*The following excerpt has been modified for classroom use. It is from "*[*What the U.S. Needs to Know About Iran,"*](https://worldview.carnegiecouncil.org/archive/worldview/1979/05/3209.html/_res/id%3DFile1/) *written in May 1979 by Yahya Armajani for* WORDLVIEW *Magazine.*
*Yahya Armajani, a native or Iran, was James Wallace Professor of History, Emeritus, at Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota. His students included Kofi Annan and Walter Mondale. Among, Armajani's publications are the textbooks* Iran *(1970) and* Middle East Past and Present *(1972).* WORLDVIEW *magazine ran from 1958-85 and featured articles by political philosophers, scholars, churchmen, statesmen, and writers from across the political spectrum.*

**How did the White Revolution Help Lead to the Shah's Downfall?**

"The Revolution of the Shah and the People" was launched in 1963 with a large affirmative referendum. It had six points: distribution of land, nationalization of water and forests, profit-sharing plans for factory workers, revision of electoral laws, enfranchisement of women, and the establishment of Houses of Justice in rural areas...

The fact remains, however, that the road to hell is paved with good intentions that are unfinished, or hastily planned, or are not implemented at all. His Majesty was in such a hurry to carry out a reform that he identified his announcement of reform with the finished product. His ministers reported that all was well, and he gradually believed his own propaganda.

The land reform was a necessary and revolutionary reform, and many benefited from it. However, there was only one law for a large country like Iran with varied climate, modes of living, and traditions. Time was needed to adapt the law to the needs to each locality; education was needed to teach the farmer how to work in a cooperative; laws were needed to protect the farmer; and money was needed to help him stand of his feet. Alas, there was not enough time for adaptation or education or laws, because all the functionaries of government were busy nodding their heads in praise of a new point His Majesty had added to the Revolution of the Shah and the People.

Soon the flood of billions of petrodollars opened the way to "industrialization" and wholesale increase of corruption. Agriculture was put on the back burner. Instead, factories were installed for which there were no trained Iranian workers; millions of tons of goods were brought by uncounted ships for which there were no docking facilities; thousands of huge trucks were imported for which there were no drivers; and tens of thousands of cars were imported for which there were no roads or city streets...There was more profit in importing items than in educating Iranians to produce them. This was especially true of agricultural products. For example, it was more profitable to import tons of frozen meat from Peru than to help the sheep herders of Iran produce more meat.

...A great deal was accomplished. The peasants who were fortunate enough to be beneficiaries of the first phase of land reform have prospered; dams have been built, and a good portion of the Khuzistan plain has been irrigated. Even though the bulk of the industrialization is of the assembly-line variety, many genuine industries were started, and sanitation and education improved. Unfortunately, most projects were poorly planned and practically everything was tinged with corruption and political repression. People in practically all walks of life were hit by economic dislocation and spiraling inflation, but the educated classes had the additional burden of political repression and absolute dictatorship.