


Analysis of the Collapse of the Pahlavi Regime in Light of Functionalist Theory

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between efficiency/inefficiency and the fall of the Pahlavi regime. This is done within the framework of Almond and Powell's functionalist theory and with an emphasis on the category of functional efficiencies of the political system. These two theorists believe that the specific task of the efficiency of the functions of the political system includes five powers of extraction, regulation, distribution, symbolism, and accountability, and that political systems must manage their activities with society within the framework of these five powers in order to survive and develop. Based on this, the question of the present study is to what extent was the Pahlavi regime able to achieve the functional efficiencies of a political system in relation to its environment?

Method: This study is conducted using the causal method. The causal mechanism reveals the socio-political processes and shows how inputs and outputs are related to each other. Therefore, it can be examined what results the government policy led to in the five powers mentioned. Data collection in this study was also compiled in a library format.

Findings: This study shows that, given the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Pahlavi regime, this government failed to perform adequately in the five aforementioned capacities and as a result, it fell. The findings of the study indicate that from the perspective of extractive capacity, reliance on oil and lack of reliance on taxes intensified dictatorship. From a regulatory perspective, the second Pahlavi regime did not operate within the framework of the law due to its authoritarian approach. From a distribution perspective, during the second Pahlavi era, we witnessed a lack of proper distribution of facilities and equal opportunities between the general public and the ruling elite. The symbolic or symbolic function such as the ideology of archaism was also not effective in maintaining and surviving the political system. From the perspective of accountability, we witnessed a lack of accountability of the government due to the lack of attention to the existence of a corrupt bureaucracy.

Conclusion: The Pahlavi regime was almost inefficient in the years leading up to the revolution based on these five government indicators. The accumulation of ineffective policies caused the people's demands not to end in the desired outcomes and as a result, ineffective policies were accumulated. In such circumstances, the socialization of politics as a challenge facing the system practically caused the spread of public distrust and the political system faced a crisis of legitimacy.

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Introduction

The Islamic Revolution is among the social revolutions. Transformation in social revolutions is characterized by great depth and breadth. Accordingly, the Islamic Revolution brought to an end the several thousand year history of monarchy in Iran. The rapid outbreak of the revolution raised the question of why the political order established to lead Iran out of backwardness collapsed so quickly. The occurrence of the revolution, apart from the realm of political and social realities, also produced a revolution in the realm of theory. For many generations, theories of revolution were unable to analyze what had occurred. From this point, a newer generation of explanations of revolution attempted to analyze the revolutions of the late twentieth century (such as the Nicaraguan Revolution and the 1979 Iranian Revolution).

Apart from these composite approaches, most analyses of the background to the collapse of the Pahlavi government sought to examine the Islamic Revolution by highlighting cultural aspects, the role of religion, and the confrontation between modern and Western approaches on the one hand and tradition on the other. This was necessary, but not sufficient. In other words, given the complexity of the Islamic Revolution as a major social revolution, it is necessary to analyze its causes from multiple angles. In this regard, the angle of analysis can be either the performance of the state or the approach of the revolutionaries. The present article has adopted the first path.

The functionalist approach is among the angles that appear useful and effective for analyzing the fall of the monarchical system. The aim is to determine whether, alongside the challenges arising from the confrontation between tradition and modernity, it can be claimed that the Pahlavi government lacked the necessary efficiency and therefore collapsed. The important challenge and issue is that if the Qajar dynasty, due to its tribal nature and the absence of a permanent army and a powerful bureaucracy (Abrahamiyan, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 16), was unable to respond to the needs of an Iranian society undergoing modernization, the Pahlavi regime, by virtue of oil wealth, an extensive bureaucracy, and a permanent army, possessed far greater authority and capability to respond to the needs of Iranian society. Functionalists such as Almond and Powell analyze the efficiency of political systems by relying on five capacities that political systems must possess: extractive, regulatory, distributive, symbolic, and responsive. It appears that by employing these functional roles, one can examine the efficiency of the Pahlavi system in Iranian society.

Thus, clearly stated, the question this research seeks to examine is: ‘To what extent was the Pahlavi system able to achieve functional efficiency as a political system in relation to its

environment?’ In response to this question, the hypothesis is proposed that, given the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Pahlavi system, this government was unable to perform appropriately in the five aforementioned capacities and consequently collapsed. To explain the role of inefficiency in the fall of the Pahlavi government, after reviewing the research background and the theoretical framework, the grounds for the regime's fall will be examined from the perspective of the five efficiency indicators.

1. Research Background

From the perspective of the two indicators of the reasons for the fall of the Pahlavi regime and the efficiency of the Pahlavi system, several works have been written. Hamed Iranshahi and colleagues (2023 AD/1402 SH) examine the fall of the Pahlavi regime in their article, "The Crisis of Government Inefficiency and the Issue of the Fall of the Pahlavi Regime," using Parsons’ structural-functional theory. According to the authors, the Pahlavi regime lacked certain capacities, including the use of force, regulatory capacity, national identity, extractive capacity, internal cohesion, and redistributive capacity, which led to inefficiency in the Pahlavi system. However, in this research, the authors address only the internal dimension of these capacities and do not consider their international dimension. Moreover, some of Almond and Powell’s five indicators are absent from Parsons’ model.

Javad Moqimi and Soosan Safavari (2021 AD/1400 SH), in the article "The Causes of the Passivity of Political Elites During the Pahlavi Period and Its Impact on the Crisis of Efficiency," argue that the existence of shared interests between elites and the Shah and the ruling apparatus was a factor in the crisis of responsiveness, which ultimately led to the revolution. Masoud Ghaffari and Mohammad Radmard (2017 AD/1396 SH), in an article titled "Institutionalism in Development and the Reasons for the Fall of the Pahlavi Regime," argue that the process of institution-building in Iran had failed because development in Iran was not based on a national approach aligned with societal demands. Masoud Akhavan Kazemi and Omid Shokaraneh (2021 AD/1400 SH), in the article "Analysis of the Impact of the Distribution Crisis on the Fall of the Second Pahlavi Regime and the Occurrence of the Islamic Revolution," state that the distribution crisis politically led to a lack of responsiveness, economically to the unequal distribution of oil revenues, and socially to the suppression of religious beliefs.

Given the above, the innovation of the present study lies, first, in examining the fall of the Pahlavi regime in light of all functionalist capacities. Thus, it adopts a comprehensive approach and discusses capacities with both internal and international dimensions that are interconnected. Second, it recognizes that weakness in some functional roles is not merely single-causal but encompasses a set of factors that have not been addressed in previous work. In addition to the above, the most important innovation of this research is that it examines the impact of the efficiencies proposed in Almond and Powell's functionalist theory on the fall of the Pahlavi regime, an approach that has not thus far been considered in analyses of the reasons for the fall of the Pahlavi regime.

2. Research Methodology

A causal mechanism is a chain of factors and events that, based on a law-like order, begins with the explaining and ends with the explained. Here, what is meant by a law-like order is the laws governing behavior (Little, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 22–25). Accordingly, a causal mechanism reveals social processes and shows how inputs and outputs are connected (Falleti & Lynch, 2009: 1161). Thus, in this article, efficiency variables (extractive, regulatory, symbolic, distributive, and responsive capacities) are treated as independent variables, and the stability or instability of a political system is treated as the dependent variable.

3. Theoretical Framework

Prior to the attention to systemic and functionalist approaches, one of the major challenges in political science was the description and explanation of the internal structure of the political system. Attention to this issue can provide a suitable space for diagnosing the pathologies of political systems (Ishiyama & Breuning, 2010: 72). In general, in political science, states are examined from three very different perspectives: from an idealist viewpoint, from an organizational perspective, and finally from a functionalist perspective (Heywood, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 129). In the functional conception of the state, institutional role or purpose is of fundamental importance. For example, analysts define the "Political System" as a set of formal legal institutions that constitute a "State" or "Government" ... With a broader definition, the term encompasses actual as well as prescribed forms of political behavior,

including not only the legal organization of the state but also the reality of how the state functions (Heslop, 2025).

In this regard, Almond and Powell should be considered among those development theorists who have presented theories concerning the political system and its mode of operation, whose primary task is the maintenance of order. Accordingly, political systems must implement three functional roles:

- Conversion and transformation functions;
- Adaptation functions;
- Functional efficiency roles of the political system (Shirzadi, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 99).
However, given the breadth of these three functional roles, this article intends to focus only on the functional efficiency roles and, on that basis, evaluate the fall of the Pahlavi system. Almond and Powell consider the functional efficiency roles of the political system to consist of five functions that all political systems seek to implement for survival:
 - Extractive capacity;
 - Regulatory capacity;
 - Distributive capacity;
 - Symbolic capacity;
 - Responsive capacity (Shirzadi, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 100).

As we know, Weber considered the state to be the bearer of legitimate authority. From the perspective of the theoretical model that will be elaborated below, there is a narrow gap between authority and sliding into authoritarianism. That is, on the one hand, we may encounter a powerful and legitimate government, and, on the other, a powerful government indifferent to public satisfaction. The important challenge is that past royal despotisms and contemporary modern dictatorships are at risk of this distortion. Below, we introduce the state's functional roles.

3.1. Extractive Capacity

Extractive capacity refers to the performance of the political system in extracting material and human resources obtained from internal and external environments. Thus, the ability to acquire extractive resources forms the foundation for other capacities and limits or expands the system's and society's ability to achieve various goals (Almond & Powell, 1966: 195).

Typically, the ways of obtaining extractive resources differ, and political systems can acquire these resources from their environment and individuals; however, the most common methods of extracting resources in modern countries are taxation and borrowing (Almond et al., 2017 AD/1396 SH: 271). An important point is that countries with single-product economies lose their extractive capacity during economic crises. Extractive capacity operates in both internal and external dimensions. For example, in the internal dimension, one can refer to taxation, the absence of a single-product economy, trained and skilled human resources, and a productive economy; and in the external dimension, to items such as income from international trade or foreign tourists, profits from investments abroad, tributes and reparations obtained from foreign countries. Taxes on services provided to foreigners can also be counted as part of a political system's extractive capacity (Almond & Powell, 1966: 203).

3.2. Regulatory Capacity

By regulatory capacity, we mean the political system's ability to exercise control over the behavior of individuals and groups within society. Regulation of behavior has usually been equated with legal coercion and threats; however, political systems have generally been able to regulate the actions of individuals and groups through other means, including material incentives (Almond et al., 2017 AD/1396 SH: 238). The type of political system is important in the implementation of the regulatory function. For example, authoritarian systems supervise various aspects of society, both private and collective, take control of all societal resources, and direct society along their desired path. It should be noted that regulatory capacity does not merely seek to impose restrictions that hinder societal and individual growth; rather, it underpins civilization, comfort, and social welfare. Issues such as public health, job security, and environmental protection are considered part of governments' regulatory activities (Almond et al., 2017 AD/1396 SH: 241).

3.3. Distributive Capacity

Distributive capacity refers to the allocation of various goods, services, honors, positions, and different opportunities that political systems distribute among individuals and groups within society (Almond et al., 2017 AD/1396 SH: 231). Equitable development requires strengthening and guiding economic growth to optimize its benefits for residents of low-

income communities across all urban areas and to ensure their active participation in the development process (Blackwell, 2000: 1285). Naturally, in developing countries, this form of development must also be extended to non-urban communities. In general, it must be accepted that the resources available to the government, in whatever form they exist, must be distributed among individuals; therefore, depending on the nature of the political system, distribution may manifest itself in society in either an equal or unequal manner. There are sectors (such as defense) that governments sometimes emphasize, overshadowing their distributive capacity. These governments, even when sectors such as education and health are harmed, allocate their budgets to defense and military issues. Poor countries, despite needing to improve skill levels or pay greater attention to health and education, are unable to take steps in this direction due to insufficient budgets (Almond et al., 2017 AD/1396 SH: 236–237).

3.4. Symbolic Capacity

By symbolic capacity is meant the recourse of political leaders to history, bravery, or to values and ideologies such as equality, freedom, democracy, communism, or liberalism. However, the main purpose of strengthening and using symbolic aspects can be understood as compelling people to pay their taxes more quickly and honestly, to obey the law, and to accept the hardships present in society. This type of reliance on symbols becomes particularly important during times of crisis (Almond et al., 2017 AD/1396 SH: 242). It can also be stated that this capacity is related to a set of efforts that ensure the dissemination of symbolic values (parades, celebrations, travels) in society and help secure a minimum level of public support (Badi', 2000 AD/1379 SH: 58). One of the functions of using symbolic capacity is to create unity among different segments of society, and political systems, by creating a shared national identity and employing symbolic capacity, can use it both in times of crisis and in other decisions that require public support (Almond & Powell, 1966: 200).

3.5. Responsiveness Capacity

Given that governments and political systems are responsible for meeting the needs of the people, they must be responsive to internal and external demands and pressures. However, the important point is to whom and in which areas the system must be responsive (Almond & Powell, 1966: 201). This capacity also reveals the degree of sensitivity of the system and its skill in satisfying demands (Badi', 2000 AD/1379 SH: 58). In general, political stability is

achieved when the ruling system, from the perspective of the governed population, is responsive to the political needs of society (Shik Lee, 2019: 730). If politicians influence bureaucratic performance through indirect means, such as restricting meritocratic rules, manipulating electoral processes, and other measures, the resulting power imbalance can have serious consequences for democratic legitimacy (Woodhouse, 2019: 145). The responsiveness of a government is, to a large extent, influenced by the nature of the regime; thus, in authoritarian and dictatorial governments, the dictator cannot be held accountable, and political parties and social movements have minimal impact in making rulers responsive in such systems. Therefore, political structures bear responsibility for meeting demands and needs and for the specific organization of roles and structures for accountability (Almond & Powell, 1966: 202). For this reason, governments, to provide for the basic needs of the people and respond to other demands, have focused on and placed the greatest emphasis on instruments for maintaining authority, both objectively and subjectively.

Accordingly, this article, based on the application of Almond and Powell's theory, seeks to link the element of inefficiency to the central signifier of the Second Pahlavi government: authoritarianism.

4. Application of Almond and Powell's Theory to the Pahlavi System

Based on the indicators examined in the theoretical framework of this research, the following sections apply the five capacities to the Second Pahlavi government.

4.1. Extractive Capacity of the Pahlavi System

The important issue is why extractive capacity did not develop in the Pahlavi government. The Pahlavi regime's reliance on oil revenues began in the early 1960s and reached its peak in the 1970s. Researchers refer to this period as the era of the emergence of the Shah's authoritarianism (Takeyh, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 188). During this period, Iran's oil revenues jumped from 885 million dollars in 1971 to 17.8 billion dollars in 1975 (Takeyh, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 280). Thus, from the mid-1960s onward, the state no longer needed to collect taxes from the people, and government revenue was effectively based on oil and gas exports (Eyvazi, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 221).

Due to its reliance on oil revenues, the Pahlavi state made a large segment of wage earners in society, including workers, industrial laborers, and employees, dependent on itself through the

salaries it paid them, while at the same time remaining independent of these classes. This was because it had no need for extractive resources from within society, which, in turn, led to the formation of a viewpoint within the state holding that the government had no duty of representation or accountability to society. For this reason, a large portion of oil wealth was spent on projects that brought grandeur and prestige but had little real economic value. The purchase of military equipment, nuclear power plants, uranium enrichment equipment, and 25 percent of the shares of the West German Krupp Steel Company are among such examples (Gasiorowski, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 338).

Extractive capacity from the international dimension in the Pahlavi system was also not very successful, and despite some efforts and groundwork, the regime was unable to generate significant income from this source. In general, foreign investment in the non-oil sector during the Pahlavi period was limited and negligible. According to the law, foreigners could own a small share of factory shares, but they were free to transfer the profits from their investments out of Iran. Under such conditions, foreign investors tended to invest more in consumer industries and household appliances; nevertheless, foreign investment was far less than imports of foreign goods into the country (Keddie, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 260-261). Foreign capital entering the country in 1962 amounted to 5.9 billion Rials (equivalent to 126.6 million dollars), while in 1972, 8.923 billion Rials (equivalent to 12.3 billion dollars) left the country (Foran, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 488).

Moreover, in the area of foreign investment during the Second Pahlavi government, Iran did not gain significant advantages, and in some cases, inappropriate approaches were observed. According to Katouziyan, government investment in Krupp's heavy industrial complex was one of the Shah's greatest mistakes in foreign investment. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi paid 800 million dollars of the country's capital to purchase slightly more than 25 percent of the shares of this company and its subsidiaries, which mainly produced declining products such as steel with high production costs (Katouziyan, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 373). In general, sole reliance on oil led to dependency, which, in turn, intensified the Shah's dictatorial tendencies and the separation between the state and the nation. In addition, disinvestment and vulnerability to international oil price fluctuations in the oil sector reduced extractive capacity during the Second Pahlavi period.

4.2. Regulatory Capacity of the Pahlavi System

Political systems must possess a certain level of legitimacy to exercise regulatory capacity in society, so that laws are accepted by the people with minimal reluctance and opposition. The political system during the Pahlavi period can be characterized as patrimonial, one defined by authoritarianism and the personal centralization of power in the Shah. As Ray Takeyh notes, throughout his life the Shah held a contemptuous view of democratic government and believed that major events occur only when a reformist dictator stands at the apex of all affairs (Takeyh, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 18). For this reason, during the Second Pahlavi period, programs of economic development and progress were subject to the desires and inclinations of a single individual. Sudden policy changes and impulsive decision-making confused officials and paved the way for abuse by those closest to the Shah, thereby intensifying chronic political, administrative, and social corruption (Qaragozlou, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 42-43). This Shah-centered personalism, combined with administrative corruption, severely undermined the regulatory function, because under the Pahlavi regime, the law was usually embodied in the person of the Shah. Consequently, to the extent that people observed a lack of respect for and implementation of the law in the Shah's own conduct, the legitimacy and public standing of the Shah declined correspondingly. The Shah effectively had no genuine belief in the rule of law, and the laws promulgated were largely formalistic. For example, according to the 'Where did you get It from?' law, all state officials who in any way received salaries and benefits from the public treasury were required to report annually all changes in their assets; temporary or permanent dismissal from office and confiscation and seizure of property were among the punishments stipulated by this law for violators (Radmard, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 66). It is evident that this law, like other anti-corruption laws, never acquired any practical implementation.

Another factor that, throughout the Pahlavi period, led to the regulatory function being used in an undesirable manner and in an inappropriate domain was undoubtedly the approach of SAVAK and the newly established Rastakhiz Party. Through the Ministry of Labor and labor unions, SAVAK monitored and inspected individuals entering universities and other state institutions. As a result of this performance, the number of strikes, which had reached 79 cases in 1953, declined to only 3 cases by 1957 (Abrahamiyan, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 517). During the Second Pahlavi period, the regime's apparatus of repression included SAVAK, the gendarmerie, the police, and the armed forces. This repressive apparatus enabled the state, by

weakening opposition organizations and creating an atmosphere of fear, to keep a large number of Iranians from political activity and to increase the state's autonomy (Gasiorowski, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 258).

In addition, the Rastakhiz Party, with SAVAK's assistance, controlled and supervised organizations, ministries, and other state institutions that provided livelihoods for thousands of people. This supervision in the publishing sector led to a decline in published titles from 4,200 in 1975 to fewer than 1,300 the following year. For example, a number of writers were arrested during these years and forced to confess that in their writings they had focused more on criticizing social conditions than on the achievements of the Revolution (Abrahamiyan, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 554). At times, the government was sensitive to authors' names, and their works were denied publication (Madani, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 179).

Censorship during this period was primarily political rather than moral; books, films, newspapers, radio, and television were all subject to it. A list of banned books had been prepared, the re-publication of which was not permitted, and even possessing them was effectively punishable; in fact, a number of citizens were convicted on this basis (Madani, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 178). In some cases, SAVAK's censorship went so far as to prevent the publication of books that had previously been printed. For instance, the publication of plays such as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* was prevented solely because a king or prince is killed in them (Hoveyda, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 93).

Regarding other functional roles through which governments can, by enforcing regulations and laws, bring order to social life and use their regulatory capacity to improve people's conditions, the educational and health sectors can be mentioned, areas in which the Second Pahlavi regime also failed to perform successfully. For example, in the health sector, there were 11,000 physicians in Iran in 1977, whereas 40,000 to 50,000 were needed to extend public health coverage nationwide. Of the total 11,000 physicians, at least half were located in Tehran, because working facilities and income-generating opportunities through private practices were more readily available there (Parsons, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 74).

Ultimately, in the Second Pahlavi regime, in addition to the clear violation of the law, the people were dissatisfied with the government's regulatory practices.

4.3. Distributive Capacity of the Pahlavi System

The Pahlavi government must be regarded as one of those regimes that lacked adequate distributive capacity, and one reason for this is its authoritarian nature. In such governments, material resources and employment opportunities are distributed not on the basis of competence and merit, but rather according to proximity and loyalty to the Pahlavi regime and to the person of the Shah. Consequently, decision-making was more exclusive and non-modern in nature than it was grounded in the Constitutional Law and parliamentary principles (Radmard et al., 2021 AD/1400 SH: 24).

In line with Ray Takeyh's perspective, the Shah found himself trapped in a system in which his power was constrained by rival institutions, a situation he found dissatisfying. On the contrary, he accorded little status to the parliament, the cabinet and independent Iranian politicians (Takeyh, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 396). Perhaps his youthful experience with elite pluralism, including his bitter and pessimistic view of Iran's aristocratic classes, whom he believed had conspired with the Allies to exile his father, shaped this attitude. Yet he overlooked the fact that this was precisely the most important path to the survival of the regime and the dynasty.

In other economic, social, and cultural spheres as well, during the Second Pahlavi period, we observe an inequitable distribution of facilities and equal opportunities between the general population and the upper echelons of the ruling elite. In society, class divisions were tangibly felt. For example, during this period, despite the development and modernization that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, we witnessed the expansion of shantytowns and the low quality of life of some segments of the population. Between 1966 and 1976, the proportion of families living in only one room increased from 36 percent to 43 percent. Forty-two percent of Tehran's population lacked adequate housing, and 96 percent of rural residents had no access to electricity (Abrahamiyan, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 550).

This was while the Pahlavi family and the Shah's close associates were immersed in oil dollars. For example, in just one instance, according to Asadollah Alam, for Farah's birthday celebration held in Birjand, the world's best chef was invited from Paris, and over two days, the cost of food for the event reached 40,000 dollars. The birthday cake alone cost 200 dollars (Faghih Haqqani, 2022 AD/1401 SH: 144).

It should be noted that one characteristic of rentier states is that, because they make little effort to raise revenues, spending those revenues becomes easier, and squandering them

becomes routine. For this reason, as John Foran recounts, the National Iranian Oil Company regularly and secretly transferred a portion of oil revenues on a monthly basis into the Shah's personal account. It is said that this amount was at least \$1 billion. Moreover, the assets of the royal family have been estimated at approximately between 5 and 20 billion dollars. In addition, between 1973 and 1976, government officials received at least one billion dollars in commissions (Foran, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 464).

The improper distribution of resources was so severe that not only did a gap emerge between Tehran and other parts of the country, but even within Tehran itself, there was evident class division and unequal distribution of income and wealth. The unequal distribution of facilities in Tehran effectively led to the division of the city into two distinct cities: the north as a wealthy urban area whose residents lived in luxurious European-style villas and which was full of restaurants and discotheques, and the southern part of the city, characterized by poor neighborhoods, narrow alleys, polluted air, and impoverished residents (Hoveyda, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 97).

Land reform, carried out to create an independent peasant class, can be considered part of the distributive policies of the Second Pahlavi period. However, since not all farmers benefited from these lands and did not enjoy sufficient income, this program ultimately failed. An examination of land distribution statistics after the completion of land reform during the Pahlavi period "Shows that 1,600,000 households owned land amounting to 2.43 million hectares, whereas 9,500 large landowning households controlled 2.45 million hectares of land; that is, each large landowning household possessed 171 times as much land as land-poor households [after land reform]." (Fouzi, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 222)

Land reform was not the only problem faced by rural populations. Alinaghi Alikhani, who served as Minister of Economy in the 1960s, recounts that, according to Amir Abbas Hoveyda, the prime minister prioritized cities, rather than all the people of Iran (Alikhani, 2002 AD/1381 SH: 191). This reality was evident in the pricing of agricultural products. Grain prices were set in favor of urban residents rather than farmers, which discouraged agricultural producers. As a result, agricultural production declined. Overall, the Shah's distributive policies were never directed toward the entire population of the country.

4.4. Symbolic Capacity of the Pahlavi System

Modernization and development under the Second Pahlavi, although not directed toward the political structure, encompassed other spheres, including social, religious, and broadly cultural domains. The Shah's efforts to rapidly marginalize indigenous culture and promote superficial and selective aspects of Western culture led to alienation, anomie, and the emergence of frustration and rebellion among traditional groups and the urban poor (Eyvazi, 2001 AD/11380 SH: 195). With the initiation of the modernization process by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, religion was sidelined and replaced by an emphasis on ancient nationalism, which was favored because it was more compatible with the construction of a monarchical system. In this definition, the religious element was deliberately neglected, while ancient traditions were placed at the core of identity. As one researcher puts it, the Shah's mindset, in fact, cast a shadow over the entire structure of society. Thus it was that Amouzegar, the prime minister during the crisis period, in response to his associates who expressed concern about murmurs emerging from mosques, stated: "The era of reactionary clerics has come to an end, and modern Iran is moving beyond them." (Najafzadeh, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 365)

The celebrations of the 2,500th anniversary of the monarchy, contrary to their intended purpose of portraying the Shah as powerful and magnificent, depicted him instead as a ruler distant from traditions and from the people, especially given that at the time of these celebrations the financial situation of many people was unstable and the majority were suffering from poverty (Keddie, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 273). The Pahlavi government was so influenced by authoritarian development that it sought by any means to transform the face of society, and naturally, a large segment of the population, who held Shi'i inclinations, did not align with Westernizing and anti-Islamic approaches (Sullivan, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 107). The Shah's aloof and arrogant behavior constituted the flip side of the people's turn toward religious leaders (Najafzadeh, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 366). From this perspective, the overall effort, in the form of modernization and social transformation, was aimed at restricting religious thought and privatizing it (Azghandi, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 104).

One of the actions that provoked strong opposition from the people and the clergy and led to the failure of another symbolic project of the Second Pahlavi was the issue of changing the calendar. Mohammad Reza Shah intended, under the claim that the country was on the path of development and civilization and that he was acting like the ancient Iranian kings, to replace the Islamic calendar with the 2,500-year imperial calendar. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sought

to shape Iranian identity on the basis of ancient Iran's teachings and identity. Thus, although during his reign he attempted to present himself as a religious person and even made several pilgrimages to holy sites, in the end, he pursued the dilution of Islamic concepts in the identity of the Iranian people. The Shah's policies, implemented in pursuit of his quest for grandeur, assaulted many of the deepest-rooted principles of Iranian culture (Zonis, 1991 AD/1370 SH: 114). Naturally, no nation remains silent in the face of humiliation and waits for an opportunity to retaliate against the humiliations imposed upon it. As a result, the people of Iran not only did not cooperate with these policies but actively opposed them.

Another event that can be regarded as a factor weakening national identity and the unity between the people and the political system during the Pahlavi period is undoubtedly the Capitulation Bill. Under this bill, which was approved by the National Consultative Assembly, American advisers were granted judicial immunity. This was itself considered a clear violation of sovereignty. However, the impact of capitulation went beyond the violation of the constitution; it wounded national pride and represented an imperial presence, an event that damaged the beliefs and emotions of the people (Katouziyan, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 284). Therefore, in light of the factors discussed, the symbolic or representational function in the Pahlavi political system not only failed to be effective but also became an important factor in activating opposition forces among religious groups and the deprived classes of society, who were largely influenced by the discourse of religious leaders.

4.5. Responsiveness Capacity of the Pahlavi System

The Pahlavi system was not responsive to the demands and claims it received from society and the people. This was rooted in the authoritarian nature of the regime, in which the people, social groups, and opponents were ignored. It is for this reason that Hossein Bashiriye argues that in the "Discourse of Pahlavi absolutist modernism, there was little room for political participation and competition." (Bashiriye, 2024 ADS/1403 SH: 69) After the coup of August 19, 1953, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sought to employ military figures in government. Accordingly, Major General Zahedi was appointed prime minister, and Major General Bakhtiyar became the military governor of Tehran. Naturally, when military elements were placed within the political structure due to their absolute obedience to the Shah, they were effectively accountable only to him, which, in turn, contributed to repression and a lack of responsiveness toward the people.

Another factor contributing to the Pahlavi government's lack of responsiveness was undoubtedly its rentier nature, which led to authoritarianism and the state's independence from social classes and the populace. Consequently, the distance created between the government and the people prevented the Pahlavi system from being responsive to society. Moreover, the prioritization of economic development over political development led the Shah to form a misguided perception of political freedom and governmental accountability. Accordingly, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was not concerned about the absence of political freedom because he believed that what mattered to the general public was material comfort. It was in this context that, during this period, the new term "Economic Democracy" became commonplace (Alikhani, 2011 AD/1390 SH: 76).

The nature of the Pahlavi system was such that political parties independent of the government did not emerge, and the existing parties, including the Melliyun Party and the People's Party, were "Yes-sir Parties" rather than genuine and effective actors; in this respect, there was no real difference between them. Thus, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's dictatorship made real competition among parties impossible (Bayat, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 84). The formation of the Rastakhiz Party delivered the final blow to the Pahlavi system and extinguished even the faint hope of accountability within the regime. Overall, as noted, the two-party system was effectively under the Shah's control, and in the few instances when leaders of the People's Party stepped outside the regime-defined framework and voiced criticism of the government, they were removed. Among such figures were Alinaghi Kani and Nasser Ameri, who were sidelined in 1972 and 1974, respectively (Halliday, 1979 AD/1358 SH: 45).

External factors also contributed to the Shah's lack of accountability. The United States supported a strong government in Iran because, during the Mosaddegh period, the interests of oil cartels had been endangered. By contrast, the existence of a powerful central government aligned with them secured the interests of these oil cartels (Keddie, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 218). The Pahlavi regime's unresponsiveness to public opinion, both domestically and internationally, led security organizations and the state apparatus to exert heavy pressure on their opponents, with little fear of repression or torture. As the London *Sunday Times* stated, "The human rights situation in Iran is worse than anywhere else in the world." (Cambridge, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 143) Ultimately, it should be noted that, due to the absence of the rule of law and the presence of a corrupt bureaucracy, the principle of accountability during the Pahlavi period was effectively marginalized. Although Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was, under

the Constitutional Law, considered a non-responsible (irresponsible) figure, in practice, he used the granting of special privileges to secure loyalty and obtain political support (Radmard et al., 2021 AD/1400 SH: 25).

Conclusion

The authors of this article believe that the Pahlavi government, owing to its standing army and extensive bureaucracy, possessed the capacity to effect change in Iranian society. Accordingly, this study sought to answer the question of the extent to which the Pahlavi system fulfilled the functional capacities of a political system within its environment. To address this issue, the theoretical approach of Almond and Powell was employed. Based on the Almond–Powell framework, system performance can be assessed through five indicators: extractive, regulatory, distributive, symbolic, and responsive capacities.

The study's findings regarding the Second Pahlavi period indicate that, from the perspective of extractive capacity, reliance on oil led to a single-commodity, dependent national economy, which in turn eliminated the need for taxation, intensified dictatorship, and widened the gap between the state and society. From a regulatory perspective, the Second Pahlavi system was in clear violation of the law; disregard for the Constitution itself attests to this. From a distributive perspective, during the Second Pahlavi era, resources and opportunities were not equitably distributed between the populace and the ruling class. The symbolic or representational function was also ineffective in preserving and sustaining the Pahlavi political system; beyond this, excessive emphasis on components such as ancient nationalism (archaism) provoked active confrontation by religious forces with the government. From the standpoint of responsiveness, due to the absence of the rule of law and the presence of a corrupt bureaucracy, the Pahlavi government was effectively unresponsive to the people. The regime used the granting of special privileges to secure loyalty and obtain political support. Therefore, based on these five indicators, the Pahlavi government was an inefficient and ineffective system.

As functionalist theory explains, the collapse of the Pahlavi system was due to dysfunction in fulfilling the fivefold efficiency functions during the pre-revolutionary period. The authoritarian nature of the regime meant that public demands did not translate into desired outputs, and ineffective policies accumulated. Under such conditions, political socialization was severely challenged, public distrust increased, and the political system faced a legitimacy crisis. In essence, due to its authoritarian nature, the Pahlavi government was unable to

perform its core functions effectively. Part of this problem stemmed from the identity of the Pahlavi system itself. This regime emerged through Reza Khan's coup of 3 Esfand 1299 (February 21, 1921), which was supported by the British embassy, and later ensured its survival through the coup of August 19, 1953, carried out by the United States and Britain. Consequently, it did not perceive a need to seek support from society. The patron–client nature of this government led it to secure support not from society but primarily from the international system, and despite its modernizing claims, it adopted a top-down, authoritarian approach to development and did not define its problem as achieving effectiveness in meeting societal needs.

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