had a similar level of cohesion and influence on the society as the bazaaris did prior to the revolution of 1979 (Mozaffari, 1991, p378). The society the bazaaris stand for is a society based on Shi’a Islam, Shi’a law, and Shi’a customs, these norms are greatly enhanced by the physical proximity of the majority of Grand Mosques and Grand Bazaars. These two are most often positioned either next to each other or are part of each other (Ashraf, 1988, p542). The bazaaris had strong links with local religious leaders due to the norms and society they represent and the financial relation they had with the local ulama.

The Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979 has become a synonym with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini was exiled from Iran in 1964 which eventually led him to Paris, where he orchestrated the Islamic Revolution (Takeyh, 2009, p15). Even though he was relatively unknown by the people he quickly became the undisputed leader of the entire opposition against the Shah (Taheri, 2009, p105). His political beliefs were influenced by the Shi’a branch of Islam,
specifically Twelver Islam. But Shi’a Islam has no clear political agenda and therefore the political agenda of Khomeini is also known as; Khomeinism, which will be more elaborated on in the third paragraph of the chapter (Asgharzadeh, 2010; Skocpol, 1982, p273).

§2.1 Iran’s history of protests
Part of the public unrests in Iran has always been an outside nation which had a decisive influence on the unrest. What follows is a short history of major public unrest which is relevant to the case studies. In 1906 Iran was led by a new Shah, Mozaffar-ad-Din Shah, who was severely ill and needed funds for medical treatment in Europe, since the Iranians could not provide him with the necessary treatments. The Shah appointed Russian national Joseph Naus at the head of the custom revenue Naus quickly became influential in the entire Iranian government (Polk, 2009, p87). This influence eventually led to a loan, on unfavorable terms, from the Russian government for the Shah’s treatments. The bazaaris, ulama, intelligentsia, and members of the traditional class felt that their country was being sold to another nation. Therefore, they joined forces and demanded amongst other things a house of representatives after general elections (Polk, 2009, p89). These protests, which came to be known as the constitutional revolution, eventually led to elections in October 1906 and the installment of the first House of Representatives (majles) in Iran in October 1906 (Polk, 2009, p92).

From July 19 until July 21, 1952 new demonstrations by the bazaaris, ulama, and students broke out after the resignation of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq on July 18, 1952 (Ashraf, 1988, p548). The resignation was a response to a power struggle between Mossadeq and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Shah. Mossadeq wanted to nationalize the Iranian oil industry, which was being controlled by the British. Reza Shah was opposed to the nationalization due to pressure from other nations. Following the protests Mossadeq was reinstalled as prime minister where he succeeded to nationalize the oil industry in order to obtain revenue for the nations dwindling economy. The British, who needed revenue after the end of the Second World War, staged a coup d’état together with the American CIA in order to reinstate Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi as the sole monarch and to denationalize the oil industry. This succeeded and the warm relationship between the United States and the Shah was made (Polk, 2009, p113).
The success of the earlier public unrests gave the coalition of bazaaris and ulama the confidence to protest again in 1963 and with success (Ashraf, 1988, p545). After the coup d’état by the British and the Americans the Shah had lost face because he was projected as a lackey of the US (Moshiri, 1991, p119). The White Revolution led to a new wave of protests in 1963 organized by the bazaaris, the ulama, and activist university students. Especially the ulama and bazaaris were against the rapid and forced westernization of Iran (Mozaffari, 1991, p388). This was the first instance that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini publicly came to the fore. Khomeini proclaimed a *fatwa* (a religious ruling) on the national referendum of January 26, 1963 (Ashraf, 1988, p555). The referendum dealt with a section of the reforms made under the flag of the White Revolution. By declaring a *fatwa* on it Khomeini made public his support of the bazaaris and the local ulama. Significantly, the influence of a small segment of militant ulama began to rise at the cost of influence by the bazaaris who became less important in the organization of protests (Ashraf, 1988, p561). Therefore, the main consequence of the 1963 riots was the fast growing influence of Ayatollah Khomeini and the further strengthening of the ulama in the protests against the Shah. It has been concluded by several authors that the organization of these riots prove a remarkable similarity to the protests and riots eventually leading up to the Islamic Revolution in 1979 (Polk, 2009, p120; Ashraf, 1988, p550).

As can be seen from this short history of civil unrest in Iran is that it is a nation which saw its fair share of public unrest. A major influence within all these events are foreign powers within national politics in Iran. The constitutional revolution protests were greatly influenced by Russian Joseph Naus. The riots after the resignation of Mossadeq were influenced by the British and the Americans. Furthermore, the riots surrounding the referendum on the White Revolution were also influenced by the United States. The wish not to be influenced by the US was also an influential factor in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Up to this day the influence or the fear of influence by foreign nations on national politics in Iran has been characteristic of the way national politicians do business. Another constant within civil unrest in Iran has been the influence of the bazaaris. This will be dealt with in the next section of this paper.

§2.2 The Bazaaris, the Ulama and the 1979 Islamic Revolution

The bazaar has a strict hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy are the big merchants (*tujjar*). The middle level consists of the headmen and the masters of artisans and shopkeepers of more than
100 guild-like associations (*asnaf*). Below that are the apprentices and footboys even more marginal are the poor peddlers, dervishes, and beggars (Ashraf, 1988, p540). This hierarchy was important in the relations with the government. In general the higher ranking bazaaris were more favorable of the government and the lower ranking officials have been more critical of the government (Ashraf, 1988, p546).

The bazaaris have a warm relationship with the local ulama. Within Shi’a Islam the ulama are divided into two groups. The dependent ulama work directly or indirectly for the government in positions as; judges and provincial religious functionaries (Ashraf, 1988, p542). In contrast the independent ulama are comprised of local religious leaders whose influence is dependent on the level of knowledge and scholarship of Islamic law (Ashraf, 1988, p542). These ulama are further dependent on the bazaaris for the rise to one of the highest positions in the Shi’a hierocracy; source of emulation (Ashraf, 1988, p542). The independent ulama are financially not supported by the government they are financially dependent on the bazaaris. The relation between the bazaaris and the independent ulama was solidified in groups called *hey’ats*. These groups served the community with for example charity work. The only thing they asked for in return from the recipients of aid was religious loyalty (Ashraf, 1988, p543). Due to their recurrent penetration of society they possessed the capacity to mobilize and inform the masses. Within these organizations the interdependence is shown between the bazaaris and the ulama. Both these groups are dependent on each other with regard to their influence within the community. On their own they would not have been able to reach the level of influence what they have attained but because they did cooperate they had a sizeable influence on the community.

With the *hey’ats* and the general function of the bazaar as a place of sociability the bazaaris and ulama were in a position to provide information. By doing so they were able to make sure that the citizens were more liable for appeals for civilian unrest. This is of influence for the potential for political violence, the second primary variable of Gurr. Furthermore, this gave the bazaaris and ulama a chance to react on the state owned media.

The Shah had always had a difficult relation with the bazaaris, especially after his reinstallment in 1953 when the relation evolved for the worse. He was perceived to be a lackey of the West and with the White Revolution acted also in this manner according to the bazaaris (Moshiri, 1991, p119). The White Revolution stood in particular contrast with the society the
bazaaris and ulama’s stand for. A few years prior to the Islamic revolution Iran’s economy was dwindling due to overheating of the economy, because of oil billions and a high inflation rate (Mazaheri, 2006, p406; Skocpol, 1982, p269). The Shah’s reaction was that the inflation was due to rising prices by the bazaaris and he started a “Price Stabilization and Campaign against Profiteering” against the bazaaris (Mazaheri, 2006, p407; Skocpol, 1982, p272). Over thirty thousand inspectors were recruited in order to compare the prices in the bazaar to a government established price list. Whenever prices did not meet the shopkeeper was; fined, banned from their home town, or sentenced to jail, next to the closing down of their shop. Eventually around 250.000 fines were levied and 8.000 bazaaris were sentenced to jail (Mazaheri, 2006, p407). These actions were all conducted with brute forms of public humiliation and public violence. Shops were looted and destroyed and shopkeepers were publicly humiliated. Since that the income of the bazaaris was largely dependent on their reputation in the community public humiliations had a severe impact on their livelihood (Mazaheri, 2006, p408).

These violent actions more or less backfired on the Shah because of the brutal and violent execution of the campaign. In addition, the true causes of the inflation were not dealt with and therefore inflation remained high. The way the Shah dealt with the bazaaris, his disregard for the independent ulama, and other dissenters instilled fear in the minds of the population (Mazaheri, 2006, p404). The consequence of the campaign was that the bazaar had found a common denominator in the years to come; the hate for the shah. Furthermore, due to the way the shah acted in this campaign the people stated to support the bazaar and their further anti-shah campaign (Mazaheri, 2006, p414).

The unintended consequence of the campaign was the further cooperation between the bazaaris and ulama in their opposition to the Shah. Furthermore the campaign led to a growing support of the people of the bazaaris and ulama (Mazaheri, 2006, p414). This is an important part in the third primary variable, whether or not the dissidents have the support of a large section of the population can be of decisive influence on the eventual regime change (Gurr, 1970, p283). Therefore the White Revolution was an important episode in the process that eventually led to the revolution.

The bazaaris were directly represented in the first majles after the constitutional revolution of 1906. Around 35 percent of the deputies were representatives of the bazaaris and 29 percent represented the ulama (Ashraf, 1988, p563). Although the merchants and guild
masters had the right to vote in the 1906 election the masses of bazaaris did not have the right to vote (Ashraf, 1988, p541). The bazaaris were not represented from the second session of the majles onwards, although the ulama continued to be well represented. The influence of the bazaar obviously declined (Ashraf, 1988, p547; Skocpol, 1982, p278). The bazaaris had through their influence in society and the hey’ats together with the ulama a decisive influence on the Islamic revolution. As the price stabilization campaign has shown the support of people for the bazaaris grew. Furthermore, due to the way the Shah handled this campaign a growing fear of him emerged with the people. Together with the ulama the bazaaris had the power to mobilize masses in order to protest and fight the Shah and his policies. The growing influence of the ulama and diminished influence by the bazaaris in the majles is indicative of the politics in the years up to and after the Islamic revolution of 1979. As the protests grew stronger throughout the twentieth century the influence of the bazaaris declined and the influence of the ulama rose

§2.3 Khomeini and the 1979 Islamic Revolution
Several years prior to the revolution Ayatollah Khomeini became more influential, particularly within the Shi’a clergy, after becoming a lecturer in Qum at the religious school Madrasah-I Fayziyah-il. Here he combined theology with politics, something what was relatively new and progressive at the time in Qum (Takeyh, 2009, p13). After his exile from Iran he published a series of lectures that would become his blueprint for Islamic rule. He published Hukumat-I Islami (Islamic Government) where he wrote that the clergy must take over government from civil servants, this needs to be done because they are the most literate on the Koran. Since the Koran provides all the answers democracy was not needed to run a country, only knowledge of the Koran is needed (Taheri, 2009, p46). Therefore, the goal of all Muslims on earth should be Islamic rule (Milton-Edwards, 2010, p175; Takeyh, 2009, p16). Even though Khomeini had a sizeable group of dedicated followers, before the 1979 Islamic revolution the general public in Iran generally did not known who he was (Taheri, 2009, p105).

Khomeini managed to unite the diverse groups who were fighting, violent and nonviolent, against the Shah. By doing so he was able to become the leader for the liberals, leftist (Marxists), bazaaris, and ulama which were all the major groups who were opposing the Shah (Skocpol, 1982, p274; Moshiri, 1991, p127). Through his support group of followers within Iran his ideas were spread. Among these ideas was the potent thought that every form of rule will be
better than the Shah’s (Kuran, 1989, p65; Moshiri, 1991, p127). In addition, by concentrating in word and speech on their combined opposition against the Shah, instead of Khomeini’s aim to install Islamic rule in Iran, he was able to convince the diverse factions to form one opposition under his leadership (Taheri, 2009, p78).

An important actor in removing the Shah was the army and its support for either the opposition or the Shah. In addition, how the army would react would also have major impact on the general public and their level of support for the revolution. Khomeini and his followers were able to convince the people that the army was on their side (Kuran, 1989, p64). The military was addressed as brothers during demonstrations and flowers were draped upon them. By doing so, the army became more and more supportive of Khomeini and eventually had 5000 deserters a day (Moshiri, 1991, p129; Skocpol, 1982, p270). These tactics further contributed to the support and popularity of Khomeini in general. By acknowledging the importance of the support of the army Khomeini follows the determinant ‘ratio of dissident to regime loyalties of regime forces’, part of the third primary variable of RD. Furthermore this case study shows the importance of this determinant. Whenever the regime forces start to defect and begin to support the dissidents other supporters might be persuaded to publicly join the opposition to. Therefore, the support of the regime forces can shift an entire conflict.

Khomeini’s thoughts are influenced by Islam. He is a follower of Shi’a Islam and specifically Twelver Shi’a Islam, by doing so he in essence distances himself from the majority of Iranians (Taheri, 2009, p21). He distances himself from the non-religious Iranians but also the Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. The Sunni Muslims also fared not much better than the other groups within Iran. Iran always has been a nation with a diverse mixture of different ethnical minorities. He has tried, and succeeds to this day, to make sure that his version of Islam is the version that the Iranian government adheres too. Therefore, whenever someone wants to be in government or work for the government he has to publicly support the thoughts of Khomeini (Taheri, 2009, p27). Even today President Ahmadinejad appears to be convinced of the imminent return of the Mahdi, an important part of Twelver Islam. He has written letters to President Poetin, Merkel, and Bush urging them to attain knowledge in Islamic theology because he believes that the end of the capitalist system is upon us (Taheri, 2009, p7).

Part of the Khomeinist thought is the belief that democracy is not needed, it is even feared. Since that the Koran explains everything rule by the people (democracy) is not wanted,
rule by the most knowledgeable of the Koran is needed (Taheri, 2009, p46). Exemplified in one of Khomeini’s books *Hal Al-Masa’el* (Solution to Problems) were he addresses more than six thousands fatwas deemed to give answers for a great deal of questions of everyday life (Taheri, 2009, p79). In addition, the citizens of Iran and people in general are considered to be ignorant and unqualified and should therefore not be taken seriously (Akhavi, 1988, p416). Khomeini saw democracy as a threat to Iran and saw it as a trap set by the Christian west in order to influence Iran. Furthermore, since that all the answers can be found in the Koran democracy would be to cast grave doubt on Allah (Akhavi, 1988, p423; Taheri, 2009, p47).

Both the thought that democracy is not needed and Khomeini’s following of Twelver Islam does not contribute to his legitimacy. Particulary by making Twelver Islam central to the Iranian government he diminished the legitimacy of the regime because only a minor section of society follows this strand of Shi’a Islam (Taheri, 2009, p21). As has been seen the legitimacy of a regime influences the potential for political violence (Gurr, 1970, p329). Therefore the regime which took over after the revolution, led by Khomeini, appeared to have great support. Even though due to following of Twelver Islam in the end the regime only had a narrow base of support. This was of influence for the protests surrounding the Presidential election of 2009, the second case study.

Khomeini believed that there should be one supreme leader, if he is considered just and the most learned by the clergy (Milton-Edwards, 2010, p152). This leader has all control and could even temporarily decide to ignore the rules laid down in the Koran (Bayat, 2009, p49). Of course this position came to be held by Khomeini himself during his life, currently Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei occupies this position. This position appears to be based entirely on Shi’a Islam, but there is no hierarchy in Shi’a Islam. There is no highest authority within Shi’a Islam only differences in knowledge (Skocpol, 1982, p273). Since that there is no highest authority in Shi’a Islam it is also impossible to have one supreme political leader for a nation that is deeply influenced by Shi’a Islam (Taheri, 2009, p46; Akhavi, 1988, p413). In addition the view of a compassioned leader was brought in grave doubt by making it very clear that when someone did not support the opposition during the protests that there will be serious repercussions when the opposition will be in charge (Kuran, 1989, p65; Taheri, 2009, p33). As was seen when after the revolution Khomeini ordered the arrest and even killing of his previous allies. Both the republicans and the communists, which had fought together with Khomeini
against the Shah, were arrested or killed. In 1981 the leader of the Republican Party was found guilty for impeachable offenses and he fled the country. Consequently, their headquarters was attacked and many of its leaders were killed. In April 1983 the leaders of the communist (*Tudeh*) party were arrested (Akhavi, 1988, 419).

Khomeini has evolved from an unknown Ayatollah with the general public to the Supreme Leader of Iran in only a few years. With his cunning use of his followers to spread his message and his ability to accommodate the views of others in his public speeches he became the undisputed leader of the opposition. Although, as has been seen with the influence of the bazaaris and the local ulama on the revolution, Khomeini was not singlehandly responsible for the revolution. A revolution needs a leader but having a leader does not mean that a revolution will be inevitable. After the revolution the true nature of his ideas became visible to the general public and his previous allies. He claims that his thoughts on how to run the country are purely Islam. As has been shown that is hardly the case, therefore his thoughts on politics and how to run Iran are better known as Khomeinism. A totalitarian state ideology based on a marginal form of Islam which he made sure that will survive up to this day by his demand that any person in government follows Khomeinism.

§2.4 Relative Deprivation and the Islamic Revolution of 1979

During this section of the chapter the influence of the bazaaris and the ulama, combined with the influence of Khomeini on the revolution, will be used to answer whether Relative Deprivation can explain why the revolution of 1979 happened. The three primary variables and their corresponding societal determinants are explained in the first chapter and are being used to determine if RD could explain the Islamic Revolution. Within this paragraph the determinants that are not correspondent with the revolution are explained. The corresponding determinants can be found by linking the different determinants to the information provided in the case studies. By placing the focus on the not corresponding determinants the research question can be more clearly answered. This is because the hypothesis is that RD cannot entirely explain the events. The not corresponding determinants are separated into two groups those that clearly do not correspond and those that are debatable. For the debatable determinants some evidence has been found within the case study. Although they remain, to a greater or lesser extent, questionable and therefore these are positioned as debatable. In the first chapter a complete overview of all the
determinants separately and discussions of them can be found.

Two determinants, from two different primary elements, do not correspond with the events leading up to the revolution. Furthermore, another four determinants are debatable whether they are applicable in this case. The first determinant that does not correspond with the case study is ‘differential increases in other groups value positions’, which is part of the first primary variable. A small part of Iranian society benefited tremendously of the policies of the Shah. Particularly the immediate circle surrounding the Shah benefited through corruption and even alleged international drug trafficking by the Shah’s sister Ashraf (Moshiri, 1991, p125). But the majority of Iranian society suffered from the government’s economic mismanagement which led to a high inflation rate and therefore soaring prices (Jahanpour, 1989, p153; Moshiri, 1991, p133). This determinant states that whenever the reference group’s value position rises and the own group position does not, political violence is more likely. Since that in Iran the position of the majority of its people steadily deteriorated due to inflation there is no differential increase in other groups’ value position even though a small group profited greatly. Therefore this determinant of RD does not stroke with the 1979 revolution.

The second determinant which is not applicable to the case of the Iranian revolution is; ‘ratio of dissidents to regime scope of surveillance’, which is part of the third primary variable. The regime of the Shah was better equipped to be able to monitor its opponents. The Shah had Iran’s secret service, the SAVAK, which was so vast that it was responsible for a sizeable part of the nation’s budget (Moshiri, 1991, p125). The SAVAK was in charge of a large programme of monitoring dissidents within Iran. The opposition led by Khomeini was not capable of providing such an advanced level of organization to be able to deter loyalists of the regime. RD states that whenever the regime or dissidents have on balance more influence with the use of surveilling opponents and regime loyalists the magnitude of political violence grows. Since that in Iran the state was clearly more powerful in this respect the ratio is in favor of the regime. Therefore this determinant does not contribute to the likelihood of a revolution. These two determinants are the ones that obviously do not correspondent with the Iranian Revolution. The paragraph continues with the four dubious determinants.

Influencing the second primary variable is the determinant ‘scope and density of aggressive symbols communicated’. This was mostly influenced by the media which was completely in control by the Shah prior to the revolution. It has not been placed in the previous
section since the bazaaris and the ulama, next to the media, also had an influential position for conveying a message. The bazaar was used as a place of commercial activities but also as a place for information gathering (Ashraf, 1988, p543). Furthermore, particularly the Friday afternoon prayer sermon was used as a way to spread information by the local ulama (Burns and Eltham, 2009, p300; Akhavi, 1988, p425). Therefore, due to the position of the bazaaris and the ulama in information gathering in contrast to the Shah’ this determinant remains debatable.

The following three determinants are all part of the third primary variable. The second debatable determinant is ‘geographical concentration of dissidents in isolated areas’. This determinant is divided up into two elements first the geographical concentration of dissidents and secondly in isolated areas. With respect to the first element of the determinant the bazaar and its immediate surroundings can be seen as the location where the opposition was concentrated. Therefore, dissidents can be considered to be concentrated in a geographical location. With regards to the second element in this determinant; the bazaar is not an isolated area. Therefore, due to this inconsistency when applying it to the case study it is not seen as a corresponding determinant but a debatable one.

The third determinant is ‘ratio of dissident to regime scope of organizational membership’. The support for Khomeini and its opposition faction was particularly strong amongst the traditional part of the Iranian society (Moshiri, 1991, p125; Ashraf, 1988, p549). Which in majority were found in the provincial towns and cities of Iran. Another group of conservative citizens in Iran is the agricultural class. Due to their lack of organization the support from them for the regime or opposition remains unclear. In contrast, due to the policies of the Shah a growing group of bureaucrats and professionals were supporters of the Shah (Ashraf, 1988, p549). Therefore, it is difficult to assess where the support of the Iranian population was to be found, overall the ratio is not clearly in favor of either the regime or the opposition.

The fourth and last determinant which is dealt with in this section is the ‘ratio of dissident to regime value stock’. The opposition forces against the Shah have been able to convince the people of Iran that the removal of the Shah will lead to a better world but this is particularly because of the influence of Khomeini (Kuran, 1989, p65). By convincing the people that life will be better when the Shah is removed he strengthened the magnitude of political violence. This example shows a general flaw in the RD theory when applying it to this particular case. The influence of a leader in Iran prior to the revolution has considerably contributed to the revolution.
This does not imply that the revolution in its entirety is because of Khomeini but a leader is needed to catalyze the individual feelings of unrest into public action. Furthermore as shown with this determinant, the leader can have decisive influence on events by the actions he takes. This is not a part of the RD theory, specifically for the Islamic Iranian revolution of 1979 this diminishes the explaining merits of it.

Overall RD gives a somewhat mixed perception of the Iranian Revolution. Of the fifteen determinants two are clearly not compatible with the revolution and four are debatable. Coming to a total of six out of fifteen determinants which are not decidedly in favor of RD with regards to explaining the events leading up to the revolution. Furthermore, the RD theory does not take into account the position and influence of a leader in a revolution. In particular for this case the leader of the opposition has had a significant influence in reaching the last stage of overthrowing the Shah. Therefore to conclude, six out of fifteen determinants are at least debatable combined with the lack of influence of a leader of a popular revolution brings to the conclusion that the RD theory does not explain sufficiently the events leading up to the Iranian Revolution of 1979.
Chapter 3: Presidential elections of 2009, the reelection of President Ahmadinejad

On June 12, 2009 Presidential elections were held in Iran. The election for president had four different candidates which are all four approved by the Council of Guardians whom makes sure that the candidates prove their allegiance to the constitution and the theocratic system (Postel, 2009, p89) The four candidates were; Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mohsen Rezaee, and Mehdi Karroubi. Ahmadinejad won the election with 63.3% of the votes casted (Mebane Jr., 2010, p6). Rumors on potential fraud during the election quickly led to demonstrations participated in by an estimated three million (Cross, 2010, p173). These protests were followed up by a violent crackdown on the protesters by the regime’s Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRCG) and the regime affiliated Basij militias. This led to several deceased among the protesters and a significant demise in the number of protests and the number of protesters (Acuff, 2010, p228). During this chapter an answer will be given to the second subquestion: What has happened before, during, and after the protests surrounding the Presidential election in 2009? Based on this an answer will be given whether or not RD can explain the popular unrest in 2009.

The uprising surrounding the presidential election has become known as the Twitter Revolution referring to the claimed influence of Twitter and the social media in general on the events (Weaver, 2010, p1). Twitter and Facebook are seen as the medium that the protesters used to communicate and organize the public unrest (Cross, 2010, p177). The use of social media outplayed the traditional media because of the nature and speed of social media. Even though, as Acuff and Monshipouri and Assareh has stated, social media on its own does not lead to a revolution, people still need to go out on the street in order to effect change (2010, p222; 2009, p9).

The opposition, the Green Movement led by presidential candidate Mousavi, can be characterized as a loose civil rights movement and as the Iranian organization that wants to effect reform (Postel, 2009, p87). Mousavi is approved and has been prime minister during the Presidency of Ali Khomeini in the Iran-Iraq war between 1980 and 1988 (Acuff, 2010, p231). Therefore doubt has risen on Mousavi’s ability and willingness to execute true change in an Iran which is led by him. Within this chapter firstly the influence of social media on the events is looked at. Secondly, the influence of Mousavi on the Green Movement and the protests that
broke out after the Presidential election is looked into. Lastly it is assessed whether Relative Deprivation can explain why a revolution did not occur in the aftermath of the 2009 Presidential elections.

§3.1 The Social Media
Mousavi is seen as the representative of the highly educated middle class in Iran who have good access to the internet. With a so-called internet penetration rate of around 35% Iran has an one of the highest number of internet users in the Middle East where the average is around 23% (ONI, 2009). Particularly the educated middle class became distanced from the Ahmadinejad regime and called for more civil liberties, this was partly done online (Acuff, 2010, p228). Furthermore, a consequence of the shutting down of Mousavi’s website was that a growing group of opposition turned to Mousavi’s Facebook page, put online in Germany thereby circumventing the Iranian censure. This has led to a large group of followers of Mousavi on Facebook (Cross, 2010, p171).

In the hours and days following the presidential election rumors about potential election fraud spread particularly fast due to the nature of social media. Instead of the normal media, which is completely controlled by the regime, Iranian citizens could rely on almost instantaneous and in general more independent news coverage, compared to the state controlled media, from social media sources (Burns and Eltham, 2009, p302). As the events unfolded the Iranian regime further restricted the liberties of international journalists (Newman, 2009, p8). Thereby, coincidentally contributing to the importance of social media since that the traditional media could no longer rely on their traditional news sources. Therefore, reports in traditional media became strongly influenced by social media, due to the problems their normal sources had with reporting the news. It would seem that this might have set a precedent for the future, where traditional media make public news gathered from social media sources. Particularly because the majority of people still use the traditional media for their news gathering (Newman, 2009, p8).

The Iranian regime has one of the most advanced censuring mechanisms of the world in place (Newman, 2009, p1). Amongst other things the regime obliges commercial Internet Service Providers (ISP) to connect via the Telecommunication Company of Iran (TCI) to the internet, this leads to a large influence on the availability of data in Iran. Furthermore, shutting down certain websites becomes relatively easy since that there are only a limited number of ISP’s to control for the TCI (ONI, 2009, p3). On May 23, 2009 Facebook was blocked by the
Iranian regime in order to curb the growing influence of Facebook on the election campaign of the opposition (Erdbrink, 2009). Especially the Facebook page of Mousavi became a place where the opposition met. Even though Twitter has also become part of rigorous control it has not been blocked by the Iranian regime. According to a number of authors this is due to the importance of Twitter for the regime in obstructing the protests (Cross, 2010, p170; Burns and Elham, 2009, p304; Grossman, 2009, p3). Due to the more open and public nature of Twitter, compared to Facebook, the regime used it to find out who was protesting and who was organizing the protests. Consequently, with the use of this information the IRCG and the Basij militias were able to arrest protesters and disrupt the protests altogether. The regime also used fake tweets in order to disrupt protests by spreading wrong information (Grossman, 2009, p4). This further indicates the importance for the regime of using Twitter as a medium to counter the protests.

This shows the importance of information and the spread of information for both the opposition and the regime. It influences the first primary variable with the determinants: ‘Regime legitimacy’, ‘Scope and density of aggressive symbols communicated’, and ‘Utilitarian and affective content of symbolic appeals for political violence’. With regards to the third primary variable it influences the ‘ratio of dissident to regime scope of organizational membership’. Because information and news is influential in order to gain support among the population, both for the opposition and the regime. Furthermore, the importance of information was also seen in the 1979 revolution where the bazaaris and ulama were another news source for the Iranian citizens. The bazaaris and ulama therefore provided a different news source next to the state controlled traditional media.

Both Twitter and Facebook have had an influential position with regards to providing information and to a lesser extent, organization of protests in Iran in 2009. Furthermore, with regards to the success of the protesters Twitter was a blessing in disguise since that the regime loyalists were also using it to influence, disrupt, and manipulate the protests. Therefore it could be concluded that social media has quickly spread the word to the world about the events in Iran. Even though it eventually led to the failure of the protests in Iran, because of the way the regime used it to work against the protesters. Even though, the influence with regards to information sharing has been particularly strong for people outside of Iran. A potentially large influence on the willingness of people to protest, as has been seen in the 1979 revolution, is the leader of the
dissidents. Therefore the leader of the Green Movement and his influence on the events are now looked into.

§3.2 A Leaders Influence

Khomeini during the 1979 Islamic Revolution has had an influential role in mobilization of people to go and protest against the government. Combined with bringing together the various factions in the fight against the Shah he has had a large role in toppling down the Shah. As a Presidential candidate and former prime minister Mousavi is part of the ruling class and system. Consequently, as a high ranking government official he is publicly a follower of Khomeinism. Taken together with his public speeches this leads to the conclusion that Mousavi does not want a revolution or a regime change. He wants reform of the current system and a return to the beginnings of the Islamic revolution (Mousavi, 2010, p336; Acuff, 2010, p323; Ayatollahi Tabaar, 210, p277). At the same time even though a supporter of the regime he has publicly criticized it, by doing so he has put his own life in serious danger (Acuff, 2010, p231).

Iran’s economy and income is predominantly dependent on oil and the income it generates from it. Because the government is only to a minor extent dependent on taxes as revenue it is decidedly different from the normal way of obtaining income for government expenditure. Furthermore, due to the way the price of oil is made on the world market Iranian civilian unrest leads to a higher oil price on the world market and therefore greater revenue for the Iranian government (Cross, 2010, p184). This leads to a government who benefits financially from civilian unrest.

Due to the way the international community and the USA in particular deals with Iran it is playing the moderate Iranians into the hands of the regime. Particularly due to the ever present fear of an attack of Israel or one of its allies moderate Iranians tend to support the regime (Burns and Eltham, 2009, p300; Cross, 2010, p170). The speed of the events surrounding the Presidential election did not give the Green Movement the possibility to organize. Therefore, the level of organization needed for a revolution, when compared with the 1979 revolution, simply was not existent (Acuff, 2010, p225). Furthermore, the majority of Shi’a clerics have become part of the regime, therefore the clerics do no longer mobilize masses in order to protest against the government. Taken this all together the opposition was in a disadvantaged position to effect regime change compared to 1979.
Mousavi in the end does not want a revolution but only reform of the current system (Acuff, 2010, p231). Combined with his lack of charisma he will not be able to mobilize the huge numbers of people that are needed to bring about a regime change. By implementing a worldwide oil embargo the biggest source of revenue for Iran could be closed off and thereby severely harming the government. Combined with a different approach by the international community towards Iran this could lead to a stronger position of the opposition. By doing so the international community can contribute to the regime change they are aiming for in Iran. At the same time the real regime change must be done by the people of Iran themselves.

As the previous case study has shown the leader of the opposition could have a decisive influence on the events leading up to a revolution. During the social upheaval in 2009 the influence of the leader of the Green Movement is also shown. Therefore this comes back to the flaw found in RD in the previous case study. RD does not account for the influence of the leader of the opposition on a potential revolution. In this case study this flaw is shown once more.

Mousavi as an officially vetted presidential candidate and as prime minister under Khamenei has always been a part of the current system and he therefore adheres to Khomeinism. Because he is a part of the system it is doubtful whether he wants regime change, publicly he has only emphasized his wish to return to the beginning stages of the Islamic revolution. Furthermore, possibly partly due to his wish for reform he has not been able to convince enough Iranian people to go out on to the streets and risk their lives for change. Even though it must be acknowledged that due to the quick nature of these protests, the high speed of social media played a big part, the Green Movement was not able to organize itself. Therefore it might have gone too quick to be able to achieve the necessary level of organization for a true regime change to come about.

§3.3 Relative Deprivation and the possibility of a revolution in 2009
The end of the 1979 revolution was a true revolution with a regime change. The Twitter Revolution in 2009 had a violent end but the Green Movement continues its struggle for reform of the regime. Relative Deprivation is used in order to assess whether according to it the events surrounding the 2009 Presidential election was a situation that was indeed not ripe for a revolution. The fifteen societal determinants of the three primary variables have been looked into and five were clearly not correspondent, four were dubious, and six where congruent with RD.
First of all the five that clearly are not correspondent with RD are dealt with and finally the four determinants that are debatable are looked at.

Five societal determinants part of the second and third primary variable are not congruent with RD in this case. First of all both ‘scope and density of aggressive symbols communicated’ and the determinant ‘utilitarian and affective content of symbolic appeals for political violence’ are not correspondent with the case. This is due to the clear nonviolent nature of the opposition movement, as stated by Mousavi in the Green Movement charter (2010, p334). Furthermore, in the third primary variable three determinants are not compatible with the case. Firstly, ‘ratio of dissidents to regime scope of surveillance’. The opposition did not reach a sufficient level of organization to successfully organize a surveillance campaign of regime loyalists. In addition the regime, by using the revenue from its oil sales to fund the secret service institution the SAVAK. This organization performs numerous surveillance and deterring campaigns on opposition members. Secondly, ‘ratio of dissident to regime value stocks’. The Green Movement has not yet given a clear and concise view on how society would look like when they will take over from the current regime (Mousavi, 2010, p334). Therefore, even though the value stocks offered by the regime are also limited, the regime at the moment has a better ratio than the opposition. Thirdly, the ‘ratio of dissident to regime loyalties of regime forces’. As has been seen in the violent crackdown on protesters after the Presidential election the loyalty of the regime forces remains clearly with the current regime (Alavi, 2010, p256). Furthermore, there are no significant numbers of deserters as has been seen prior to the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Four societal determinants remain debatable whether they support RD or not in its assessment of the possibility of a violent revolution in Iran in 2009. To begin with are two determinants which are part of the second primary variable. Firstly, the ‘legitimacy of a regime’. Among the well-educated middle class the current regime has lost its legitimacy. The loss of support is seen from the brain drain out of Iran and the support for the opposition by the middle class (Ansari, 2010, p347; Monshipouri and Assareh, 2009, p6). Although among the poorer and richer sections of society oil revenue is being used to strengthen the support of these groups for the regime. Therefore this determinant remains undecided. Secondly and related to the previous is the ‘regime effectiveness in alleviating RD’. As has been seen the regime uses elaborate welfare schemes to support, and receive support, from the poorer sections of society. Via corruption and the vast network of civil servants the regime receives support from the richer
sections of society (2013, The Washington Post). Even though with regards to civil liberties such as free press and free elections, the demands of the opposition, no leeway is offered. This leads to the conclusion that this determinant also remains undecided whether it supports the second primary variable or not.

Furthermore, three determinants that are part of the third primary variable. Firstly, ‘geographical concentration of dissidents in isolated areas’. Comparable with the case of the 1979 revolution is that the opposition predominantly finds itself within the cities of Iran but this does not characterize as an isolated area such as mountainous terrain. Therefore this third determinant is doubtful. Secondly, the ‘ratio of dissident to regime scope of organizational membership’. As has been seen with the first two dubious determinants is that the support for the regime is indecisive. The growing middle class does not support the regime but the unorganized and therefore difficult to assess poorer section of the nation remains to be seen whether they support the regime or opposition. Due to the nature of support of the regime it remains doubtful whether the majority supports the regime or the opposition.

This paragraph shows that there are five determinants which are clearly not supportive of the likelihood of a violent political revolution. In addition four determinants remain doubtful whether these contribute or not to the likelihood of a political revolution. Furthermore, as has been seen in the case of the 1979 revolution the position of the leader of the opposition remains nonexistent in RD. Even though, the influence of Mousavi with for example his clear nonviolent nature of opposition had a strong influence on the events. At the same time the influence of Mousavi on the protesters is probably more negative than positive with regards to the likelihood of a revolution compared to Khomeini. Therefore to conclude, out of the fifteen determinants nine remain dubious at best, with regards to the case of the 2009 Presidential election. Therefore RD was congruent with the events in Iran in that it did not lead to a violent political revolution and a regime change. Even though it is unable to sufficiently take into account the influence of the leader of the opposition for popular revolutions.
Iran, Revolution, and Relative Deprivation a conclusion

Within this concluding chapter the main conclusions from the previous chapters are given. Furthermore, a general conclusion on the research will be given. Within chapter one Relative Deprivation states that frustration leads to a form of aggressive response as a reaction to the frustration. Concentration has been put on violent popular revolutions because this is the final stage within why men rebel. The three primary variables; potential for collective violence, potential for political violence, and magnitude of political violence, influence the eventual occurrence of a violent popular revolution. Taken the determinants of the first primary variable together the conclusion is that uncertainties for the future contribute to the likelihood of collective violence. The second primary variable is largely dependent on the actions a government takes, by its actions a government can considerably contribute to its legitimacy and thereby the likelihood of political violence. The third primary variable is the last step before a violent political revolution will occur. When the ratio of support is more favorable for the opposition or the dissidents the magnitude of political violence grows significantly. This first chapter was concluded with an assessment of the critique on RD. For example there has been a significant amount of critique on the core of RD that all frustrations will lead to a form of aggressive response. Another point of critique was the lack of explanation for how individual sentiments are turned into collective action.

The thesis continues with the first case study of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. Both the bazaaris and the ulama were influential within the organization of popular protests. These two groups supported each other within the local community, either financially or with enhanced influence in the community. The existence of soaring inflation in Iran was blamed by the Shah on the bazaaris and their supposed profiteering of market prices. Although the general public was at first supportive of the campaign they quickly turned against it. The general public began supporting the bazaaris and ulama in their emerging fight against the Shah and his policies. As the protests against the Shah evolved over the years the growing influence of the ulama became clear. This led to a significant lower influence of the bazaaris within society and especially within the majles.

Ayatollah Khomeini’s rise to power began in Qum where he became a popular lecturer due to his combination of religion with politics. In hukumat-I Islami (Islamic government) he wrote that the Koran has all the answers on how to run a country and therefore democracy is not
needed. By his concentration on the common cause of removing the Shah from power he managed to combine the various factions which were opposing the Shah. Furthermore, by convincing the people that every form of rule would be better than the existent one he received the support of the general public and eventually also from the army. Leading up to significant numbers of deserters from the Iranian army as the end of the revolution draw near. Khomeini has managed to keep Khomeinism at the core of government business, even today, by insisting that government personnel adhere to it.

The case study has shown that two determinants from Relative Deprivation were clearly not supportive of the case study. In addition, four determinants remained debatable at best whether they are supportive of RD or not in this case. RD’s lack of acknowledging the influence and position of a leader in a popular revolution is a significant shortcoming for the application of it with regards to this case study. A leader is needed to catalyze existing feelings of deprivation among individuals into collective action, which has been particularly influential within this case. Therefore, taken together RD does not sufficiently account for the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979.

Within the third chapter attention was turned towards the second case study; the social upheaval surrounding the Presidential election of 2009. The broadcast of the civil unrest was taken over by social media from the traditional media because these became severely restricted in their work by the government. This new way of news coverage might have set a precedent for future news gathering particularly in nations where there is a lack of independent media. Before the elections Facebook was blocked in Iran when it became clear that it was an important meeting ground for the opposition. Twitter was not blocked, even though it also played an influential role in the protests and the organization of it. This is probably because the regime used the more open and public nature of Twitter to track down the protesters to arrest them and to disrupt the protests completely. Social media has spread the word about the incidents surrounding the Presidential elections. At the same time it has given the regime a way to disrupt the protests and therefore social media might have been the reason why the protests emerged quickly but also why it did not succeed.

Furthermore, Mousavi was and is a part of the regime and is therefore a supporter of Khomeinism. Therefore, he is probably not in favor of a regime change. The Green Movement lacks unity in order to present the Ahmadinejad government with a strong protest movement. In
addition, oil has given the Iranian government a potent force to remain in power. The revenue it gains from the oil production means it is not dependent on public taxes for the majority of its national income. Combined with the fear of an attack by Israel or one of its allies moderate Iranians remain supportive of the regime.

Relative Deprivation gives a clear picture for this case study five determinants are clearly not in support of RD and four determinants are debatable. Furthermore RD, similar to the earlier case study, lacks in acknowledging the position and influence of the leader of the opposition which has been influential in this case. Even though as the determinants show, RD was correct in assessing that no violent popular revolution with a regime change took place in Iran in 2009 even though it did not successfully take into account the position and influence of the leader of the protest movement.

Both case studies have shown that no revolution or revolution like situation is the same, even though that there might be certain similarities. Therefore, the pretention of a theory or paradigm to be able to explain why revolutions occur on a world scale is probably only true to a minor extent. Particular factors which influence specific situations are always of importance especially with regards to popular revolutions. This being said this does not mean that the entire RD theory cannot be used, certain elements can be applied in a variety of situations. For example legitimacy of a regime and the historical occurrence of popular revolutions in a nation or one of its adjacent countries is a relevant factor when assessing a potential revolutionary situation. RD cannot account for case specific factors which are particularly relevant for the two case studies within this thesis. RD should therefore be seen a theory or tool which provides a general view on popular unrest. It should not be seen as a theory which can explain, or even predict, specific revolutions. It should be seen as a tool which provides general guidelines to assess whether or not a revolution might become more or less likely in a specific situation.

The answer on the research question is that RD can only partly explain why a revolution took place in 1979 and why no revolution took place in 2009 in Iran. With the conclusion that RD lacks in taking into consideration the position and influence of the leaders of the opposition in both case studies. Furthermore, since that RD cannot live up to its own expectation in retrospect, it is doubtful whether it can prove its merit in assessing a possible revolution situation in the future. More research is needed in order to strengthen the knowledge on revolutions in general in order to come to an answer on the question why men rebel. Particularly the position
and influence of a leader of an opposition movement and leader of a revolution should be researched and encapsulated within RD. Since these two case studies have shown that RD lacks in acknowledging the influence a leader has in bringing individual feelings of discontent into collective action. Even though certain elements do overlap in these case studies more research is needed to be able to fill the gaps existent in the theory by Gurr. When more research is done RD can become a significant part of an answer to why popular revolutions occur.
Epilogue

This thesis will be completed with a look upon Iran today. The Iranian government is preparing for the next presidential election which is held on June 14, 2013. Ahmadinejad is not eligible to run as a candidate since the constitution states that Presidents can only fulfill two terms (eight years) as President. The candidate who receives the public support of the Grand Ayatollah has a good chance to win the election. Ahmadinejad has made himself unpopular with the ruling clergy. For example, at the funeral of the late President of Venezuela Hugo Chavez on March 8, 2013 Ahmadinejad publicly embraced the mother of the late President and ally of Iran. This has led to an outcry by the clergy in Iran, it is strictly forbidden to touch a woman who is not a close relative in Iran.

Ahmadinejad publicly positions his protégé Esfandiar Rahim Mashaie as his successor. Even though, Mashaie is considered to actively undermine the power of the clergy (Dehghanpisheh, 2013, Reuters). It was assumed that Grand Ayatollah Khamenei will back parliament speaker and former nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani as the new Iranian President. This has changed since Larijani and Ahmadinejad had a public fall out in parliament in February 2013 (Dehghanpisheh, 2013, Reuters). The chances for the current chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili has therefore risen as possible new candidate supported by the clergy (2013, GlobalSecurity.org). The strategy of the opposition appears to be to boycott the election. Both Mousavi and Khatami are already two years placed under house arrest and the opposition has not found another leader to actively support (Carey, 2012, World Policy Institute). The opposition is hoping that when the election has a low turnout it will show the world that the President, and the Grand Ayatollah, do not have the support of the general public.

The economy of Iran is heavily weakened due to international sanctions, the economic crisis, and the ever growing group of nations who boycott Iranian oil. The official inflation rate is 25 percent but estimations have more than doubled that (2013, GlobalSecurity.org). Furthermore, unemployment is becoming a bigger problem with an estimation of 500,000 to 800,000 Iranians who have lost their jobs only in the last year (2013, Global Security). The sanctions, lower oil revenue, and mismanagement of the economy have led to a strong drop in value of the rial. This led to protests by black market money-changers from Tehran. As a consequence of the drop in value of the rial the price of cars has risen since they are seen as a solid investment. Similar to the 1979 revolution the growing price of cars has led to accusations of profiteering by car dealers.
In the beginning of March 2013 farmers from the Isfahan province clashed with security forces because of a decision to divert water from the area. This shows a growing unrest among the people population is not politically motivated. To add to this growing unrest is suspicion that Ahmadinejad is involved in corruption and has played a part in major banking scandals (2013, The Washington Post). These incidents show growing unrest among the people of Iran. The Iranian government has responded on this by forcibly clamping down on any signs of civil disobedience (Carey, 2012, World Policy Institute).

These events show some similarity with the revolution in 1979 that was inspired by political and economic motivations. The protesters were united in one opposition force by Khomeini, something that can also happen in the forthcoming months. Although, only when a leader steps to the fore and unites the opposition factions. If this leader can capitalize on the growing economic unrest and could combine this with the existent political unrest the momentum can shift drastically and quickly towards the opposition. The regime is completely aware of this because it has used the same tactic in 1979 to take over the reign from the Shah. Therefore, it is probably unlikely that this will happen without violence. The upcoming months will be an interesting period for Iran, its citizens, and the world.

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