Islamic Populism

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> What Enlightenment declares to be an error and a
> fiction is the very same thing as Enlightenment . . .
> — Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

Discussions of Islamic revival, fanaticism, fundamentalism, popu-
lism, etc., reverberate in the literature concerning the Muslim world.
There is resistance to all forms of *un*Islamic (especially Western) ideas
and modes of behavior. To be sure, there are various "Islams" — rang-
ing from militant Shiism in Iran and Lebanon to the Sunni brotherhood
(Ikhwan) in Egypt and other parts of North Africa — each fashioning
and refashioning the "venerable tradition" against the tendency of
local intelligentsia and ruling·governments to imitate the West.[1] At
times the target is what Al-e Ahmad calls "Westoxicated intellectuals,"
the·colonial legacy and, occasionally, as with Iqbal, Abduh, Shariati
and other apostles of Islamic "modernism," is self-directed. Yet there
is a common thread. These Islamic movements are not inherently
backward-looking or conservative, seeking primarily to restore pre-
modern values or to legitimate particular interests.[2] Nor are they the
legitimate postmodern heirs of largely bankrupt secular movements

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1. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1993). See also Will-
iam R. Roff, "Islamic Movements: One or Many?" In Roff, ed., *Islam and the Political
Economy of Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 31-52.
2. Daryush Shayegan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une Revolution Religieuse?* (Paris: Albin
Michel, 1991). See also Michael Youssef, *Revolt Against Modernity* (The Hague: E. J.
Brill, 1985).

and ideologies.[3] Similarly, facile associations of Islamic populism with empowerment "from below" need re-examination.[4] All in all, these movements, first and foremost the Islamic revolution in Iran, have sparked new suspicions about the universality of Western Enlightenment.[5]

The Iranian revolution's linking of nation and religion contradicts Max Weber's verdict on modernity. Instead of formal-value rationality and the concomitant gradual decomposition of religious worldviews, what has developed is a kind of "hierocratic domination" — the sobering, strange courtship of the holy by a modern bureaucracy. Coming to terms with this revolution requires deciphering a "heroic" society engaged in recreating itself on the basis of a social imaginary drawn from tradition.[6] Although this process is far from over, it is clearly a watershed and it has profoundly shaken the predominant paradigms of progress. With its overt anti-secularism, its identification of politics and religion and its relentless quest for the Islamization of all features of social life, the Islamic revolution is a threat to the ideologists of progress inasmuch as it threatens their belief in the march of history and in time-honored distinctions such as progressive/reactionary, radical/conservative.[7]

At any rate, the crisis precipitated by what has been described as the

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3.   W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1985). Also, Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992); Akbar S. Ahmad and Hastings Donnan, eds., *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1994).

4.   See, e.g., Edmund Burke III, *Global Crises and Social Movements: Artisans, Peasants, Populists and the World Economy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988); Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World* (London: Routledge, 1991); Ali A. Cudsi and Ali E. Hillal Desouki, eds., *Islam and Power* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Mohammad Ayoob, ed., *The Politics of Islamic Reassertion* (New York: Praeger, 1982).

5.   For a work that traces Islamic movements to Western culture's stance toward the East, see Ali Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (London: James Currey Ltd, 1990). Despite its insights, this work is hampered by a holistic notion of "the West" and an uncritical understanding of Islamic cultural forces.

6.   ·On the concept of "heroic society," see Alsdair McIntyre, *After Virtue* (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1981).

7.   While conceding that Islamic fundamentalism "is very hard to reconcile with liberalism," Fukuyama holds on to his teleological account by reducing the Iranian revolution to a pathological development — a temporary throwback from the general evolutionary pattern. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 217. Similarly, a former CIA analyst of Islamic movements has recently projected (under a pseudonym) the impending demise of these movements and the imminent "meltdown" of the Islamic Republic. See Edward G. Shirley, "Is Iran's Present Algeria's Future?" in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (May-June, 1995).

"revenge of God" is undeniable.[8] Yet none of the "facts" of this revolution are self-evident,[9] and it is premature to conclude the revolution has midwifed an "anti-secular" state pure and simple.[10] The contraposition of Islam and secularism, long a staple of sociological literature, does not seem tenable in light of recent post-revolutionary developments.[11] The turbulent post-1979 state-building process has had problematic consequences for both religion and politics. The Islamic Republic has established a kind of institutional heteronomy and linked it to two largely incompatible forms of power, republicanism and theocracy, through a populist imaginary that constantly reproduces its initial *élan* while simultaneously nurturing a secular undercurrent impossible to describe as "theocratic populism" — an article of faith in analyses of Iran.

Islamic Populism Revisited

Today, the concept of Islamic populism, whether in conjunction with or juxtaposed to "fundamentalism," is used to describe the plethora of disparate religious movements in the Middle East and beyond engaged in

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8. Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, trans. by Alan Braley (Philadelphia: Pensylvania State University Press, 1994). See also Martin G. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *The Glory and the Power: The Fundamentalist Challenge to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). Both these works are theoretically weak and, consequently, unable to grasp many of the complexities of the fundamentalist "phenomenon."

9. Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Although Arjomand is on the mark when he questions the distinction between revolutions and counterrevolutions, his analysis falls short in that he reduces the revolution's ideological repertoire to the religious leaders' outlook (e.g., p. 200), uncritically uses terms such as "ideology," and confuses revolutionary practices with subversive religious critiques. A similar reductionism can be found in Moadel, who writes that the revolution "transpired when the revolutionary ideology began to take over the protest movements" and that it "was over when the Shiite revolutionary discourse was reduced to the ideology of the Islamic Republic." Mansour Moadel, *Class, Politics, and Ideology in the Iranian Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 191, 268.

10. See Theda Skocpol, "Reconsidering the French Revolution in World-Historical Perspective," *Social Research*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Spring 1989), p. 69: "The Iranian revolution . . . has opposed a secular, 'modernizing' absolutist monarchy in the name of an Islamic theocratic regime. Iran's revolutionary political culture is a militantly anti-secularist and anti-modernizing version of Shia Islam."

11. According to Gellner, "The secularization thesis does not apply to Islam." Gellner, *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity, op. cit.*, p. xi. See also Leonard Binder, *Islamic Liberalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). Both authors overlook "internal secularization" and thus are forced to dichotomize Islam and secularism. For a summary of recent discussions on the subject, see José Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

mobilization, organization, and possibly (as in the case of Iran) ruling in the name of *Allah*. Populism has been deployed to explain the secrets behind Khomeini's charisma, the revolution's successful mobilization, its glorification of the have-nots, its transversal constituency, its seemingly paranoic "xenophobia" and its nostalgia for an idealized past. With these features as earmarks of populism, the Iranian revolution has been lumped, explicitly or implicitly, with other populist experiences such as Peronism and Narodnism. Beyond the common references, however, considerable confusion remains over the concept of populism.[12]

Almost all accounts of the Iranian revolution have relied uncritically on the existing literature on populism — especially Latin American populism.[13] This *ad hoc* use of the concept tends to confuse more than it clarifies, particularly because theories of populism were originally developed to explain events outside the Middle East.[14] Thus Afrashteh defines populism as "institutionalized xenophobia" — a one-sided, psychologically reductionist assumption,[15] and Moghadam uses populism simply as a class concept.[16] Consequently, the religious component of this populism becomes an extension of class and the strategies of Iranian populists are reduced to "class behavior." As to the question "why Islam?" the standard

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12. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Khominism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Manouchehr Dorraj, *From Zarathustra to Khomeini: Populism and Dissent in Iran* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1990); Paul Vielle and F. Khosrokhavar, *Le Discours Populaire de la Revolution Iranienne* (Paris: Contemporaneité, 1990); Fred Halliday, "The Iranian Revolution: Uneven Development and Religious Populism," in *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 36, no. 2 (Fall-Winter, 1982); Kambiz Afrashteh, "The Predominance and Dilemmas of Theocratic Populism in Contemporary Iran," in *Iranian Studies, Vol. XIV*, Nos. 3-4 (Summer-Autumn, 1981).

13. Thus Abrahamian simply equates Iranian and Latin American populisms (as modern expressions of mass discontent). Yet he undercuts his own effort (of deconstructing the "paranoid style" in Iranian political culture) by recycling old clichés about foreign domination. See *Khomeinism, op. cit.*, p. 116. On Latin American populisms, see Daniele Checci, *The Emergence of Populist Experiences in Latin America* (Oxford: Queen Elizabeth House, 1993); Emilio de Ipola, *Ideologia y Discurso Populista* (Mexico City: Folios Ediciones, 1982); Anibal Viguera, "Populismo y Neopopulismo en America Latina," in *Revista Mexicana de Scoiologia*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (July-September 1993), pp. 49-66. See also Guilermo A. O'Deonnel, "Delegative Democracy?" in *Working Papers*, No. 172 (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, Kellogg Institute, 1993).

14. Bashirieh writes about "populist mobilization" in Iran without, however, clarifying what he means by "populism." See Hossein Bashirieh, *The State and Revolution in Iran* (Sidney: Croom Helm, 1984).

15. Afrashteh, "The Predominance and Dilemmas . . ." *op. cit.*

16. Val Moghadam, "Islamic Populism, Class and Gender in Post Revolutionary Iran," in John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 189-223.

answer has been formulated in terms of "lack of other alternatives."[17]

The emphasis here is on Islam's organizational rather than ideological role. It is meant as a corrective to the so-called "authenticity" argument, which traces the roots of "political Islam" to the Muslims' attempt to regain their lost authenticity (*asl*).[18] Although there is no denying the importance of cultural alienation and the need for roots, the "authenticity" argument overlooks the impact of factors unrelated to religion.[19] In contrast, typical sociologistic explanations invert the authenticity argument by claiming that Islam's role was not a cause but an effect of the revolutionary process, which they commonly describe as populist.[20] Here, the specificity of Iranian populism is defined as broadly representing the middle classes, with one group interpreting the phenomenon as traditional and fascist,[21]

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17.   "Sociologically, given the lack of established roots for alternative political ideas in society, there existed an intimate and active relationship, both sentimental and ideological, between religion and the 'masses.'" Mohsen Nodjomi, "From Popular Revolution to Theocratic Absolutism: Iran 1979-1981," in *Socialism and Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Summer 1988), p. 38. Accordingly, Asharaf and Banuazizi write, "In the absence of genuine political parties, independent labor unions and professional associations, and freedoms of speech and assembly, religion became the only rallying point around which a mass movement could be built." See Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "The State, Classes, and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution," in *State, Culture and Society*, No. 1 (1985), p. 9. These authors have developed a stage theory of the Iranian Revolution. Accordingly, there are five stages, "each marked by a particular mode of mobilization, dominated by a particular coalition of opposition groups, and distinguished by a particular set of confrontational strategies." p. 4. But these are too many variables. Consequently, the revolution's chronology has been forced to fit this neat categorization so that, e.g., the squatters' riots in Teheran in 1977 are simply ignored because they do not conform with the "nonviolent mobilization" of the first stage. In addition, the authors fail to document their claims as to the frequency of collective action.
18.   See Hamid Algar, *The Roots of the Islamic Revolution* (London: Islamic Society, 1982). According to Algar, the revolution "was also a question of an individual returning to the self, to the deepest self." p. 118. The authenticity fever has also caught on with some leading Arab intellectuals who argue that, e.g., the "illusion of cutting ourselves off from our past was definitely refuted by the Iranian Revolution. There is no progress without holding to our authenticity." Quoted in Emmanuel Sivan, ed., *Radical Islam* (New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press, 1985), p. 167. For a critique of this approach, see Paul Piccone, "The Actuality of Tradition," *Telos* 94 (Winter 1993-94), pp. 89-102.
19.   See Mongol Bayat, "Islam in Pahlavi and Post-Pahlavi Iran: A Cultural Revolution?" in John L. Esposito, ed., *Islam and Development* (New York: SUNY, 1980).
20.   See Michael Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982): "The causes of the revolution, and its timing, were economic and political; the form of the revolution, and its pacing, owed much to the tradition of religious protest."
21.   For a typical "Third World fascism" analysis, see Mansour Moadel, *Class, Ideology, and Politics . . ., op. cit.* ; see also, Homa Omid, *Islam, and the Post-Revolutionary State in Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

and another seeing it as a modernist prototype for socialism.[22] Both interpretations are predicated on a materialism that separates, the revolution's form and content — a dualism that explains the remarkable resurgence of the *ulama* and how the popular association of revolution with Islam is more a symptom than a cause of political dissent. Both accounts deduce the revolution from the lack of democracy, of an organized proletariat, class consciousness, etc. Allegedly, because of their relative immunity from repression, the *ulama* were the only social group able to voice popular.grievances with impunity. This assumes that the secular forces, had they not been demolished, could have stolen the torch from the clergy — a highly dubious assumption.

Accounts predicated on the "lack of secular ideologies" underestimate the power of religion and assume the superiority of secular ideologies. Usually, they are accompanied by the additional claim that Islam "cemented" a historical bloc of opposing forces. Thus, allegedly, the Iranian masses first became revolutionary and then were "Islamicized." This assumes a pre-ideological phase of mobilization — an easily refutable notion of the possibility of carrying out a revolution without ideology.[23] In addition to an analysis of religion that does not reduce it to merely communicating pre-existing meanings,[24] what is missing here is a serious inquiry into the nature of the revolutionary process as a need-generating mechanism rather than a neutral

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22.   Some Iranian leftists, such as the leader of the pro-Moscow Tudeh Party, opportunistically identified Khomeini's version of Islam with "scientific socialism." See "Interview With Kianoori," *International Herald Tribune* (January 23, 1979). Prior to the revolution the entire Iranian Left had advocated.the Marxian thesis of the "withering away of religion." After the revolution, references about.the *ulama* as a "dying class" vanished, but Iranian leftists still reduced the role of Islam to semantics and continued to see the Islamic revival as temporary and "transitional."

23.   This is the main problem with Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). Subsequently Skocpol corrected this shortcoming, but only by deploying a crude notion of ideology. See her "Rentier State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution," in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (May 1982). Smith has pointed out that "the decentering of class struggle is only an initial step in the development of a more useful political analysis of these movements." Anne Marie Smith, "Rastafari as Resistance and the Ambiguities of Essentialism," in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, eds., *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 172.

24.   The problem with the stereotypical usages of "religious language" is that they imply another (public) language existing side by side it, as if each were an individual linguistic totality closed off from the.other. See, e.g., Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988). For an alternative view, see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschafen* (Frankfurt: Surkamp, 1971); and Nancy Bonvillain, *Language, Culture, Communication: The Meaning of Messages* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993).

channel for pre-existing needs and discontents.[25]

Another interesting perspective on Islamic populism focuses on the "dual society." According to Tehranian, there were "two epistemic societies" predicated on religious and secular ideologies, and the resulting frictions generated by their interaction led to the revolution.[26] Keddie has emphasized the persistence of religious values among the educated sons and daughters of traditional bazaar families, tracing this to these values' ability to stimulate demands and to provide solutions for the problems facing these strata.[27] As a corollary, the "identity crisis" linked to the "dual society" is typically traced to the relative inadequacy of secular values due to their "lack of foundation in the Muslim world because as individual norms they are structurally inappropriate to a non-industrial society."[28]

The first objection here has to do with whether Islamic populism is simply a function of a particular stage of social development or a consequence of distinct processes. The theory implies the questionable assumption that eventually the need for Islamic "revival" is likely to diminish. Aside from its dubious implicit teleology, this view conflates two distinct levels of analysis: (a) the social milieu which generated this populism, and (b) the specific actions, tactics, and strategies of the protagonists, which may have triggered the populist "revolt." The advocates of "dual society" have yet to confront this issue. Their assumption of a "lack of fit" between secular norms and a pre-modern society remains too simplistic.

In *Turban for the Crown*, Arjomand repeatedly criticizes secular forces for their "suicidal" compromise with their religious counterparts during the 1978-79 revolution. Yet he does not differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate compromises. There was considerable agreement

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25.   Mohsen M. Milani, *The Making of the Iranian Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988). One of the problems of this work is that it has no clue as to how the revolutionary process functioned as a learning process creating its own disciplinary mechanisms.

26.   Majid Tehranian, "Communication and Revolution in Iran: The Passing of A Paradigm," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. XIIV, Nos. 1-4 (1980), p. 7: "The increasing dualist structure of Iran's social and economic systems revealed itself perhaps above all in the communication system. We can best examine the salient features of this dualism in terms of the two competing religious and secular ideologies, structures, and processes of social communication — living autonomously side by side with immense friction whenever and whereever they collided."

27.   Nikki R. Keddie, "Iran: Change in Islam: Islam and Change," in *International Journal of the Middle East Studies* Vol. 11, no. 4 (June-July 1980), pp. 527-547.

28.   Bassam Tibi, "The Renewed Role of Islam in the Political and Social Development of the Middle East," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1983), pp. 3-4. Tibi repeats his (essentially Eurocentric) view in *Islam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990).

between the secular and the religious forces. Operating within the parameters of an Islamic eschatology that emphasized an otherworldly "ethics of duty" over this-worldly success,[29] Khomeini's critique overlapped with that of secular, liberal, and nationalist critics in at least one important respect: the perceived lack of autonomy from foreign powers. Arjomand and others overlook this state of affairs and, consequently, cannot trace the trajectory of the revolution as a consensus-creating process.[30] Here Foucault's writings constitute a striking exception.

Foucault and the Islamic Revolution

Having observed the revolution first-hand as a correspondent for *Le Monde* and *Corriere della Sera* (Fall 1978), Foucault immediately broke with predominant interpretations of the revolution — especially Marxist ones. While he did not consider the revolution populist, much of what he wrote documents the development of an Iranian populism: "What struck me in Iran is that there is no struggle between different elements. What gives it such beauty, and at the same time such gravity, is that there is only one confrontation: between the entire people and the state threatening it."[31] Following Furet, he distinguished between

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29.   "This martyr-producing nation . . . is not afraid of any enemy, power, or conspiracy. Afraid are those whose school of thought is not martyrdom. Victorious is the nation for whom martyrdom is prosperity." Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, *Sahifeh-e Noor*, Vol. 13 (Teheran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1983), p. 65. Crucial here is the Islamists' rationalization of death, as basically a non-problematic passage from one realm of being to another. According to Ayatollah Taleghani, who was the foremost popular cleric after Khomeini, Islam has disclosed the secret of death, i.e., that "there is no death; it is a transition of one life to another, from the womb of nature to a large, vast, and elevated divine presence, especially the death which is in the path of Allah." Quoted in *Majmoo'eh-e Notghay-e Nemaz-e Jomm'eh-e Teheran*, Vol. 1 (Teheran: Ministry of Islamic Guidance, 1985), p. 45.

30.   See, Mohammad Amjad, *Iran: From Royal Dictatorship to Theocracy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989); Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos On a National Scale* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1988); and Ali Rahnema and Farhad Nomani, *The Secular Miracle* (London: ZED Press, 1990).

31.   See Michel Foucault, "Teheran: La Fede Contro lo Scià," in *Corriere della Sera* (October 8, 1978): Islam does not "constitute an ideology so diffused among the population that it forces the revolutionaries to unite with it for a certain time. The religion is much more than a simple vocabulary through which the aspirations that have no other words must pass." However, Foucault seems to contradict himself when he characterizes religion as "the vocabulary, the ceremonial, the timeless drama into which one could fit the historical drama of a people that pitted its very existence against that of its sovereign." See his "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirits," in Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed., *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 216.

revolutionary events and their socio-historical context.[32] His focus on the interplay between movement and power, the self-constitution of revolutionaries, their actions and modes of resistance, as well as their religion, was in tune with his attacks on traditional historiography and his anti-humanism. To a certain extent, the Iranian revolution as a critique of pro-gressivist thought corroborated Foucault's premonitions. Defining the Iranian revolution as "a movement that permits the introduction of the spiritual dimension in political life," he dismissed the label "anti-modern" and argued instead that it is "the most mad and most modern form of revolution" deserving a great deal of intellectual enthusiasm.[33]

Foucault saw it as a fascinating break not only with the old Iranian regime but also with "the entire world order . . . it is perhaps the first insurrection against the global system."[34] Clearly, the Iranian revolution led him to re-examine not only the role of religion but also the problem of revolution as such. The Iranian experience only superficially resembled other revolutions marked by "class struggle" and led by a "vanguard." He saw the revolution's "contingent singularity" as an unprecedented manifestation of a "collective will"[35] embodied in Khomeini.[36] As in Rousseau, for Foucault the collective will denotes the voluntary participation of all. Yet he was not blind to the "dark side" of the Iranian collective will, e.g., its "atrocious" aspects, the "worship of the dead," the "virulent xenophobia,

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32.   See François Furet, *La Revolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). For Foucault, an event "is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of relationship of forces, the usurpation of power . . : the forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulating mechanisms but respond to haphazard conflicts." Quoted in Jean Goldstein, ed., *Foucault and the Writing of History* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1994), pp. 170-171.

33.   Foucault complained that the European intellectuals' relative lack of enthusiasm for the Iranian revolution stemmed from their lack of understanding of its historical significance. See "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirits," *op: cit.,* pp. 212-213.

34.   Michel Foucault, "Ritorno al Profeta?" in *Corriere della Sera* (October 22, 1978): "It is not a revolution in the literal sense of the term, which is, people getting on their feet and redirecting themselves. It is the insurrection of men with bare hands, who want to lift the formidable weight we all bear, but more particularly weighs on them: 'the weight of the entire world order'." Previously, Foucault had sneered at all liberation movements as "the forms that made an essentially normalizing power acceptable." in *History of Sexuality*, Vol. One (New York: Pantheon, 1981), p. 144.

35.   "We met in Teheran and throughout Iran, the collective will of a people. Well, you have to salute it, it does not happen every day." See "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirits," *op. cit.,* p. 215.

36.   "Il Mitico Capo della Rivolta," in *Corriere della Sera* (November 26, 1978). Here Foucault portrays Khomeini as a saintly figure opposed to political corruption and Iran's domination from abroad.

and the "subjugation of women."[37] None of this stifled his appreciation of the novelty of the revolution. His romanticization of the Iranian phenomenon was based both on his observation of the mass demonstrations and the general strike (which crippled the Iranian system for half a year) and his interpretation of where the revolution was going: a "radical rejection of the past" moving "toward a distant luminous point, in which it might be possible to reconnect oneself to a faith rather than to preserve obedience."[38] Contrary to standard analyses, Foucault did not raise the movement over its prospects, and the formation of revolutionary identity over its consequences.[39] The problems with his analysis lie elsewhere.

Foucault's notion of the "collective will" remains too vague. Like Rousseau, he said precious little about the content of this will and what it wills.[40] It collides with his own romanticization of the revolution when voicing skepticism about the revolutionaries' demand for an "Islamic government," which he did not regard as "very reassuring."[41] He was not particularly disturbed by this fundamental ambiguity, nor did he see the collective will's "intolerance" as purely negative, but as "necessary."[42] His inability to provide a coherent analysis is not only related to a vacuous concept of the collective will but also to an equally ill-elaborated distinction between faith and obedience. What are the historical advantages of a regime based on faith? Foucault has no answers. This abstractness prevented him from foreseeing the degeneration of the revolution into

37.   "Is it Useless to Revolt?" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism,* Vol. 8 (1987), p. 7, and "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirits," *op. cit.,* p. 215.

38.   "Ritorno al Profeta?" *op. cit.* Here, Foucault writes about the revolution's double orientation: "It is . . . something old and, at the same time, something very distant in the future. It is to turn back to what Islām was at the time of the Prophet, and also to go forward."

39.   James Schmidt and Thomas E. Wartenberg, "Foucault's Enlightenment: Critique, Revolution, and the Fashioning of the Self," in Michael Kelly, ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1994), p. 297: "The importance of Iran for Foucault lies not in what the revolution may or may not have achieved but rather in the simple fact that it took place." Schmidt and Wartenberg do not seem aware of Foucault's Italian articles on Iran, and have based their interpretation on his more circumspect French articles.

40.   Derrida's critique of Rousseau's voluntarist idea of community is relevant here. See Jacques Derrida, *On Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Press, 1976), pp. 244-45. According to Adorno, the will is "the force that enables consciousness to leave its domain and so change what merely exists; its recoil is resistance." Theodore W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum Books, 1973), p. 241.

41.   "Ritorno al Profeta?" *op. cit.*

42.   "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirits," *op. cit.,* p. 224: "The movement, as soon as it perceives slight differences, feels threatened. I believe the intolerance is there — and necessary."

despotism and terror. He seems to have forgotten his own insight that resistance often extends the very relations of domination it seeks to resist.[43] The price he had to pay for his sensitivity to the revolution was that he had to occlude his own insights into the disciplinary mechanisms of power "from below." In fact, his enthusiastic response to the Iranian revolution betrays his lingering commitment to the ideas of the Enlightenment, particularly the idea of revolution as a liberation from bondage and servitude.[44] Here his own ideas can be used to criticize his analysis of the Iranian revolution and vice versa. Whereas his theoretical works make no reference to individual beliefs, intentions and actions, his account of the Iranian revolution concentrates on the participants' hopes and concerns,

Foucault's own ideas provide the basis for a critique of his downplaying the repressive aspects of the Iranian revolution, i.e., the way the emancipatory revolution, acting as a two-edged sword, created a new "carcereal society." From the very beginning, the clergy came to power and became the dominant group by manipulating the masses through a network of mosques and Khomeini's charisma. Foucault, however, paid little attention to religious power in the Iranian movement. Religious organization appears as a mere tool, without the slightest clue as to how religious groups actually used their organization to secure and widen their power. Presumably, the emancipatory movement was limited by the oppositional identity defined by religious institutions interested in creating and controlling it. Yet Foucault did not bother to probe the "consensual" disciplinary nature of the revolution as a "normalizing" process in which domination and emancipation are inseparably linked.[45] Otherwise, he might have concluded there was no innocent collectivity that was subsequently corrupted by the leadership,[46] and he might have anticipated the emergence of Khomeini as the

43.   See his "Truth/Power," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

44.   For more on this, see John Dunn, *Modern Revolutions: An Introduction to the Analysis of A Political Phenomenon* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

45.   Foucault might have anticipated the post-revolutionary clerical intolerance had he paused on his insight that the revolution "is above all about a movement trying to give a permanent role to the traditional structures of Islamic society in political life." In "Ritorno al Profeta?" *op. cit.* For Foucault's ill-elaborated view of the "consensual disciplines," see "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 378-380.

46.   There were numerous instances of abhorrent behavior on the part of revolting masses, e.g., the burning of banks and Pepsi trucks by the mobs chanting anti-Bahai slogans, and the burning of Teheran's red light district, killing scores of prostitutes, by the frenzied protesters who boasted of "cleansing the city" and regaining their "dignity." See Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, *The State and Populism in Iran*, doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1988.

embodiment of justice. He might also have inquired as to whose interests are served by the revolution. Could the revolution end up benefiting the privileged? These questions are sidestepped because he rejected the idea that the popular movement represented a national "class alliance."[47]

Foucault's analysis slipped into the very error his theories had sought to correct by duplicating a binary model of the center versus the subjects, the powerful versus the powerless.[48] Thus he saw the incumbent regime's toleration of opposition throughout 1978 not as sign of liberalization but of the discontinuity of power. Despite his acknowledgment that liberalization had inadvertently contributed to strengthening the opposition, he saw only the regime's defensiveness.[49] At best, he saw the ensuing power struggle between the state and the revolutionaries in terms of the way in which the actions of the former incited the latter, but not the multiple channels of influence between the two camps, how Islamization operated on both sides of the political divide. Consequently, the Shah regime's excommunication of "Islamic Marxists" ended up contributing to the intensification of efforts by revolutionaries to emphasize their authentic, home-grown religious identity which, in turn, prompted the regime to stress as well its religious pedigree.[50]

Although conceptually sophisticated, on the whole Foucault's account of the role of religion in revolutionary Iran is not very original: "It is today what it has been repeatedly in the past: the form that the political struggle assumes as soon as it mobilizes the popular classes. It forms a force out of the infinite dissatisfactions, hates, misery, desperation. . . . [Religion] provides an irreducible force . . . and can oppose state power."[51] These views have been around for some time.[52] A more serious criticism here has to do with Foucault's comment that in the course of the "cassette revolution" the masses heeded the exiled ayatollah's (tape-recorded) calls out of their free will and without him being

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47. In "Iran: The Spirit of a World Without Spirits," *op. cit.*, p. 219: "What we witnessed was not the result of an alliance, for example, between various political groups. Nor was it the result of a compromise between social classes." He was dead wrong about alliances. At the height of the revolution, Khomeini did consult "with opposition groups over a common strategy." See *Kayhan* (October 25, 1978).

48. See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988).

49. Foucault may have drawn too many analogies between the Iranian and the French revolutions. For his views on the decomposition of the French *ancièn règime*, see *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

50. Thus, a new press law promulgated by the pre-revolutionary Parliament banned all publications deemed "contrary to Islam." *Kayhan*, September 23, 1978.

51. "Teheran: la Fede contro Scià," *op. cit.*

52. See Christian Jambet, "The Constitution of the Subject and Spiritual Practice," in *Michel Foucault Philosopher* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 233-247.

"enthroned."[53] This is very unFoucauldian. The hierarchical split between the transmitter and the receiver becomes undistorted communication, without any hint of the revolution's new imperialism of representation and the related subordination of every participant to the inclusive but authoritarian cult of the personality. When all is said and done, Foucault does not provide a really adequate analysis of Islamic populism.

A Critical Theory of Islamic Populism?

The rise of "political Islam" in Iran and elsewhere seems to indicate that new conflicts and new social movements have developed, which are rather different from older types of class struggle centered on production relations. Rather, they concern primarily issues of socialization/cultural reproduction, i.e., "one-sided rationalization," "cultural impoverishment," and "reification of the lifeworld." According to Habermas, these movements address the question, "How to defend or reinstate the endangered ways of life?" and can only be resolved by overcoming the distortions and pathologies in the "lifeworld."[54] In this context, Islamic populism appears primarily as a defensive movement concerned with protecting the "lifeworld" against further encroachment by the system. The post-revolutionary Islamization of national life in Iran seems to confirm Habermas' account of "identity movements" aimed at strengthening "the institutional framework that subjects system maintenance to the normative restrictions of the lifeworld."[55]

Habermas, of course, writes about Western societies and his theories cannot be automatically transposed to the study of Islamic populism.[56] The latter, in fact, may necessitate some modifications in his account. In a nutshell, were Habermas to confront "petrolic" societies (OPEC and non-OPEC), he would realize that, contrary to his theory, the media of money and power cannot be distributed between the economic system and state apparatuses. Functioning

53. "La Rivolta dell'Iran Corre sui Nastri delle Minicassette," in *Corriere della Sera* (November 19, 1978). According to Foucault, "The great ayatollahs of the present time, those who stand up to the king, the police and the army, those who have made the entire population go to the squares, no one has enthroned them, but all have listened to them. This is true even in the smallest communities." See "Teheran: la Fede contro lo Scià," *op. cit.*

54. Jürgen Habermas, "New Social Movements," *Telos*, Vol. 49 (1981), pp. 33-37.

55. *The Theory of Communicative Action,* Volume Two, *op. cit.,* p. 185. Offe has similarly written that "Every act of modernization not only has the positive aspect of improvement, it is also marked by the actually ambivalent aspect of restructuring living conditions through brutal and irritating interference and encroachment." See Claus Offe, *Contradictions of the Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T., 1987), p. 212.

56. See Stephen K. White's criticisms in *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice & Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

as essential components of the economy, so-called "rentier" states face crises different from those he described.[57] For one thing, "motivation" crises not only tend to occur in both economic and political "subsystems," but they stand in a different relation to "legitimation deficits."[58]

Habermas overemphasizes the pathology-producing impacts of the "mediatizing" mechanisms of the economy and the bureaucracy. Consequently, notwithstanding his tendency to romanticize the lifeworld,[59] he underestimates specific lifeworld problems that can be traced to the turbulence of its constituent components,[60] e.g., the fragmentation of religious consciousness. Habermas occludes the autonomous logic of the devolution of worldviews and, worse, precludes a critical scrutiny of the potential

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57.   This is the "rentier state" theory which maintains, among other things, that in rentier societies, with little or no taxes, the citizens are far less demanding in terms of political accountability. See Hossein Mahdavi, "Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran," in M.A. Cook, ed., *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); also, Giacomo Luciani, ed., *The Arab State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). There are several problems with this theory. It deduces the totality of the state — its administrative mechanisms, budgetary priorities, etc. — from the "rentier structure." Typical formulations tend to identify the "rentier state" with its operation as a rent collecting mechanism. But government revenue is a necessary condition of its institutions and not its fundamental mechanism. The oil "rent" coordinating operation of the state must not be confused with its overall *modus operandi*. In addition, this theory suffers from the reduction of state decisions to economic interests. For a modified version of this theory that recycles all its limitations, see Lisa Anderson, "Peace and Democracy in the Middle East: The Constraints of Soft Budgets," in *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 49. No. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 25-45.

58.   "A legitimation crisis must be based on a motivation crisis — that is, a discrepancy declared by the state, the educational and the occupational systems on the one hand, and the motivation supplied by the socio-cultural system on the other." *The Legitimation Crisis* (Boston: Beacon Press,), 1975), p. 130. In revolutionary Iran, the motivation crisis affected the functionaries of the old regime, who were disoriented by the Shah's belated attempt to offset the revolutionary momentum by means of a bureaucratic house cleaning. This led to complaints such as the following: "Was this to be our reward for faithfully carrying out the monarch's policy for years? Are we, the technocrats who built modern Iran, now to be sacrificed for its critics?" Quoted in John Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981), p. 109. This belies the claim that the pre-revolutionary state "had become a sphere of decision-making, more or less insulated from social pressures." See Simon Bromely, *Rethinking Middle East Politics* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 151.

59.   Anthony Giddens, "Reason Without Revolution? Habermas' *Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns*," in Richard Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T., 1985), pp. 95-121. Piccone seems to share Habermas' romanticization of the lifeworld when writing about the "rapidly fading constraints of pre-modern provincialism." See Paul Piccone, "Postmodern Populism," in *Telos* 103 (Spring 1995), pp. 45-86.

60.   See Fred Dallymer's criticisms in his "Critical Theory and Reconciliation" in Don S. Browning and Francis Schussler Fiorenza, eds., *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), pp. 18-121.

distortions created by attempts to reconquer the lifeworld.

Although Habermas has retreated from his previous celebration of "post-metaphysical" thinking, his half-hearted reconciliation with religious-transcendental worldviews suffers from the absence of any firm principles. What is missing is a serious attempt to draw the full implications of his insights emphasizing religion's endurance, its "therapeutic experience," and its role in fostering a communicative ethics.[61] At any rate, by focusing on the multiple channels of communication between the state and "public spheres," and on the imperatives of social and system integration, his analysis may contribute to a theory of populism. Habermas has argued that extensive state intervention prevents focusing on the contradictions of capitalism and shifts political action away from potential structural transformations to the state.[62] Shortcutting a long theoretical detour, this line of inquiry paves the way for a dual analysis of populism: a) as a anti-hegemonic politics posing alternative forms of knowledge and power, and b) as a preemptive politics from above aiming at establishing a relation between state and society by shaping and reshaping social subsystems — a politics of survival by the incumbent regimes. How does this apply to the Iranian experience?[63]

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61. According to Habermas, religious and other traditional values function as "stencils according to which needs are shaped." Similarly, the renewal of tradition is said to be "ever more strongly dependent on individuals' readiness for critique and capacity for innovation." See Habermas' "reply" in Browning and Fiorenza, eds., *Habermas, Modernity and Public Theology, op. cit.* See, also, Marsha Aileen Hewitt, *Critical Theory of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Joseph Runzo, ed., *Ethics, Religion and the Good Society* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992); and S. Cromwell Crawford, *World Religions and Global Ethics* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

62. "The more effectively class conflict, which a private enterprise economy builds into a society, can be dammed up and held latent, the more persistently are problems pressed into the foreground which do not immediately harm interests which are calculable on the basis of class." *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, op. cit,* p. 391.

63. See Pierre-André Taguieff, "Political Science Confronts Populism: from a Conceptual Mirage to a Real Problem," in *Telos* 103 (Spring 1995), pp. 9-44. There are several problems with Taguieff's otherwise thorough analysis of populism. First, he tries to portray "protest" and "identitarian" populisms as two distinct ideal-types and as two poles of the same phenomenon. Either way, this classification is suspect, among other things, because identity logic is part of any populist protest. Second, he adopts a minimalist view of populism as a form of mobilization, a style of politics, which coincides with the experience of "populist regimes" in, e.g., Brazil, as his own discussion shows. This undercuts his insistence that populism does not presuppose a particular type of regime. Third, his claim that "all populisms are in some ways national-populisms" disregards the deterritorialization of trans-national populism, such as Islamic populism. Finally, in one way or other all populists advocate social justice. Taguieff overlooks the levelling dimension common to all forms of populism and readily dismisses the notion that populism embodies any particular ideological content.

Populism in Iran

One of the salient features of populism in Iran concerns the "national-popular" character of *Twelver* Shiism, Iran's dominant sect since the early 16th century. To go over a fairly familiar story, Iranian Shiism has a history of both passive and active resistance to oppression, a strong messianic impulse, a built-in emotionalism, and an organic connection with the Iranian national ethos.[64] The national spirit did not become self-conscious until the last couple of decades of the 19th century.[65] Its main defect was (and to some extent still is) the existence of several sub-national, i.e., ethnic, provincial, etc., corporate identities.[66] A distinctive Iranian identity may be traced back some two thousand years.[67] The modern Iranian "nation," however, first emerged in the 19th century, as a result of the confluence of state-building, Western intellectual and technological influence, and local reaction to European colonialism and Ottoman reforms. On the whole, this reaction took two forms: nativist-religious and Western-secularist.

Religious nationalism first arose in connection with a clergy-sanctioned revolt against the foreign monopoly of tobacco (1891-92), and soon after, with the Constitutional Revolution (1906).[68] As in the recent revolution, the Constitutional Revolution featured an uneasy symbiosis of two impulses of Iranian nationalism, threatening a break-up of the country.[69] This culminated in a new authoritarianism (1925-41) closely following the

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64. For background on Shiism, see Heinz Helm, *Shiism* (Edinburgh University Press, 1991); Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shii Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany: SUNY, 1982). As Moltman has observed, "The messianic idea has the weakness of the preliminary and provisional which does not give of itself, but preserves itself, which cannot die because it refuses to live." Quoted in Leroy S. Rounder, ed., *Knowing Religiously* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 16. On Shiite "emotionalism," see Peter Chelkowski, "Popular Shi'i Mourning Rituals," in *Al-Serat*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1986).

65. Yan Richard, *Le Shi'isme en Iran* (Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 1980); Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); and, Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran* (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1966).

66. Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Paragon Press, 1993).

67. Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran* (Rome: Instituto Italiano Per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1989).

68. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982). This is by far the most important work on Iranian historiography.

69. See Mongol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Bayat's claim that the *ulama*'s participation in the Constitutional Revolution was not "motivated by doctrinal or religionational considerations" (p. 261) is questionable. It overlooks the fusion of modern nationalist thought in the *ulama*'s outlook.

Turkish path of secular nation-building. Thus a conscious effort to pro-
mote statist nationalism went hand in hand with the removal of the
ulama's control over education, the judiciary, taxation, and the like.[70] The
forced localization of religion aided the centralization of power, but was
hardly conducive to an evolution of a "civic religion." This did not hap-
pen, not just because of Shiism's doctrinal rigidities or the absence of a
viable "reformation,"[71] but also as a result of religion's viability as a con-
duit for popular and nationalist pressures.[72]

As is well known, during the democratic interlude following the
allied invasion of Iran (1941-53), the religious caste resurfaced and,
while joining the crusade to nationalize Iranian oil, bulked on the ques-
tion of social reform. Chief among the latter was land reform. As it hap-
pened, most *ulama* sided with the land owning class in opposing any
meaningful land redistribution.[73] Operating in an increasingly polarized
polity marked by the growth of the communist movement,[74] these *ulama*
did not blink an eye when the fragile liberal-nationalist government of
Mosssadegh was overthrown by a hastily-arranged coup aided by the
CIA and the British secret service.[75]

Although it suppressed democracy for quarter of a century, the post-coup
regime did not represent a strategic defeat for Iranian nationalism.[76] On the
contrary, the state-building process under the second Pahlavi Shah occurred

70.   See Ali Banani, *The Modernization of Iran, 1925-41* (Stanford: Stanford Uni-
versity Press, 1961).

71.   As Afghani has stated: "From the viewpoint of contemporary needs, only a mod-
erate sensibility and thinkers such as Calvin and Luther can separate religion from supersti-
tion and adopt the religious principles to the necessities of today's civilization." See
"Notgh dar Mored-e Ta'alim va Tarbiyat," in *Iranshenasi*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (February 1925).

72.   This is a point aptly described by Said Amir Arjomand in *The Shadow of God
and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

73.   Seeh Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-
State Relations in the Pahlavi Period* (Albany: SUNY, 1980).

74.   Fakhrodin Azimi, Iran: The *Crisis of Democracy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989).

75.   See Sepehr Zabih, *The Mossadegh Era* (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982).

76.   Claims that there was a "clientilistic relation" between Iran and the US often
ignore the "complex interdependence" of the two regimes and the increasing "uncoupling"
of the Shah's diplomacy from the logic of the Cold War. See, e.g., Mark Gasiorowski, *US
Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building A Client State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University
Press, 1991). Here the definition of "clientilism" is too wide in its equation of interrela-
tions with meta-sovereign operations and too narrow in that it ignores the disruptive liai-
son between the Shah's nationalist initiatives and his overall relations with the West.
Keohane altogether overlooks these problems when discussing OPEC's "destruction of
hegemony." See Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univer-
sity Press, 1984), p. 184.

along secular nationalist and modernization lines. Whereas by the early 1970s the Shah had fulfilled Mossadegh's dream of nationalizing oil and was spearheading OPEC's "geoeconomics" while developing a foreign policy of "*de facto* non-alignment,"[77] his social engineering, i.e., land reforms and other items of the "White Revolution," represented a milestone in the country's emergence from feudalism and far surpassed the Mossadeghists' agenda. In retrospect, there is little doubt these reforms amounted to a Gramscian "passive revolution" best described as "economic populism."[78]

The Shah's economic populism, which entailed schemes such as "profit sharing" and "joint investiture" with the workers, was a conscious effort to "eradicate all social contradictions."[79] These schemes were complemented with a wide range of "public policies," such as state subsidies for food, education, transportation, health care, housing, culture and the arts, which as time went on increased the sense of entitlement on the part of the recipient population. So long as the oil "pie" was large enough to sustain the scope of these entitlements, economic populism perpetuated the *status quo*. By the same token, these very same initiatives made the state the object of intense political attention and created several unintended consequences. Thus the "profit sharing" scheme led to the deterioration of business confidence, reflected in a record capital flight and the diversion of capital to unproductive activities.[80]

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77.   See, Sepher Zabih, "Iran's International Posture: De Facto Non-Alignment Within a Pro-Western Alliance," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Summer 1970). Similarly, Hunter has argued that "the basic objective (of the Shah's regime) was the advancement of Iran's national interests." Shirin T. Hunter, *Iran and the World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 29.

78.   See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, translated by Quinton Hoare and C. Norwell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 116. Economic populism refers to "a reformist set of policies tailored to promote development without explosive class conflict." See Rudiger Dornbasch and Sebastian Edwards, eds., *The Macroeconomics of Populism in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). As a result of these reforms, land was distributed among more than two million peasants, and thousands of workers became shareholders in 1,439 enterprises, including 160 large factories. For details see Afrasiabi, *The State and Populism in Iran, op. cit.* These figures belie Hooglund's contention that they were "conservative" in nature. See Eric Hooglund, *Land and Revolution in Iran* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982).

79.   Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Be Sooy-e Tamadon-e Bozorg* (Teheran: The Ministry of Culture and Arts, 1977), p. 20. The Shah constantly sought to outdo the Left in its zeal for social revolution. This led his court minister to conclude that "it is the government itself which should be regarded the chief agent of subversion." See Assadullah Alam, *The Shah and I: The Confidential Diary of Iran's Royal Court, 1969-1977* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 537.

80.   See Anthony Parsons, *The Pride and the Fall: Iran 1974-79* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 90.

The main shortcomings of the Shah's populism had to do with the implementation of his programs, since state officials and the landed elite established cozy relations. Consequently, the land laws were never fully applied. Similarly, there were no adequate follow-ups after the early 1970s, when technocratic growth replaced emphasis on economic-justice. Finally, economic populism barely reached the urban and rural poor, who swelled the margins of society.[81] In the absence of a social safety net, the Shah's regime unwittingly propelled the poor toward religious groups engaged in charitable activities.[82]

Despite their flaws, the Shah's nationalist and populist policies might have appeased at least some of his opponents. There could have been a rapprochement between them, had it not been for the lingering stigma associated with the coup, the Shah's personal identification with the West, the increasing atrophy of palace rule, the violation of rights and the frustration of democratic expectations. Instead of undertaking a meaningful democratization, by mid 1970s the Shah opted for a single party system in the attempt to integrate the population.[83] The result was disastrous. This created a legitimation problem for a regime already regarded as anti-nationalist (*zedd-e melli*) or, to paraphrase the poet Barahani, the "basest stooge of imperialism."[84] This widespread misperception not only facilitated the diffusion of a variety of revolutionary doctrines but also shortcircuited any reformist options. By establishing a simple equivalence between the struggle for democracy and anti-imperialism, it paved the way for collaboration among various secular and religious opposition groups.

Crucial here is the globalization of Islamicist movements. In a sense,

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81. Farhad Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1980).

82. It is estimated that during the 1950s taxes paid to the *ulama* exceeded those paid to the government. See M. Yapp, *The Near East Since World War One* (London: Longman, 1991), p. 337. Unfortunately, there is no reliable information about the religious taxes during the 1960s and 1970s. According to Akhavi, "The clergymen in Iran continue to disburse funds, aggregate followers on specific issues, articulate needs, wield the symbols of culture, administer shrines and manage and own lands." *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, op. cit*, p. 179.

83. See Jerrold D. Green, "Pseudo-participation and Counter-mobilization: Roots of the Iranian Revolution," in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1-4 (1980).

84. Reza Barahani, *The Crowned Cannibals* (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 107. Yarshater's claim that the revolution was "an angry response to the overall situation that threatened our national identity and pride" indicates that the old misperception is still very much alive. See Ehsan Yarshater, "Hoviyat-e Melli," in *Iran Nameh*, Vol. 3 (Summer 1993), p. 429.

Iran was a latecomer to the "Islamization of political knowledge" attributed to the works of Hassan al-Bana and Seyed Qutb in Egypt, Iqbal in Pakistan, etc.[85] Whether original or borrowed, the Iranian flirtation with the "Islamization of political knowledge" produced a variety of outcomes — an "Islamic left" (Shariati), an "Islamic liberalism" (Bazargan), and a neo-traditional "Islamic government" (Khomeini), all articulating utopian versions of an alternative Islamic society *(jamme'eh-e tawhidi)*.[86] The problem with these utopian efforts, however, was that they lacked a concept of the modern state and were not rooted in concrete history.[87] All these groups embraced some version of Islam as a "total and comprehensive" system of beliefs,[88] without any understanding of the boundaries between different social spheres. This is why their often modernist pretensions wither with the inevitable conclusion that their core is traditional or, at best, quasi-modern.[89]

An important aspect of this traditionalism is the anthropocentric image of the "perfect man," [90] so prevalent in the writings of Khomeini,

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85.   See *Islamization of Knowledge* (Washington, D.C. IIIT, 1991). The only thing credible about the "Islamization of knowledge" seems to be the political aspect. Otherwise, recent emphasis on "Islamic sociology," "Islamic science" and so on, appears as so many hopeless, ethnocentric attempts to domesticate social science for the sake of dogma.

86.   See Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Phillip Allen, 1990). A number of "state intellectuals" *(rowshanfekran-e dowlati)* directly contributed to this Islamic utopian movement. See Seyyed Hossein Naser, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (New York: Longman, 1975); and Ehsan Nafaghi, *Ghorbat-e Gharbi* (Teheran: Muaasaseh-e Entesharat-i, 1974).

87.   Shariati and other Shiite dissidents could promise whatever came to their head, assuring their followers it was based on superior knowledge, while leaving the details of the promised society to be worked out by others. Thus Mahdi Bazargan, the apostle of Islamic liberalism, clung to the traditionalist notion that "religion must dominate politics and control it," the stated reason being that religion "does not recognize any borders" and that "of the eight principles of religion, four are about social issues and four about the foundation of politics." See *Binahayat Koocheh-a* (Teheran: Bazargan, 1963), p. 77; and Bazargan, *Niaz-e Khoob* (Teheran, n.p., n.d.), pp. 124-125.

88.   Thus Morteza Mutahhari wrote about Islam's "comprehensive and all-encompassing tendency." See *Usul-e Aghayed-e Eslami* (Teheran: n.p., 1977), p. 56. This recalls Rodinson's point that "Islamic ideology" is totalitarian "in that it tends to extend its directives and judgements to all areas of social and private life." See Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and the Modern World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981), p. 94.

89.   This belies the interpretation by Halliday and others that Khomeini "recycled Western ideas." See Fred Halliday, "International Relations and Its Discontents," in *International Affairs,* Vol. 74, No. 4 (October 1995), p. 739.

90.   "This is an ideal human being (who) passes through nature and understands God and reaches God. . . . In nature he is God's successor. . . . is God-like in exile on earth." See Ali Shariati, *Eslamshenasi* (Teheran: Ershad, 1981), pp. 100-102. According to Khomeini, the "perfect man is God's vice-regent on the entire world." Quoted in "Ensan-e Kamel," in *Nashre Andisheh*, No. 5 (Spring 1993).

Shariati, Mutahhari, and others. Based on the twin motions of leadership (*imamat*) and innocence (*maasumiyat*), the idea of "perfect" or "exemplary" man legitimated, for Khomeini in particular, the doctrine of the "rule of the jurist" (*Velayat-e Faghih*). This doctrine has provided a normative basis for the perpetuation of theocratic rule in Iran.[91] Ultimately, the terror of an Islamic humanism, which construes the leading jurist as near perfect and divine, is responsible for this theocracy.[92]

Another common thread running through these various religious perspectives was their populism: they romanticized the liberating potential of Islam, dealt with justice and tyranny in the abstract, combined transcendental and immanent forms of social criticism, appealed to people and not classes, emphasized authenticity, and rejected the Shiite tradition of dissimulation. There were serious differences among these accounts, as can be seen in Bazargan's emphasis on individual rights,[93] Shariati's relentless attack on the "ossified institution" of the *ulama*, and Khomeini's anti-intellectualism.[94] Yet, these differences did not overshadow their common denominators (at least, for a while after the revolution) and they intersected as the ideological pillars of a revolution requiring "the unity of the word" — a key revolutionary slogan etched by Khomeini.[95]

The revolution itself can be attributed to the ineptness of the old regime, a breakdown in social integration and the concurrent increase in solidarity among the discontented population. It was basically an urban phenomenon involving a multiplicity of disparate groups and organizations with heterogenous aims, but welded together by a single aim: the

91. For an excellent study of Khomeini's philosophy, see Alexander Kynsh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Autumn 1992), pp. 631-655.

92. To dismantle this humanism requires kneading together the pillars of a new Islamic (human and natural) ecology. See Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, "Towards an Islamic Ecotheology," in *Hamdard Islamicus*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp. 33-49, as well as the series of articles on "Islamic Futurism" written in *Kayhan Havai* during the period 1989-95.

93. See Said Barzin, "Constitutionalism and Democracy in the Religious Ideology of Mehdi Bazargan," in *British Journal of the Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1994). This is a good summary of Bazargan's thought, but suffers from lack of a critical scrutiny of the dark sides of Bazargan's ideas.

94. See Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, "Islam and Populism in Iran," in *Discussion Paper*, The African Studies Center at Boston University, No. 5 (Spring 1982).

95. Behind this slogan was a half-hearted recognition of the plurality of forces in the revolution that was chocked by a monist emphasis on solidarity based on Islam. This explains the limitations of Khomeini's populism after the revolution, the fact that he could not prevent a breakdown of this unity and keep ideological differences to the background, as he had during the revolution.

overthrow of the Shah. This populism was a complex mixture of theology and politics evolving along religious lines. Undoutedly, Khomeini's charisma played a central role in giving the revolution the momentum and discipline necessary for success.[96] The price tag, however, was the imposition of a pre-modern pastoral authority.[97] Thus revolutionary zeal coincided with a combination of autonomy and self-surrender — a new mastery that transformed revolutionary charismatic authority into despotism.[98] The perpetuation of this despotism was based on the recycling of the revolutionary momentum through a policy of continuous mobilization directed against internal and external threats, justified by Khomeini's dictum that "people must remain on the stage." The result was a post-revolutionary system thoroughly consumed by the populist "dimension." A wholesale purge of the functionaries of the old regime thus went hand in hand with the creation of a vast network of civil and (para) military organizations, e.g., revolutionary guards, revolutionary committees, and the (now defunct) Islamic Republican Party, designed to assimilate[99] the masses and to exclude independent organizations of workers, state employees, leftist and ethnic groups. The channeling of mass participation generated a new kind of state which, with the help of new symbols of dignity (e.g., the disinherited), generated system integration by establishing a new ideological framework within which capitalists and workers are considered different but equally legitimate social

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96.   See Ahmad Ashraf, "Charisma, Theocracy, and Men of Power in Post-revolutionary Iran," in Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi, eds., *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), pp. 101-151.

97.   Khomeini's one time designated successor, Ayatollah Montazeri, once stated: "Some students view *Velayat-e Faghih* as dictatorship. They must be told that *Velayat-e Faghih* does not mean dictatorship. It is like child guardianship." Quoted in Rasalat (February 1, 1988). Thus, for example, when there was a debate over the name of the new republic, Khomeini stated that "whoever's path is not with Islam is our enemy. . . . Even if 36 million people say yes [to the label Democratic Islamic Republic], I still say no." This point is overlooked by both Abrahamian and Zubaida when they write without any reservation about the "modernism" of the Khomeinist phenomenon. See Abrahamian, *Khomeinism, op. cit.*; and Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State* (London: Routledge, 1989).

98.   An important tool for the perpetuation of this despotism was the threat of "deviants." In his will, Khomeini wrote about the "inevitable penetration of 'corrupters on earth' and enemies of Islam in all branches of government." Since his death, Khomeini's successor has followed suit by constantly reminding the nation of "plots by the enemies of Islam." Recently, he has included the attempts to "juxtapose Islam and national interests" as the latest manifestation of such plots. See *Rasalat* (October 4, 1995).

99.   Another assimilationist practice has been the transformation of Friday sermons into a religious-political event. See Heidar G. Azadanloo, "Formalization of Friday Sermons and Consolidation of the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *Critique*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall 1992).

categories.[100] Notwithstanding the escalation of demands,[101] Khomeini and his followers broke off dialogue with other dissident groups and resorted to pseudo-elections and the outright use of force to institute a "pure Muhammadian society." This, in turn, almost led to civil war (1980-1982), the flight of the educated strata from the country, and Khomeini's politics of factional "balancing."[102]

Crucial in Khomeinist populism is the perpetuation of a state of emergency revolving around opposition to the West.[103] The demonization of the US, already anticipated in the revolutionary slogan, "After the Shah, it is America's turn," ensured a "permanent Jihad — the guarantee of revolutionary continuity."[104] This has led to a deflection of the dissenters' energies toward well-chosen targets. As a corollary, a whole set of concepts, such as "liberalism" and "Americanist Islam," were aptly used to excommunicate individuals and groups not in harmony with Khomeini's "total institution."[105]

Another key feature of this populism was the deterritorialization of the Islamic revolution in terms of the trans-national imperatives of Islamic cartography.[106] Led by self-proclaimed "warrior-priests" (*rouhanioun-e mobarez*), the new regime was thus fated to "export the revolution" so Iran could become the "motherland" and Khomeini the

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100.   See Cyrus Bina and Hamid Zanganeh, eds., *Capitalism and the Islamic Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

101.   During the last months of the revolution, the striking population had garnered substantial concessions from the Shah's regime, such as generous pay increases and tax breaks, which translated into exorbitant demands on the regime that followed it.

102.   For a superb discussion of post-revolutionary "elite factionalism," see Shahrough Akhavi, "Elite Factionalism in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 41 (1987), pp. 181-201.

103.   Thus the importance of the 444 days American hostage crisis, which Khomeini called a "second revolution," appropriately so as it opened a fresh avenue for popular mobilization and an excellent excuse to purge unwanted liberal and non-doctrinaire elements from the government.

104.   Quoted in *Payam-e Hajj*, No. 195 (November 1988), p. 14.

105.   Khomeini's *Velayt-e Faghih* was a law unto itself. It did not and could not be controlled by public opinion and did not lend itself to democratic accountability. This can be seen in the following statement by Ayatollah Yazdi, one of Khomeini's close allies: "In the Islamic Republic, if the majority of people vote for a person, if that person is not linked with [Imam's] vote, those votes are void." In *Rasalat* (May 6, 1989).

106.   Islamic cartography refers to: *Umma* (Islamic community) — something endowed with a content, a history, a telos and a trajectory. The idea that all Muslims are part of a "single nation" and that the Islamic regime is duty-bound to create such a unity is stated in Article 10 of the Constitution. See *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, translated by Hamid Algar (Berkeley, CA: Mizan Press, 1980), p. 11.

pope of Islam.[107] Islamic statecraft was thus stylized toward globaliza-
tion and the deterritorialization of its values, to the detriment of conser-
vative Arab neighbors, including Iraq, whose leader seized the
opportunity to act as the anti-Iranian bulwark to settle old disputes.[108]
The brutal war that ensued (1980-88) — what Khomeini called a
"heavenly bliss" — had a tunnel vision effect on the Islamic Republic
as it refueled populist mobilization by, among other things, recycling
the romantic notion of the citizen-soldier. The long war and the threat
of war (with the US) aided internal cohesion in a system where old
class and nepotistic ties were replaced by solidarity based on religious
and political criteria.

This new system required, first of all, extensive reorganization of the
army and the old bureaucracies, now complemented by new, post-revo-
lutionary agencies (e.g., Jihad for Reconstruction), constituting a com-
plex "double state" based on the confluence of moral-ethical and
bureaucratic rationalities. The "expanded" state has exhibited a split
from the very beginning and has been held together by the religious-
based pattern of recruitment and employment, whereby the largely
unprofessional revolutionary cadre were able to take over the state appa-
ratuses and turn them into their "fiefs." Acting as the new guardians of
capitalist relations in Iran, these Islamic Jacobins headed by Khomeini
adopted a reformist policy under the cloack of fervent revolutionary
rhetoric. Unlike other populist reformisms, however, the absence of gen-
uine socio-economic reform can be attributed to the fact that Islamic

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107.   Ayatollah Meshkini once stated: "Today, the Imam [Khomeini] has vice-regency
over 50 million Muslims and tomorrow, God willing, he will rule over one billion Mus-
lims." *Rasalat* (January 18, 1988). Most likely, Khomeini's infamous *fatwa* against Sal-
man Rushdie was motivated by the pan-Islamicist impulse. See also Farhang Rajaee,
"Islamic Ideology and Worldview: The Cultural Export of Revolution," in John L.
Esposito, ed., *The Islamic Revolution: Its Global Impact* (Miami: Florida International
University, 1990). Saddled with the pan-Islamicist mission, the Iranian state was, conse-
quently, turned into a movement-state that constantly aborted its own momentum for insti-
tutionalization by recycling the globalist revolutionary momentum. This deterritoriali-
zation stemmed from pan-Islamic solidarity (*assabiya*), which called for violent opposi-
tion to any kind of ethnic-based nationalism. Khomeini and his followers, however,
embraced the notion of "love of country" (*hobb-e vatan*) which, in turn, implicated them
in an implicit religious nationalism. See Kaveh L. Afrasiabi, *After Khomeini: New Direc-
tions in Iran's Foreign Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994).
108.   On the Iran-Iraq war, see Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at
War* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988); and Farhang Rajaee, ed., *The Iran-Iraq War: The
Politics of Aggression* (Miami, FL: University of Florida Press, 1993).

populists inherited an "overreformed" society, to the merchant's powerful role, as well as the emergence of a whole new group of privileged *nouveaux riches*, most of whom owed their wealth to their connection to the state. Consequently, a society featuring flagrant income and wealth disparities emerged under the guise of egalitarian rule.[109] Renewed class warfare was staved off by strict labor laws, state-controlled labor unions, etc., as well as by the carrots of employment, subsidies, urban and rural improvements, a fledging cooperative sector, a new sense of citizen participation, and a modicum of respect for the "private realm."[110] The levelling effects of the ruling ideology culminated in a conscientious policy of rural improvement and a haphazard welfare initiative through subsidies, the "coupon-economy," clientlistic foundations (e.g., the Martyrs Foundation) and the like.[111]

Throughout its existence, the Islamic Republic has pursued contradictory priorities. Craven appeasement of the disinherited has gone hand in hand with the growth of a capitalist state. As a result, demands generated by the new sense of entitlements on the part of the growing population greatly exceeds available public resources, leading to serious disfunctions in economic policies.[112] These contradictions have found their political corollary in a "mixed" part-theocratic, part-republican system, whose founding father became increasingly enamored of state power, and whose constitution affirms the principle of popular

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109.   See Hooshang Amirahmadi, *Revolution and Economic Transition: The Experience of Iran* (New York: SUNY, 1990). Although useful, this work misjudges unemployment and poverty in Iran by ignoring the vibrant "informal sector."

110.   In an important 8 point edict issued in 1981, Khomeini ordered the unruly guards and the *komiteh* to respect the sanctity of private homes. In limiting state encroachment in the private sphere, Khomeini also undermined his "moral totalism," which called for Islamization of all aspects of life. In turn, this quasi-liberal tolerance led to a sharp distinction between private and public life, with the former as the nurturing ground of a secular sensibility. For Khomeini's edict, see Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

111.   There are signs of decentralization of power in post-revolutionary Iran. The provinces bordering the newly-independent Central Asian republics have signed separate agreements with these republics and have enjoyed the kind of autonomy in decision-making that includes sub-national "para-diplomacy." For more on this, see Afrasiabi, *After Khomeini, op. cit*, Chapter on "The Making of Iran's Central Asia-Caucasus Policy." For the concept "para-diplomacy," see I. D. Duchacek, D. Latouche and G. Stevenson, *Perforated Sovereignties and International Relations: Trans-Sovereign Contacts of Subnational Governments* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988).

112.   See Massoud Karshenas and M. Hashem Pesaran, "Economic Reform and the Reconstruction of the Iranian Economy," in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 113-135.

sovereignty only as a second order sovereignty (after His Deity).[113]

The democratic-republican aspect, highlighted by three plebiscites, four parliamentary and six presidential elections within the first 15 years of the new system's existence has provided the foundation for regular elite turn-over — especially within the Majlis. With the help of a multilayered filtering device to screen political candidates, such as the exclusionary Law on Freedom of the Parties, the system has ensured itself against the destabilizing consequences of "surprise elections." In practice, however, parliament has been less than satisfactory, not just because of theocratic intervention or factional politics, but also as a result of the countervailing role and power of the 12-member Council of Guardians, which has veto power over all legislation.[114] By the time of Khomeini's death, the friction between the two institutions had spilled into the open, prompting the creation of a para-legislative body, the Council on the Expediency of the (Islamic) Order, to act as an intermediary between them. This was part of a broader, pragmatist revision of the Constitution which included, first and foremost, the uncoupling of the institution of religious leadership (*marjaiyat*) from "leadership" (*rahbari*). As an initial step in formal separation of religion and politics, this was commensurate with the gradual distancing of the high ranking *ulama* from the state and a shift of the religious center of gravity from politics to faith. This is a positive development, since the previous conflation of state and religion had resulted in an internal colonization of the religious "sphere," whereby the various *ulama* were judged in terms of their loyalty to the regime. The increased differentiation has not meant more stability, partly because these changes are pragmatically

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113.   In his famous 1988 edict, Khomeini sanctioned "unlimited" state power that could, if need be, "revoke any agreements it concluded with people . . . [and] prohibit any matter religious or secular." See *Kayhan* (January 7, 1988). These excesses were meant to offset the debilitating influence of religious "dogmatics" and to free the government to deploy liberal solutions for the postwar economy. Bakhash misses this point. See Shaul Bakhash, "Iran: The Crisis of Legitimacy," in *Middle Eastern Lectures* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1995), pp. 99-119. Stereotypical classifications of the Iranian system as a "theocracy" pure and simple not only overlook the government's system of checks and balances, but also conflate the distinction between a republic and democracy, thus missing the point that the first refers to a regulative political notion while the second is a profoundly problematic concept. See David Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989). These classifications ignore the complex diagram of power in the Iranian system, e.g., the fact that power "from below" exerts an incredible influence, and lapses into a power reductionism that confuses the vices or virtues of clerical leaders with the regime's institutional characteristic.

114.   See Said Saffari, "The Legitimation of the Clergy's Right to Rule in the Iranian Constitution of 1979," in *British Journal of the Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (1993).

implemented and have yet to be fully rationalized. In fact, the leader's power has been increased in the new constitution, which puts him in charge of the supervision of national radio and television and the control of the Council on the Expediency of the (Islamic) Order. Consequently, the post-Khomeini order has become more totalitarian while less theocratic — all this while Iranian society has become more liberal.

A growing number of associations, groups, and publications, has emerged in Iran, which contradicts the stereotypical image of the Islamic Republic as a closed, hermetically intolerant society.[115] These developments have opened up more possibilities than the Islamic state can deal with.[116] Caught between the Scylla of religious dogmatists who want to reunite *marjaiyat* and leadership, and the Charybdis of modernist groups yearning for a straightforward republic unshackled by monarchic limitations, the post-Khomeini regime has had to deal with incompatible priorities. The "de-ideologization" attributed to the "second Islamic Republic" does not mean a clean break with the Khomeinist legacy.[117] Rather, this means an incomplete, haphazard revisionism based on the recognition that, in light of domestic groups unwilling to observe a quiet requiem for Khomeinism, there was no way to eliminate the legacy of charismatic authority short of precipitating a dangerous identity crisis. In early 1990s, this revisionism was staved off by the ideological hiatus of "pan-Arabism" due to the Kuwait crisis, as well as by the Soviet collapse (which Khomeini had anticipated in his blunt letter to Gorbachev that "Islam can easily fill the ideological vacuum"). Suddenly, the Khomeinist goal of making Iran into a "moral superpower" had been given a new life by the opening of a new window of opportunity, especially in Muslim Central Asia.

On the whole, ideological fixity and pragmatic policy reconsideration ended up coexisting, in part due to the gullibility of the Islamic "moderates" in charge, who thought Khomeini's fundamental precepts should be retained but the means altered, as if the means had nothing to do with the nature of the ends pursued. Notwithstanding the ideological fragmentation and the conservative side-effects of the policy changes, the "second"

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115.   See, Kavah L. Afrasiabi, "Give Iran Credit for the Strides It Has Taken," in *The New York Times* (March 24, 1990).

116.   Thus every time the government has evinced a greater tolerance for veil-lessness (*bi-hejabi*), this has met the stern objections of religious dogmatists, who complain about "ideological sell-out," compelling the government to intensify its surveillance of women's "dress code." See Kavah L. Afrasiabi, "Iran's Other Prisoners," in *The Boston Globe* (August 16, 1993).

117.   See Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *After Khomeini* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

Islamic Republic remained caught in a double bind, between Khomeinism and post-Khomeinism.[118] It remains to be seen whether this will culminate in a further secularization of the state or in a complete remixing of religion and politics. As it stands, the "mixed" system presents a paradox with respect to modernity.[119] Compared to the repressed past, it is a more open and accountable political system, even though on specific civil rights, e.g., the rights of women and religious minorities,[120] it has made a huge step backward. These paradoxes lend themselves to a postmodernist interpretation, which is contradicted by the Khomeinist "metanarrative."

Iranian advocates of secularism, who want to leap from the Islamic Republic to a secular republic, may be headed nowhere. What is needed is a gradualist approach that selectively secularizes law, economics, etc., while reconciling the Islamic ethos with modernist values. Most disturbing about present democratization strategies is that they remain outside legal boundaries. Thus the constitutional limits concerning what is possible have remained untapped. The premature and forced *Aufhebung* of religion and politics threatens the well-spring of those rights granted in the defective republic, e.g., the right of parliamentary accountability. What is needed is a redemptive reformism that seeks to retrieve participatory democracy and self-government from the demagogic populism of the power elite and to articulate it within a democratic populist agenda from below, fully cognizant

·118.   The new leader, though without Khomeini's charisma and religious rank, has succumbed to self-delusion and wants to assume the superhuman task of establishing a sacred order. He has spearheaded the assault on "Western cultural invasion" by, among other things, issuing a *fatwa* that discourages music classes. He remains, however, a pathetic figure who can satisfy no one. Moreover, he may soon recognize that leading the *Volksgeist* necessitates a more confined and less interventionist approach, instead of roaming hopelessly all over the government. At the same time, in compulsively mimicking Khomeini, the new leader has retained the populist bias that works against any undue economic and bureaucratic change. Thus he ordered a turn-around from the liberal Five Year Plan (1989-1994) by emphasizing "social justice" and "self-reliance" in the Second Five Year Plan (1995-2000). In doing so, the leader's demagogic populism has prevented the kind of deep structural adjustments the post-war economy needed, i.e., deep cuts in government spending to reduce the budget deficit and free market forces to promote efficiency.

119.   See Eric Rouleau, "The Islamic Republic of Iran: Paradoxes and Contradictions in a Changing Society," in *The Middle East Insight*, Vol. 11, No. 5 (July-August 1995), pp. 54-59.

120.   Compared to the past, the legal status of women and minorities have deteriorated. While religious minorities have been treated as second class citizens, barred from certain bureaucracies and universities, women's rights have been seriously curtailed by the establishment of Sharia laws (allowing polygamy and counting women's testimony as worth half that of men). At the same time, Iranian women enjoy a greater degree of political freedom than ever in the past. See, Haleh Esfandiari, "Iran, Women and Parliaments under Monarchy and Islamic Republic," in *Princeton Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1993), pp. 1-25.

of the regime's large following, who have endured great sacrifices during the turmoils of the past two decades. The budding of a "religious fascism" among this segment of the population now threatens the liberalization of Iran.[121] A future "Lebanonization" of Iran cannot be ruled out. Ironically, the authority of Khomeini's successor potentially serves the democratization process as a bulwark against the religious trend and, hence, any premature offensive to bracket his role might have catastrophic consequences, lapsing the country back into another round of barbarism.

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121.   To illustrate, during the Fall of 1995, a leading religious dissident, Abdul Karim Soroush, was repeatedly harrassed when delivering lectures at various universities, and a leading ayatollah, Ahmad Jannati, encouraged Khomeini's followers to take the law into their hands whenever there was a deviation from the "Imam's will," resulting in a number of arsons at Teheran's bookstores. Regarding Soroush, whatever the merits of his Shariati-style reformation, his disadvantage is that he has little or no background in political philosophy and, yet, has taken the lead against Valajati Faghih and the political role of the *ulama* in today's Iran, without bothering with the positive aspect of their role in filling the vacuum of a national elete.