



On the Role of Strategy in Nonviolent Revolutionary Social Change: the Case of Iran, 1977-1979

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Abstract

Are revolutions made or do they come? This question is at the heart of revolution theory and has received plentiful attention from scholars. In this paper I suggest that adherence to this traditional dichotomy may not be the most useful to approach the study of revolutions. Therefore, I argue that theorists of revolutions are well advised to examine the role of the strategic decisions made by revolutionaries in their struggles against the state. Drawing empirically on the nonviolent revolution of Iran in 1977-79, I show that the strategic decisions made by the opposition movement not only allowed them to capitalize on a political opportunity, but that their strategic choices in fact helped bring that opportunity about in the first place.

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