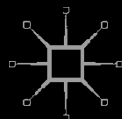# IRAN'S STRUGGLES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

ECONOMICS, AGENCY, JUSTICE, ACTIVISM

Edited by **Peyman Vahabzadeh**

Iran's Struggles for Social Justice

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Editor

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Economics, Agency, Justice, Activism

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Printed on acid-free paper

To the memory of
Khosrow Shakeri (Cosroe Chaqueri) (1938-2015)
social justice advocate par excellence

Foreword

What does it mean when a group of young and middle-aged academics gather on a North American university campus and wonder what has happened to the enduring problem of "social justice" in their homeland half way around the globe in Iran?

Early in July 2015 I was part of such a group of almost exclusively Iranian academics who had gathered at the University of Victoria, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. All the papers were delivered in English. All the discussions in between the papers were in Persian. We delivered our papers, exchanged and debated ideas, topics, concepts, and issues in English, and then we retired to dining halls and restaurants and caught up with the latest news in our homeland in Persian.

In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1977–1979, a generation of Iranian critical thinkers has emerged outside their homeland. There is a palpable disconnect between this generation and the unfolding history of their country of birth. The chapters you will read in this book are a sample evidence of the work of this generation that remains deeply concerned about their national history and yet confined in their abilities to offer only critical perspectives. This "generation," to be sure, includes colleagues in their sixties as well as younger scholars and critical thinkers in their thirties. Both these cohorts, however, share the common denominator of having exited the nasty censorial policies of the ruling Islamic Republic to be able to live and think and read and write in relative freedom.

The writings of these chapters and their delivery in an academic gathering in Iran are next to impossible to imagine. Over the last almost four decades, the ruling apparatus of the Islamic Republic has systematically destroyed

the very foundation of social sciences and categorically appropriated the very idea of "social justice" for itself. There is no public debate, no common conversation that would enable anything remotely resembling a communal consciousness surround the question of "social justice." The slightest suggestion of any such critical thinking will land a person in a kangaroo court, facing prison terms for having compromised what the custodians of the Islamic Republic consider their "national security/*amniyat-e melli*." Although critical thinking and writing are inseparable from any human gathering anywhere in the world, including and perhaps particularly in societies in the snare of totalitarianism, the systematic destruction of social sciences and humanities in Iran is a matter of state policies and their cultural revolution against what they call "the West."

In this book you will read learned discussions of various forms of struggles for social justice in Iran, of the predicament of the working class and labor movements, the theological underpinning of political mobilization of the poor, detailed accounts of the cooperative movements, gender equality, the student movement, new literary archive pertinent to social justice, and many other equally urgent issues. Do the writing and reading of these crucial essays constitute an exercise in futility when the subject of their conversations and contentions, Iranian people themselves, scarcely know they exist, let alone read and perhaps learn from them?

Signaled by the fact that this book is in English and not in Persian, though all its authors are Iranian, no organic link can be presumed between this critical body of literature and the struggle for social justice in Iran. In one way or another, as evidenced in every single chapter, those scholars gathered here deeply care, closely follow, and are vastly informed by the subject of their scholarship—and yet they have opted to write their thoughts in English, while they are perfectly capable of doing so in Persian. The location of these senior and junior scholars on North American or Western European campuses does, in part, explain their choice of English—a choice effectively decided by the fact that they are writing, in part, in critical conversation also with their non-Iranian colleagues on these campuses.

This disconnect, however, is much less pertinent than it may first appear if we remember that *the public space* upon which the very idea of "Iran" as a nation was formed has always been transnational. The first Iranian novel, *Siyahatnameh Ibrahim Beig* (1903), was written in Cairo and published in Istanbul; the first Iranian film, *Abi and Rabi* (1930), was made in India. From Calcutta to Istanbul to Cairo to Berlin were the sites

of the most widely circulated and read periodicals of the Constitutional period. Istanbul, in particular, was the site of the rise of the first generation of Iranian public intellectuals. Central Asia and the Caucuses were the domain upon which these intellectuals first came to grips with the very idea of their homeland outside its emerging frontiers. So writing about Iran from outside Iran is nothing new, novel, or unusual.

There is, however, one crucial difference between all those cases and a volume such as this that you are about to read. All those books, films, and periodicals were in Persian, while this one is in English. This volume, as a result, as countless others like it, represents a new gestation of Iranian scholars, critical thinkers, and public intellectuals. They are now all deeply embedded in the heart of North American and Western European academic circles. They have mastered the language of their imperial whereabouts better and more effectively than any other generation before them. This development, of course, has the disadvantage of not being read by their contemporaries in Iran. But it has certain number of other advantages.

These scholars are now living, reading, and writing in a vastly more cosmopolitan environment than what the Islamic Republic has allowed in their homeland, and they are conversant with a widening body of literature beyond Iran as they openly or implicitly engage the work of postcolonial critical thinkers just like them from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, never before so openly present in the horizons of Iranian thinkers when writing in Persian as now confined to the censorial mandates of the Islamic Republic. This cosmopolitan worldliness of their prose and the fact that it is conversant at the heart of the globalized empire lift the dialogical disposition of their prose to an entirely different domain. They are bringing the Iranian public sphere to global consciousness, where it can find its sense of interiority onto a worldly scale.

Generations of writing in Persian addressed Iranians exclusively and as such had a mournful, contemplative, plaintive, and introverted monologue tone to it. Writing in English for a global audience has the entirely opposite texture to it: defiant, conversational, embracive, worldly, and as such in solidarity with others who share a similar trajectory. The English these scholars write has the intonation of the Persian-speaking world embedded in it. This English is not "accented" as some have suggested, as if there is an English without an accent. All spoken and written languages have an accent of their speakers and writers. But there is an intonation to the language that has nothing to do with who is speaking or writing

but everything to do with whom is the speaker and the writer addressing: who is his or her interlocutor? The interlocutor of these essays is a global readership, a worldly audience, who knows where Iran is and what are its issues, but does so in a comparative worldly context otherwise absent when identical issues are rewritten in Persian and addressed exclusively to Iranians. That worldly consciousness had always existed in Persian when spoken in the imperial context of its own history. But that imperial context today has moved to English, as it may very well travel to Chinese in our own lifetime.

Yes, a vast segment of the Iranian population not conversant in English may never get to read this or many other books like it. But millions of other Iranians can and will. English, as a result, and what postcolonial critical thinkers from four corners of the world write in it, is the upending of the imperial language, the way Spanish was wrested in Latin America from Spain, or English was in India, or Arabic in Islamic lands beyond the control of the tribal Arabism of their conquerors. Today, English has become an Iranian language too, as once Persian became an Indian language, Arabic an African, or Spanish a Latin American. The book you hold in your hand reads in English but breathes the desires and struggles of a nation for social justice in Persian.

New York, NY   Hamid Dabashi
May 2016

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book represents the collective endeavor of academics and activists who share a profound sense of social justice in their approach to the various aspects of Iran's present complex and unjust reality. The book originates with an international scholarly conference under the rubric of "Iran's Struggles For Social Justice: Canadian and International Perspectives" (http://socialjusticeiniran.com/), organized by the editor of this volume, and held on July 10–12, 2015 at University of Victoria, in the heavenly city of Victoria, on Vancouver Island, Canada, in the unceded traditional territory of the Coast and Straits Salish Peoples, on the ancestral land of the Lekwungen family group, Checkonien and Sungayka, where the University of Victoria campus sits on the site of an old Lekwungen village. The organizers and participants in the Conference acknowledge that they held their deliberations on Aboriginal territory and are grateful for the hospitality offered to them.

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Hajar Amidian is a PhD candidate in Political Science, University of Alberta, Canada, specializing in the areas of international relations and Canadian politics. In her dissertation, she attempts to advance the understanding of the correlation between authoritarianism and rentier theory in postrevolutionary Iran. She holds an MA in North American Studies and a BA in English Language and Literature from the University of Tehran.

Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He has taught and delivered lectures in many North American, European, Arab, and Iranian universities. He is the author of over 100 essays, articles, and book reviews on subjects ranging from Iranian Studies, medieval and modern Islam, and comparative literature to world cinema and the philosophy of art (transaesthetics). His most recent books include *Corpus Anarchicum: Political Protest, Suicidal Violence, and the Making of the Posthuman Body* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), *Post-Orientalism: Knowledge and Power in a Time of Terror* (Transaction, 2015), *Can Non-Europeans Think?* (Zed Books, 2015), and *Persophilia: Persian Culture on the Global Scene* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

Mojtaba Mahdavi is the Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities (ECMC) Chair in Islamic Studies and Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta. His research and teaching lie in the areas of contemporary social movements and democratization in the Muslim world; secularism, Islamism, and post-Islamism; modern Islamic

political thought; and political economy of the Middle East and North Africa. He is the coeditor of *Towards the Dignity of Difference? Neither End of History Nor Clash of Civilizations* (Ashgate, 2012) and the guest editor of the journal *Sociology of Islam* on "The Unfinished Project of Contemporary Social Movements in the Middle East and Beyond" (2014). He is currently working on two book projects: *Towards a Progressive Post-Islamism in Postrevolutionary Iran* and *The Unfinished Project of Social Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*.

Mohammad Maljoo was born in Tehran in 1972 and educated at the Faculty of Economics, University of Tehran, where he received his PhD in Economics in 2005. He was a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics, Allameh Tabataba`i University and at the University of Tehran between 2006 and 2009. He was a research fellow at International Institution of Social History (Amsterdam) in 2010 and at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, in 2013. His field of specialization includes political economy of the postrevolutionary Iran. He has published more than 60 journal articles in Persian and several in English, German, and French on these subjects.

Afshin Matin-asgari holds a doctorate in Modern Middle East History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) (1993) and is currently Professor of Middle East History at California State University, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Mazda, 2002) and of more than 20 articles and book chapters on twentieth-century Iranian political and intellectual history, with particular attention to leftist trends and movements. These include "The Berlin Circle: Iranian Nationalism Meets German Counter-modernity," in K. Scott-Aghaie and A. Marashi (eds.), *Modern Iranian Nationalism* (University of Texas Press, 2014), and "The Impact of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union on Qajar and Pahlavi Iran: Notes Toward a Revisionist Historiography," in S. Cronin (ed.), *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions Since 1800* (Routledge: 2012). His forthcoming book is *Both Western and Eastern: Intellectual Constructions of Iranian Modernity*.

Amir Mirfakhraie is a Sociology Faculty at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. He received his PhD in Educational Studies from the University of British Columbia, specializing in the sociology and anthropology of education, with a focus on Iranian textbooks, and multicultural, antiracist, and global education. His research interests include antioppression and

antiracism education, curriculum studies, critical pedagogy, citizenship education, and Canadian and Iranian Diaspora studies. His research focuses on the immigration of Iranians to Canada and British Columbia, ethnic and racialized diversity in Canada, antiracist/antioppression pedagogies, and the construction of national identity, the family, the state and economy, "race," ethnicity, and gender in Iranian school textbooks. Dr. Mirfakhraie has numerous publications on these subjects.

Sara Naderi is a PhD student at the Department of Sociology, University of Victoria. Her research interests include women's studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, sociology of religion, and sociology of knowledge. Sara's primary focus is on questioning and criticizing modern subjectivity as she seeks alternative and critical subjectivities. In her academic research, she endeavors to articulate the marginalized narratives of subjectivity, probing, in particular, Iranian women's subjectivity that arises from their marginalized subject position—as women in a postcolonial society and in the modern world. Her empirical research mainly focuses on women in Iran, and partial findings of her study have been published in Persian in *Introduction to the Feminine Narrative of the City: A Study on Women's Lived Experience* (Teasa, 2013).

Nima Naghibi is Associate Professor of English at Ryerson University in Toronto. Her research is in the areas of diasporic and postcolonial studies, and life narratives, with particular attention to questions of human rights and social justice. She is the author of *Women Write Iran: Nostalgia and Human Rights from the Diaspora* (Minnesota Press, 2016) and *Rethinking Global Sisterhood: Western Feminism and Iran* (Minnesota Press, 2007). She has published on Western representations of Muslim Middle Eastern women, specifically the *hijab*, in Western discourses; diasporic Iranian life narratives; documentary films; and the filmic adaptation of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*. Her essays have appeared in such journals as *English Studies in Canada*, *Interventions: An International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, *Radical History Review*, and *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly.*

Ardalan Rezamand completed his BA from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1998 with double major in Philosophy and Islamic and Near Eastern Studies. He worked as a health-care analyst and a personal banker before returning to academia. Ardalan attended Simon Fraser University for his MA studies, graduating with an MA in History in

2012. His MA thesis traced the influence of academic philosophy in the formation of a modern Iranian identity. Currently, he is a PhD candidate at Simon Fraser University. His research interests include religion and politics of modern Iran, in particular, the hybridization of knowledge in the twentieth-century state-sponsored civic institutions.

Mohammad Safavi was born in the southern city of Abadan, Iran, into an oil worker's family. He joined the project workers in the Iran–Japan Petrochemical Plant in a construction site in Mammko and Jarahi districts near Bandar Ma'shour in 1975 and was soon involved in labor activism as a member of the Project-Seasonal Workers' Union of Abadan (1979–1980) and as a labor and social activist working in Isfahan Power Plant. In Canada, he started a career in food industry and worked as a baker, participating in 1990 in a successful campaign in organizing bakery workers (Venice Bakery) to Join United Food and Commercial Workers Union (Local 1518), in which he served as a representative in the Health and Safety Joint Committee, and as a shop steward for almost 15 years. He has written numerous articles on labor issues from social movement–unionist point of view, published in various Persian publications and on the Internet.

Siavash Saffari is Assistant Professor of West Asian Studies at the Department of Asian Languages and Civilizations, Seoul National University (South Korea). He received his PhD in Political Science from the University of Alberta (Edmonton, Canada), where he also taught courses in comparative politics and political theory. Prior to joining Seoul National University, he was a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies, Columbia University. His research interests include Middle Eastern and Islamic politics, modern Islamic political thought, modern Iranian studies, modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, and development/postdevelopment. His publications have appeared in several peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes. He is the author of *Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism and Islam in Iranian Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Roozbeh Safshekan is a PhD candidate in Political Science at the University of Alberta. He obtained his MA in Middle Eastern Studies from Columbia University and in Political Science from the University of

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Shokoufeh Sakhi is a visiting scholar at the University of Victoria. She holds a PhD in Political Science from York University, Toronto, specializing in political theory, writing on the phenomenology of the resistant subject. Dr. Sakhi acted as Executive Committee Director (2013–2014) of the Iran Tribunal Foundation, investigating the Iranian state's crimes against humanity in the 1980s, and also testified as an ex-political prisoner at the Iranian People's Tribunal hearings held at the Hague (2012). Among many documentaries, she appeared in *The Tree That Remembers* (2002), a National Film Board of Canada (NFB) film on Iranian political prisoners. Her most recent publication is "Prison and the Subject of Resistance: A Levinasian Inquiry" in *Death and Other Penalties* (Fordham, 2015).

Kaveh Sarmast has been a lecturer of various courses, including cooperative theory, entrepreneurship, and development courses, at Allameh Tabataba`i University and the University of Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences (UWRS) in Tehran from 2009 to 2013. He received his PhD in Economic Development from Belgrade University, Republic of Serbia (Ex-Yugoslavia). His principal academic interest is in cooperative theory and movement, as reflected in his PhD dissertation, where he made a detailed discussion about international cooperative movement. He has other publications on cooperatives and economic development issues; participated in many debates, conferences, and seminars on Iranian and global economic issues; and recently concluded his research fellowship at the Center for Cooperative and Community-Based Economy (CCCBE), University of Victoria, Canada. As Chair of the Iranian Association of Graduates in Economics (2008–2013), Kaveh played a key role in the development of a community of graduates in economics.

Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani is Assistant Professor of Women and Gender Studies at the Department of Historical Studies, University of Toronto-Mississauga, and Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto. Dr. Tahmasebi is an interdisciplinary scholar whose areas of specialization encompass feminist theories in relation to

continental and transnational contexts, critical theories of women's movements in the Middle East, digital activism, theories of ethics, and contemporary history of social and political thought. Her recent publications include *Emmanuel Levinas and Politics of Non-Violence* (University of Toronto Press, 2014) as well as refereed articles in *Subversive Itinerary* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), *Difficult Justice: Commentaries on Levinas and Politics* (University of Toronto Press, 2006), *Civil Society and Democracy in Iran* (Lexington Books, 2012), and *Philosophy and Social Criticism, Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*.

Peyman Vahabzadeh is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Victoria, Canada, specializing in classical and contemporary European thought, in particular phenomenology, social movements, exile, and Iranian social and political movements since the 1960s. He is the author of *Articulated Experiences: Toward a Radical Phenomenology of Contemporary Social Movements* (SUNY Press, 2003), *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1970–1979* (Syracuse University Press, 2010), *Exilic Meditations: Essays on A Displaced Life* (H&S Media, 2013), and *Parviz Sadri: A Political Biography* (Shahrgon Books, 2015), in addition to eight books of poetry, fiction, literary criticism, and memoirs in Persian, and some 50 articles in the public domain. His works have appeared in English, Persian, Kurdish, and German.

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Introduction: How to Approach This Book

Peyman Vahabzadeh

Iran's Struggles for Social Justice has found its present shape through a collective sense of wonder: the Iranian Revolution, a revolution that at its core was a nationwide, popular movement for social justice and democratic self-determination, not a Shi'i state or Shi'i values, has produced, 37 years later, a sad reality *contrary* to the ideals of 1979. The *discourses of social justice and participatory democracy* that mobilized a proud and resilient nation from different walks of life for a better future has now faded away, leaving only bitter memory in the lives of ordinary people who are left with no choice but to sadly measure the Revolution in terms of their loss of social and international status, equitable conditions, institutional avenues of participation in deciding their future, one-off opportunities, means of subsistence, and of course, their loved ones lost to the war or in waves of political purges.

This book offers a first contribution to the long-term project of understanding the issues, challenges, and potential outcomes pertaining to the Iranian people's struggles for social justice, in particular after 1979 but also in tandem with their struggles in the past century. The project is a response to the scholarly neglect of the theme as the fast pace of overwhelming challenges since 1979 have, for good reasons, diverted scholarly

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attentions from social justice and to issues such as human rights, citizenship and authoritarianism, economic analyses, diplomacy, secularism, or analyses of political Islam, to name but a few. These fields constitute legitimate concerns and have yielded abundant scholarship. Since the academic field, just like the social and political expanse, witnesses rising discourses that dominate, relatively speaking, the field for a while, it is important to note that certain discursive turns over the past three decades have inadvertently marginalized the focus on social justice, despite the fact that studies of labour, women's movement, and minorities necessarily prompt the question of social justice.

This is a rather unusual book. As a collective effort, the book crosses disciplinary boundaries, shifts analytical angles, and brings out lived experiences. As such, the contributions of this volume go beyond the established literature, often appropriately informed by the political economy approach, on Iran's steadfast post-revolutionary transition to economic liberalization and privatization and its detrimental social and economic consequences for the working class, the middle class, the poor, the vulnerable, women, the minorities, not to forget Iran's delicate ecology. The post-revolutionary transition to a neoliberal economy and the abandonment of social justice are undeniable facts. Thus, the common immediate historical context of our collective interest in social justice is the post-revolutionary and postwar Iran, when in the pretext of the war, the opposition was severely repressed, and in the shadow of rebuilding the country, a neoliberal shift in Iranian economy emerged and has been gaining significant momentum. Our contributions in this volume, therefore, intend to promote new studies of this multifaceted phenomenon, produce new research, and stay unrelentingly analytical. From such a heterogeneous group of scholars, activists, and graduate students who have contributed to this book, one can naturally expect interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches and studies—a testament to the originality of this volume and our collective approaches to social justice. We hope this book provides the groundwork for a growing field of social justice studies in Iran in this increasingly unjust world we have inherited.

This multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary book dwells in the analyses of grand socioeconomic structures as well as the legal turns necessary for the assault on the collective, social rights of Iranians and for undoing the past collective achievements of working peoples. Attending to these aspects prompts the question of *social justice*, but this book is also equally about the *struggles* for social justice since 1979 and their consequences.

Therefore, the book attends to political analyses, historical observations, the question of justice, social movements, activism and activists, education, personal experiences, and literature. Thus, the economic conditions merge with agency and activism around collectively constructed notions of justice. Contributors to this volume believe the profound question of social justice requires such multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches. We also believe that as a pioneer work, this book is still in need of further research to address many other issues pertaining social justice.

The sites of collective action, public discourses, and intellectual debates are explored and examined here. A glance at Iran's history in the past century clearly shows that the country's entry into political modernity—epitomized by the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911, an anti-colonial, anti-authoritarian, and democratic movement—has always contained a vivid and weighty element of social democracy. In other words, the emergent discourse of rights, citizenship, and constitutionalism has been concomitant with the discourse of just social relations and equitable working conditions. The subsequent history of Iran has also contained continuous and democratic struggles for citizenship rights as well as social justice in the face of serious setbacks imposed by the states on social movements and organized dissent especially those of the Left. Here is how we should understand *Iranian modernity* without reifying it: *a process involving agonistic social projects and multiple social imaginaries.* Alas, authoritarian rule has never allowed this diversity, and the public debates arising from it, to come to fruition. The postrevolutionary turn of events, in addition to the dominant neoliberal discourse worldwide, have contributed to the diminishment of the social democratic imaginary—in public discourse as well as in social and political programmes—while the staggering social inequalities, in their multiple forms, and increasing pauperization of the population invite a reinstatement of the social justice discourse in public debates. This is why the authors of this book stand against resignation and forgetting, against succumbing to neoliberal models and declaring the decline of social justice as *fait accompli.* This project also means that social justice must be rescued from rigid definitions of the doctrinal Left, so it can re-emerge in a new, dynamic way, as the multifaceted project at the heart of Iranian modernity.

As a collective effort of academics, students, and activists, this book intends to critically probe the various aspects of social justice and social inequality. It will show that reality is always a *socialized* process. The authors challenge the reified concepts of human rights, citizenship, and

democracy, in both their current liberal and social democratic discourses. The book aims at showing how by viewing democracy and social justice as socialized, and thus collective processes, discourses pertaining to human rights, democratic citizenship, and social justice will return in an entirely new light by turning away from reified, ossified, ideological, and borrowed concepts.

The Road from Here

In Chap. 2, the Editor offers preparatory observations on the historical and conceptual contexts of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies of social justice in post-revolutionary Iran. He contextualizes the Iranian state's abandonment of the ideals of 1979 Revolution within two consequential events in 1988: ending the war with Iraq and the massive purging of political prisoners. Iran's history since then has been a history of economic privatization, abandonment of social programmes, reducing subsidy payments, a rising oligarchy that feeds off a rentier state, commonplace corruption, and suppression of opposition. The author then offers a concept of social justice that speaks to the realities of today's Iran. The contributions in this book speak to the various aspects of the themes raised in this chapter.

Chapter 3 attends to the relationship between Iran's rentier state and struggles of civil society for democracy. Examining the Iranian case, Hajar Amidian challenges the thesis that oil-producing states block democratic struggles. Although rent-dependent states tend to become authoritarian, she argues, Iran shows clearly that the authoritarian state does not constitute a total structure, and as such it is prone to challenges by both elite action (Iranian Reformists) and democratic social movements (student movement) including collective actions for social justice. Mohammad Maljoo attends, in Chap. 4, to the legal enactments of the state in order to "unmake" the working class and thus diminish the labour movement and the workers' collective power to challenge their exacerbating working conditions. Privatization and neoliberalization of economy, he shows, have caused fundamental changes to Iran's Labour Code to the detriment of the workers' bargaining power. Labour casualization, exclusion of small workshops from the Labour Code, contracting out state positions, and empowering human resource firms to deal with the workers are among the manoeuvres leading to the workers' collective disempowerment.

Chapter 5 attends to the increasing role of charity organizations in attending to the needy and poor as the state's commitment to the "downtrodden" (*mostazʻafin*) withers away. Public religiosity based on Shiʻi liberation theology has been advocating economic justice, argues Siavash Saffari. In moving away from economic justice, the state has instead relegated the poor to religious-charity organizations and foundations. In the end, Saffari hopes for the mass mobilization of the poor in challenging privatization and austerity. In Chap. 6, Kaveh Sarmast attends to the history and status of cooperatives—a forgotten experience in citizen-oriented and -initiated economy. Pointing out the old tradition of mutual assistance in rural Iran, Sarmast shows the exogenous and endogenous causes of the cooperative movement before 1979. He examines the legal and constitutional aspects of cooperatives today and how as a result of the new economic turn the cooperative movement, despite several key success stories, has gradually diminished.

Educational aspects are key to maintaining a public conception of social justice. In Chap. 7, Amir Mirfakhraie critically examines Iran's school textbooks, revealing how the textbook propagated notion of the ideal Iranian-Shiʻi citizen, while anti-imperialist, promulgates discriminatory, racist, patriarchal, and ethno- and religio-centric values. The Iranian Self thus constructed, he argues in this condensed study, is out of tune with the necessary values at the heart of social justice. Ardalan Rezamand critically examines, in Chap. 8, the official pretext to the Cultural Revolution of 1980. He shows that while Ayatollah Khomeini called for an end to westoxification in university curricula and Islamization of otherwise Western knowledge, it was the university's being a long-time bastion for students and faculty defending social justice and democracy that lay at the heart of the Cultural Revolution, closure of universities, and purging of students and faculty.

The questions of agency and the subject are closely connected to recollecting the severe suppression of post-revolutionary, leftist social justice activists. Shokoufeh Sakhi critically examines, in Chap. 9, the ethical and political consequences of the appeal of victims' repression in Iran to human rights as natural and inalienable. The human rights discourse allows for the new subject to emerge and voice the injustices inflicted upon him or her, while the social justice subject needs to enter an ethical relation of respons-ability. In Chap. 10, Nima Naghibi offers a close reading of Sahar Delijani's fictional *Children of the Jacaranda Tree*, a novel about the children of the leftist activists in the 1980s who were subject of prolonged imprisonments, torture, and executions. Naghibi's reading highlights the

importance of remembrance in the intergenerational approach to tragic and historic events in light of current day social movements.

Victoria Tahmasebi-Birgani offers an original study of Iranian women's online activism, in Chap. 11, in particular My Stealthy Freedom Facebook page. Reaching nearly the unprecedented one million "likes," My Stealthy Freedom allows for "low-risk" online activism in which Iranian women can register their personal protest against the imposed veiling laws. Despite the state's continued filtering of this and other opposition websites, argues Tahmasebi-Birgani, the popularity of this initiative indicates how social media platforms can be effectively used as a means of mobilization for gender and social justice. In Chap. 12, based on her fieldwork on the women of Tehran, Sara Naderi critically problematizes the commonplace, feminist conception of Iranian women's subjectivity. She shows that the Iranian woman is caught between the dual-parallel binaries of Islamic view of woman and Western-secular, Iranian feminism, on the one hand, and the paternal–maternal models of personal development and subjectivity, on the other. As a result, she argues, Iranian women's subjectivity is permeated by serious contradictions. In conclusion, she offers a model of "performative agency" for understanding women's struggles for gender and social justice.

Mohammad Safavi presents his first-hand experience as an activist with the Project-Seasonal Workers' Union of Abadan, 1979–1980, in Chap. 13. He contextualizes this historic experience within a brief history of the labour movement in Iran, showing how this successful but short-lived unionization effort of Abadan workers stands in tandem with the history of labour movement: the Union's mandates and its successes inevitably rendered it a formidable social institution with broader mandates than those of a workers' union. The Union's success then led to its sad demise, as the new regime dismantled the Union, repressing its activists, and jailing its key organizers. Roozbeh Safshekan offers in Chap. 14 the history of the student movement in Iran in order to contextualize the origins and struggles of the post-revolutionary student movement, in particular the Freedom and Equality Seeking Students, a short-lived, leftist student union of which he was a member. Safshekan shows that despite the efforts of the state the student movement has steadfastly been a defender of democracy and social justice, while it has failed to forge the necessary alliance of the social movements for these causes.

Chapter 15 presents a historical overview of the Left's contribution to the cause of social justice in Iran from the Constitutional Revolution to the present. Applying a global social justice frame to modern Iranian

history, Afshin Matin-asgari argues for a new social contract that incorporates the necessities for the implementation of social justice in Iran. Despite its problems, the Left has been the steadfast defender of social justice, and Matin-asgari calls for the renewal of the Left in light of the new experiences in Turkey, Greece, and Spain. Mojtaba Mahdavi, in Chap. 16, offers a meticulous survey of the indigenous, grassroots ideas of social democracy in Iran, focusing in particular on the theories of Mohammad Nakhshab, Khalil Maleki, and Ali Shari'ati. Mahdavi shows the fundamental limits of the liberal paradigm in addressing social justice, and he concludes by calling for building a new, decolonial discourse of social justice. Lastly, in Chap. 17, Peyman Vahabzadeh offers an interpretive history of the founding element of social democracy in the Constitutional Revolution in order theoretically articulate the missing link between social justice and democracy. A democratic future, he argues, is unthinkable without the formidable presence of social justice, and this defines the unfinished project of political modernity in Iran that started with the Constitutional Revolution.

The Afterword invites the readers to consider the areas for further research in the field of social justice in Iran.

Rebuilding the discourse of social justice is at the heart of this multidisciplinary project, as it attends to the diverse aspects of social justice: gender justice, environmental justice, collective rights of workers and working peoples, rights of minorities, equitable conditions for the masses, educating justice and peace, and of course building democratic institutions capable of advancing the struggles for social justice. In short, we need to opt for understanding social justice as the socialized process of bringing the nation together instead of subjecting groups and classes to discriminatory practices.

Historical and Conceptual Preparations for a Multidisciplinary Study of Social Justice in Iran

Peyman Vahabzadeh

In the summer of 1988, two significant events marked a historic turning point in the trajectory of Iranian sociopolitical life. First, Iran's war with Iraq—a war fought feverishly since September 22, 1980 when Iraqi forces crossed Iran's western borders; a war that has won the unfortunate designation of the longest conventional war between two states in the twentieth century; a war in the state of stalemate and attrition since 1983—ended on July 20, 1988 when the leader of the Revolution conceded, in a historic declaration, to drink from the "goblet of hemlock" and Iran at last accepted the UN Resolution 598. Second, thousands of political prisoners—from Marxist, socialist, radical Muslim, nationalist, and various other secular or religious backgrounds—were summarily executed during the fateful months of August and September 1988.

The first event released the country from a devastating war economy, and as Iran's rentier economy transitioned toward a celebrated and trumpeted postwar rebuilding or reconstruction period (*dowran-e sazandegi*), an incremental but visible and significant turn away from the ideals of the

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1979 "revolution of the downtrodden" (*enqelab-e mostaz'afin*) in which peoples from various walks of life selflessly participated in a nonviolent, grassroots, national liberation movement for democracy and social justice. The second event profoundly scarred Iranian political life as it emblematized the generational purge of defenders of social justice from diverse ideological streaks, plurality of political affiliations, and multiplicity of gender, ethnic, class, and religious backgrounds outside of the ruling establishment. Given the concurrent mass exodus (by tens of thousands) of an entire generation of postrevolutionary activists between early 1980s and early 1990s, this otherwise unfathomable purge represented a vivid act of "clearance," to borrow a term from Ian Angus (2012), of the political field from diverse agents of the social justice cause; in fact, the purges represent a clearance of political field from those who uncompromisingly stood by the ideals of the 1979 Revolution: democracy, social justice, and postcolonial self-assertion. Once the articulators of social justice were silenced, the public discourse pertaining to social justice and participatory democracy died out or was forced into exile. The second event—the generational purge of defenders of social justice—was the necessary step for the (neoliberal) socioeconomic processes following the first event—the end of war—to take place without hindrance. Or so it tragically seems.

The War's "Blessing"

The war was "a divine blessing" (*ne'mat-e elahi*), famously declared Ayatollah Khomeini. It was a blessing, held the Ayatollah, because it provided a historic opportunity for the Iranian nation, at the forefront of liberationist Islam, to come to terms with the "necessity to rely upon ourselves and abandon hope in outsiders" (2016). The leader of the Revolution still held a view of the war as a war of liberation through which the long-coveted "return to the [authentic] Self" would finally be realized. He did not see much of the postwar Iran (having died within a year after the ceasefire), having no idea what members of his inner circle, who collectively secured key positions after the Imam's death in order to rule the country in the decades to come, had in mind for the country. For them, the war was indeed a "blessing": the war effort (or the "sacred defense") symbolized a courageous defense of the Revolution. For sure, the war indicated the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's ambitious maneuver to settle long-time territorial claims in his favor, and he was encouraged by Western powers that wished the defeat of Iranian Revolution. Iran's engagement was indeed

self-defense, but in the context of a popular revolution, self-defense soon emerged in the public and religious discourses as a Shi'i-inspired "war of liberation" partaken by Iranian people whose enormous sacrifices reenacted, in official propaganda, the collective memory of the revered martyrdom of Hussein Ibn Ali, the Third Shi'i Imam, by Omayyad Caliph, Yazid I, in 680 CE. A nation exhausted by war, an economy in ruins, and a country deeply wounded and partly devastated: so reemerged the post-war Iran, but in the postrevolutionary state-propagated semiotic universe, Iran was depicted as an innocent and victimized but proud nation that had stood up to the evil, colonial forces of "global arrogance" (*estekbar-e jahani*) and their regional cronies. To the rising political elite who now had the opportunity to emerge from out of the mantle of their revered Imam, the war meant that Iran had stood its ground, safeguarded its territorial integrity, and defended its Revolution. The end of the war, then, provided the possibility of a radically new turn. The public discourse of the "sacred defense" paved the way for the "reconstruction effort," and President Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani (presidency: 1989–1997) was crowned the "reconstruction commander" (*sardar-e sazandegi*) in the state-run media. In the next two decades, the country gradually but steadfastly sought to liberalize the economy, dismantle the state's economic monopoly, remove the constitutional obstacles to privatization, negotiate concessions with Western powers to end international sanctions that impeded neoliberalization policies, and not surprisingly, achieve all that at the expense of Iran's working people.

Iran's (Hidden) Nietzschean Revolution

In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Friedrich Nietzsche offers a theory of "slave morality" that lay at the heart of Christian morals. This is a work of "genealogy" because it reveals the presuppositions of morals through the original formations. The notion of "good," Nietzsche proposes, is derived from power through language (1989: 26), and it is identified—etymologically and socially—with the higher order of society and the nobility, those "with aristocratic soul" (1989: 28). As such, good and evil conceal, (heretically) borrowing Marxian language, the class character of these notions. The reaction of the deprived classes to the powerful leads to a "slave revolt in morality," a reactionary sentiment of fuming and destructive envy that Nietzsche calls "*ressentiment*" (1989: 36–37). Morality separates action from the actor, thus unburdening actors of responsibility

for their actions (Nietzsche 1989: 45). Driven by a deep sense of collective *ressentiment*, the "oppressed, downtrodden, outraged exhort one another with the vengeful cunning of impotence" (Nietzsche 1989: 46). In Nietzsche's aristocratic philosophy, the downtrodden are unable to *mentally and intellectually* rise above their conditions; they are incapable of achieving self-consciousness, to borrow Hegelian terms. They are thus purely motivated by vengeance, hatred, and destruction of the old (noble) order. Mentally, the slaves wish to become masters at any cost, without having the (presumed) concomitant nobility or the desire to change the master–slave system. They shed responsibility and guilt for their actions. Slave morality will bring no fresh values, no exalted order, no exceptional quality; it will just conjure up the old in a savagely exploitative and ruthless order. Driven by greed and envy, the victorious slaves will only imitate the material values and lifestyles of their former masters but fail to attain noble spirits.

The rise of Iran's political–economic elite from out of (largely) deprived, nonproductive, traditional–religious sectors profoundly resentful of the Shah's westernized modernization, in the postrevolutionary and postwar periods, exemplifies the long-neglected Nietzschean aspect of the 1979 Revolution. This aspect has been lost to the scholars' preoccupation with methodological lenses (often quantitative and/or ideologically informed) that focus on class analysis, political economy, political theory, regional politics, and Islam. These approaches are fine and fruitful, but they have diverted attention from the collective psychology and cultural components of the religious circles within traditional lower- and middle-class families that had supported Ayatollah Khomeini since the early 1960s, individuals who have been occupying key positions of power and privilege in postwar times. In other words, to the scholars focusing on grand structures, the stealth "slave revolt" within Iran's otherwise genuine postcolonial and democratic Revolution remains imperceptible. The new *nomenklatura* (following Milovan Djilas) rose to power not just by staying close to the political inner circle and participating in the war effort (or pretending to). Moved by *ressentiment, they rule the masses by actively abandoning them*: the very masses from which they had emerged, the masses they had helped mobilize during the Revolution and war effort, those who represented the new elite's social origins. These masses generated the selfless and social justice-oriented revolutionary cadres loyal to the Imam's original ideas (to varying degrees), those lost to the war, and suppressed or marginalized due to their opposition to the Islamic Republic. The *nouveau riche* from

humble backgrounds, to borrow Nietzsche's term, literally "exhorted" the deprived classes for their own caprice for wealth and power. The poor and vulnerable were relegated to fend for themselves in the postwar era, as the rising elite from humble backgrounds, driven by *ressentiment* and racing to imitate (unsuccessfully) the ruling class they had subverted, secured key political, security, and military positions. No wonder, then, that there emerged an authoritarian oligarchy organized around a lucrative rentier state. *Democracy and social justice—the core ideals of 1979*—would not feed the *ressentiment* of this oligarchy. For this new monstrous chimera of insatiable avarice and unending control, committing their underprivileged past to history involved leaving behind the very masses with which they once shared their underprivileged realities. As the ruling elite rises in economic positions and political power, it proportionately declines in social status and in the eyes of the public. No matter. After all, this is now their historic chance to avenge their underprivileged past and internalized painful memories of deprivation and humiliation.

Privatization of Iranian Economy

"Eradication of poverty and deprivation thus became one of the Islamic Republic's principal duties and its leaders' principal aims" (Amuzegar 2007: 60). It so happened that in the aftermath of the "revolution of the downtrodden," the "reconstruction effort" policies brought about an effective abandonment of the marginalized masses that had brought the Islamic Republic to power. The social justice streaks of the Revolution now became rhetorical ruses, devoid of substance, monopolized by the statesmen's official discourse to divert public attention from the new economic policies. The *new turn* was rather a *turning away* from the core revolutionary ideals that had once unified Iranians. With this turning away, what is left of the Revolution is authoritarianism and social disintegration.

This chapter does not intend to provide data-supported proof of privatization within Iranian economy: this is a fact beyond dispute. In addition to being state policy declared by current President Hassan Rouhani (2012), in addition to an International Monitary Fund (IMF) comprehensive assessment (Jbili, et al. 2007), numerous valuable studies have registered this economic shift (Behdad 2000; Behdad and Nomani 2002; Amuzegar 2007; Molavi 2009). In Iran, privatization means giving up state-owned economic sector, legislated under Chapter IV, Article 44 of the Constitution (that identifies state, cooperative, and private sectors), which bestows upon the state the monopoly over major resources, indus-

tries, transportation, and communication. About 80 % of Iranian economy falls under Article 44 (Amuzegar 2007: 67), with the share of the state being about 70 % of the economy. In 2006, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei ordered privatization of economy, declaring, "Ceding 80 per cent of the shares of large companies will serve to bring about economic development, social justice and the elimination of poverty (quoted in Molavi 2009: 8). For this to happen, Article 44 seems like an obstacle. "Two convenient escape routes thus suggested themselves: simply ignoring the mandate of Article 44 and proceeding with the transfer of public-sector assets, or searching for an enabling 'interpretation'," observes Amuzegar. "Unthinkable as the violation option might appear …, the decision was not precedent setting in the Islamic Republic. In previous years, various administrations had routinely sidestepped, bypassed, ignored or even boldly violated various principles of the country's 1979 Constitution and its 1989 amendment" (2007: 65–66). Precisely because of the constitutional emphasis on social justice through state ownership, we shall see, a new privatization discursive game has emerged to justify the turning away.

Privatization has unleashed three major processes: (a) the rise of an economic elite tightly linked to the rentier state; (b) dismantling or bypassing of the laws and constitutional provisions pertaining to the role of the state and cooperative sectors (legacy of the Revolution); and (c) abandonment of the working class, the middle class, the poor, and socially and economically vulnerable (retirees, disabled, mentally ill), often relegating them to charity organizations through removal of legal codes that protected minimum wages, collective rights, and fair employment contracts. The revolutionary economy was based on the values of *'adl* (justice), *qest* (roughly, share), and *ensaf* (fairness), but we must note, with Behdad and Nomani, that this economy was more of a (Islamic) utopian type and thus never really put on trial, let alone properly implemented (2002: 673). We must add that this utopian ideal, legalized in the Constitution and partially institutionalized in postrevolutionary *bonyads* (foundations), was at its zenith during the war. As such, this model never had a chance to be tried in times of peace: state-centric redistribution was thus equated with war economy in the public discourse of the reconstruction era.

As mentioned, what justified Iran's new economic turn was the war. And who to initiate—and legitimize—this process more rightfully than those who rose to power through the war: the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). The IRGC moved into economic activity through the reconstruction and development efforts, and their "reconstruction bases" (*qarargah-e sazandegi*), *Khatam al-Anbia* and *Qorb*, launched this process

and became economic powerhouses that initiated privatization through state contracts (Alfoneh 2010; Alam Rizvi 2012; Harris 2013; Vahabi 2015). Since then the involvement of the IRGC and those associated with the rentier state has only increased multiple times. Privatization and neoliberalization of the economy spawned an exclusive economic elite. Thus, the process of economic liberalization guaranteed two things: *first*, only those connected to the highest ranks of statesmen, and their military and security affiliates, enjoyed the exclusive privilege of becoming economic keyholders to privatization through the distribution of subcontracts. They formed a new class around the country's rentier state. *Second*, the distributive system was set up such that from Iran's entrepreneurial class only those with solid connections to the ruling elite would receive a share of subcontracted projects. As such, Iran's privatization process has never resembled the competitive system one observes in the West in which (supposedly) the top bidder wins the contract or state sales. Here we have a clientelist system that guarantees that privatization actually benefits those associated with the ruling elite (like Mexico under Partido Revolucionario Institucional that ruled for 71 years). The sanctions strengthened this exclusive group. Iran's stagnating entrepreneurial class is thus left with that which trickles down. In a country in which about 70 % of economy is state owned and its state is mandated to relinquish 80 % of state ownership, the amount of wealth to be transferred can only be fathomed. Under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (presidency: 2005–2013), privatization was pitched to the masses in a populist light, as he introduced the Justice Shares: a gimmick to hold social justice ideals of the Revolution together with ongoing privatization (Amuzegar 2007). The plan was to distribute among millions of families shares of state-owned firms the dividends of which would be cashable within 20 years. Valued at $36 billion as of 2014, Justice Shares represented subsidy payments as the government severely cut back on various food, fuel, and services subsidies. To get the complete picture, we must add the liberalization of foreign exchange as well as price liberalization and wage reductions (Behdad 2000: 115–131).

Rise of the New Public Discourse

Naturally, for a revolution whose ideals hinged on participatory democracy and social justice, the turning away in economic policies from those ideals at the expense of increasingly impoverished population has been concomitant with a *discursive shift* away from those ideals. The new discourse was carefully, incrementally, and *successfully* crafted across several

administrations and through efforts of state-funded think tanks. Several key features enable us to understand the new public discourse promoting privatization, neoliberalism, and free-market capitalism.

First, instead of rejecting the concept of social justice, the rising neoliberal discourse counterintuitively appropriates it, *equating* social justice with the massive but wasteful and unproductive state ownership, mismanaged state-initiated developmental programs riveted with corruption, and failing government-run social safety nets (health care, social security, old-age pension) due to lack of accountability. Once the signifier "social justice" is uprooted from its original revolutionary, egalitarian discourse and attached to signifieds that evoke the public's moral abhorrence, the proponents of neoliberalism will be able to depict market liberalization and privatization (of not only state-owned industries but also social services) as the "true" manifestation of justice, one that reconciles respect for individual reason and choices with social charity. Fingers are pointed at the "welfare state" (*dowlat-e refah*)—which has *never* existed in Iran—as equivalent to "big government": the culprit in failing to deliver social justice to the masses.

Massoud Nili (President Rouhani's advisor on economic issues) and company (Moussa Ghaninezhad, Mohammad Tabibiyan, and Gholamali Farjadi) intentionally evoke the term "justice" so that they would challenge the idea that "justice" necessitates redistribution and thus state agency. They then flip this false predicate to yield *laissez-faire* neoliberalism as the sole alternative. They even pose individual right of ownership and personal freedom, which they deem as principles of free-market economy, as the necessary condition for realizing personal morals and social virtues (Nili 2008). Referencing Friedrich Hayek, Ghaninezhad argues, "contrary to existing notions, social justice is an ultimately subjective and fluid concept to the extent that one cannot perceive of an objective, distinct, and commonly acceptable content [meaning] for it" (2000: 781–782).

Second, the neoliberal discourse's equation of social justice with government ownership and state distributive system enables it to effortlessly opt for the reversal of former policies. It dwells in the popular, and justified, disgust for government corruption and mismanagement of public funds—a sentiment widely shared by Iranians. In the absence of any clear long-term roadmap developmental plans for the country, liberalization ironically relies on President Rouhani's government to remove the impediments to unfettered free-market economy. "According to this doctrine, called supply-side or neoliberal economics, solutions to economic

stagnation, poverty and underdevelopment lie in unhindered market mechanism and unreserved integration into world capitalist system. Recessions, joblessness and economic hardship in many less-developed countries are not so much due to economic mismanagement or the nature of global capitalism as they are because of government intervention and/or exclusion from world capitalist markets" (Hossein-Zadeh 2014). In the liberalization discourse, therefore, the state's (re-)*distributive powers* acquires an entirely new meaning: social justice requires the commonwealth to function as the agent of citizens' welfare while economic liberalization requires the state's distributive powers to be deployed for the privatization of state-owned corporations. In this model, social justice is rhetorically tethered to "development," and the only plausible option to properly "develop" remains market-oriented competitive system (as opposed to state-centered and market-oriented monopoly) (Nili 2011: 29).

Third, in the emerging privatization public discourse, a *slide* has taken place: the term *kargar* (worker)—once the ultimate referent of social justice discourse—has been gradually transformed into *karafarin* (job creator). The term *karafarin* has gradually replaced the word "capitalist" (*sarmayehdar*) with its negative connotations in Persian as someone who thrives off others' toils. The word *sarmayehdar* (capitalist, entrepreneur) is, depending on the context, sometimes even used to mean "thief." As such, *karafarin* intends to put a positive spin on "capitalist": *karafarin* is the one who creates jobs for others, rather than produce wealth for himself (as in *sarmayehdar*). The term *sarmayegozar* (investor) accompanies *karafarin*: both terms denote generating for, and adding something new to, society. This linguistic ploy is significant as "a 'slide' refers to the characteristic of a 'discourse,' which is not a single statement but an organized field of statements" (Angus 2008: 18). The phonetic quasi-homology of the two terms (sharing the word *kar*—meaning both "labor" and "job") allows for the shift in focus on the state policies backing those who (supposedly) create jobs for workers instead of upholding the rights of the workers. Those who recall the early postrevolutionary years—when the Islamic Republic was forced by rival, primarily leftist but also Shi'i discourses to promote the idea of social justice—remember Ayatollah Khomeini's famous praise for workers in 1981: "Workers constitute the most precious class and are the most beneficial group in societies," he declared. "The enormous wheel of human societies is turned with the powerful arms of the workers. The life of a nation is owed to labour and labourer" (Khomeini 2015). This is significant because it illustrates how

badly the Islamist rulers wanted to wrest away workers' representation from the Left's unwavering support for workers and the poor. Note that the centrality of *kargar* (and thus the poor, minorities, the vulnerable, as well as women under the new regime) within the discourse will require the deployment of policy that protects the rights of the underprivileged. This trajectory implies the state as the agent of protection of citizens. By replacing *kargar* with *karafarin*, the privatization discourse replaces the state's agency with market mechanisms that in turn take care of employees (seemingly) in accord with economic productivity. And thus withers away the concept of *rights*. It comes as no surprise, then, that President Rouhani finds Iranian labor laws and minimum wage "very oppressive" and obstacles to economic prosperity. "One of the main challenges that employers and our factories face," writes Rouhani, "is the existence of labor unions. Workers should be more pliant toward the demands of job-creators" (quoted in Hossein-Zadeh 2014).

Fourth and last, with the state now mandated to privatize the public sector, security and political stability are posed in the new discourse as the preconditions for economic liberalization. "As stable international relations paves the grounds for economic development, economic development, in turn, makes a country more secure or stable as it makes the country less vulnerable to external threats" (Rouhani quoted in Hossein-Zadeh 2014). As the country ends hostilities and makes concessions with Western powers, it acquires the stability it needs to crush the resistances of the vast majority of Iranians adversely affected by liberalization and removal of collective bargaining rights (see Vahabzadeh 2016). Iran's turn to a full-fledged privatized capitalist economy, due to its linkage to an avaricious ruling elite, has become an obstacle to democratization and recognition of individual and collective rights (Nomani and Behdad 2012). Unlike Europe, Iran's economic liberalization does not come with political liberalization. But this is precisely the point: that capitalism and free-market will bring Iran (or other countries) democracy is a *myth*. This means that, once again, Iranians must simultaneously fight on two fronts: for social justice and for democratic self-assertion.

The people have indeed felt the adverse effects of the increasingly aggressive privatization policies. A 2004 survey shows 71 % of Iranians are dissatisfied with "the economic situation of the country," while 25 % are somewhat satisfied and only 5 % are very satisfied (Maljoo 2006). "Economic crises, high inflationary trends, and persistently high rates of unemployment put workers under pressure," observe Nomani and Behdad. "Job insecurity increases as factories close for various reasons.

Wages are low and workers' payments are frequently delayed for months. The use of temporary contracts, which are exempt from many benefits of the Labor Code … is spreading. The repressive acts of government in dealing with workers' grievances have often forced workers into a defensive struggle for their basic economic demands" (2012: 221). Today's expanding movements of workers and teachers are surgically repressed, their union leaders facing long-term prison terms (Vahabzadeh 2016). Minimum wage for 2016 has been set by the government at Rls 812,000 (US$236) per month, and while 7 million workers are paid even less because they are not covered by the Labor Code ("7 Million Workers" 2016), this newly set monthly minimum wage is only one-third of the living wages to support a family of four ("Minimum Wage of Workers" 2016). Seven major workers unions demanded in winter 2016 the minimum wage of Rls 3,500,000 (US$1017) per month for maintaining a decent standard of living ("Where Are You?" 2016). Twelve million Iranians suffered from "food poverty" in 2015, even those with two jobs cannot stay afloat ("Poverty in Iran" 2015), and 40 % or 30 million live in poverty ("30 Million" 2016).

The above picture, by no means complete, constitutes the general contours of the immediate historic context for renewed studies of social justice in Iran. Evidently, the two key ideals that united revolutionary Iranians from diverse walks of life in 1979—social justice and participatory democracy—have been abandoned in the past three decades. However, in order to guarantee the omission of revolutionary ideals, which are the ideals of the majority of humanity today, the voices of those ideals had to be silenced.

Clearance of Social Justice

In the pretext of the war, Iranian regime was able to suppress its opposition. The regime's opposition often depicts the waves of repression in the dark decade of the 1980s as monstrous, demonic, and vicious. Quite the contrary, the repression of opposition was in fact calculative, surgical, and cunning. Iranian security carried out the process of repression of the opposition with considerable efficiency.

The period of state formation following February 1979 witnessed the clerical push for the consolidation of power and establishment of the Islamic Republic. This period witnessed rife conflicts. Following the Revolution, the continued quest for social justice and egalitarian relations first and most vividly manifested itself through ethno-regional movements,

most notably in the Iranian Kurdistan, in the Plains of Turkmen, the ethnic-Arab regions in Khuzestan, and to some extent in Azerbaijan. These movements were either repressed or faded away with the exception of the Kurdish quest for a federative arrangement which degenerated into a prolonged civil war until around 1985. The Cultural Revolution in 1980—the state's "coup" to close down universities under the rubric of Islamization of education—provided the first opportunity to purge one-third of nonconformist student population as well as faculty and staff. The regime's heavy-handed repression led to the armed resistance of certain leftist and Muslim opposition groups, leading to the June 1981 street clashes, which brought about the mass arrests and summary execution of members of militant groups until 1983. The purges continued through careful repression and arrests of members of nonmilitant parties and organizations, some of which even having defended the new regime. Mass flight of activists into exile consequently gained momentum. With thousands of activists in prisons, by 1985, Iranian political scene was clearly homogenized, bereft of any visible opposition. The process of consolidation of power became conclusive by 1988 with the regime's purging of thousands of political prisoners, just before signing the UN Security Council Resolution 598 that ended the eight-year war with Iraq.

So we can see that the dominant mode of collective action in this period pertained to ethno-national movements and party politics. Movements outside of these spheres of collective action—notably women's movement against new discriminatory measures—were marginalized or—like workers' job actions—subsumed under ethnic movements or party politics of opposition groups. Obviously, the Revolution had opened up the possibility for a new, egalitarian, and democratic Iran within reach, at least for a historic moment, and this was due to the irreducible diversity of the social forces that contributed to this historic turn, a diversity that has been erased from the state's official narratives. I call this process "clearance," a concept with Scottish origins whose highlands have been the sites of numerous clearances of rebellions, peoples, and languages. Clearance is not an act performed once and for all; it persists through "continued dispossession" (Angus 2012). In our case, for the consolidation of power and for the new political and economic turn to take place without hindrance, it was essential for the regime to silence the articulators of the core ideals of the Revolution. Without these articulators, the social justice and democratic discourses died out. With the Reform government (1997–2005) and then in the Green Movement (2009), the democratic ideals of the Revolution

were reinvigorated in new terms and in objection to, respectively, intolerant everyday policies and disregard for the nation's political will, but the social justice element has remained largely un- or underarticulated.

By and large, Iranian leftist organizations have been rightly criticized for their doctrinal ideologies, sectarianism, Stalinism, factionalism, militantism, or for making unprincipled compromises with the regime. Yet none of these charges will detract from the Left's appearance in postrevolutionary Iran (and under the *ancien regime*) as the bearer of the public discourse of social justice and participatory democracy. Leftist activists have consistently brought the plights of the working class, the poor and squatters, and ethnic minorities to public view, tried to organize workers and the poor, educate the vulnerable, and mobilize and empower the minorities. For a century now, the Left—Marxist or Muslim—has solidly stood for the subaltern, articulating their demands. Although the unwavering defense of women's rights, as well as rights of sexual and religious minorities, have been disturbingly absent from leftist discourse until recent years, the Left was a defender of the ideals of the Revolution. It is for this reason, for being a menace to the consolidation of power and the future direction of the country, that the Left was subjected to clearance.

Aside from state-sponsored "intellectual" attacks, the anti-social justice assault continues from all sides. Liberal thinker Sadeq Zibakalam, for instance, attributes Iran's "backwardness" to leftism and populism, expressing contempt for intellectuals (Matin-asgari 2004: 76, 78). Such a gross misunderstanding reveals an intellectual crisis: in light of the collapse of the "actually existing socialism" and the proven failure of the state's delivering of democracy and social justice to Iranians, and in the absence of original thinking by the majority of intellectuals in the country, these intellectuals simply take the unsurprisingly easy task of relegating fundamental questions such as social justice and democracy to "unrealistic" aspirations of a seemingly bygone generation of dreamers and instead adhere uncritically to a diluted version of liberal discourse that tends to resolve Iran's problems of dispossession and impoverishment by erasing the questions. In the context of the aforementioned clearance, the historical retrieval of the public and discursive legacy of the continually repressed Left is in order.

Given Iran's repressive measures, since the Reform movement, the opposition has unmistakably been dwelling in the discourse of civil society and human rights. The human rights discourse has significantly contributed to women's and minorities' rights movements in challenging the

state's repressive measures and have brought about public awareness. The mobilizing power of the human rights discourse is evidenced in the 2009 Green Movement. However, just like its Western liberal–democratic counterpart, Iran's human rights discourse lacks the concept of social rights and has failed to articulate (indeed it has alienated) the demands of workers, the poor and vulnerable. In the past decade, with the greater access to the Internet and the coming of age of a new generation of young leftists (although few in numbers), the issues pertaining to social justice are making a precarious return. It seems, though, the working people have produced their own activists, workers and teachers above all, to fight for their survival (Vahabzadeh 2016).

In our postcommunist era, doctrinal Left has largely faded away; instead, democratic socialism, gender- and sexuality advocacy, green, ecological, antipoverty, and anarchist networks of activists have emerged. This is how the question of social justice is reactivated from under sedimented layers of oblivion in the public and intellectual discourse.

Social Justice: The Floating Signifier

Finally, we need to attend to "social justice," a concept that is as lasting, motivating, and widespread as it is difficult to define for the positivist who wishes to grasp the universal concept before observing the particular, concrete phenomena. Perhaps this is precisely the key to the concept's vitality: it defies narrow and *a priori* definitions as it endures by continuously adapting to the pulse of times, changing collective sensibilities, and new possibilities for challenging perceived injustices. There is no point, after all, offering a concept and then forcing the complex realities of our times into compliance with it. The concept owes its reach to its diversity, interpretability, and wide applicability. As a *floating signifier*, social justice allows a changing and broadening range of signifieds under its banner: gender justice, ecological justice, justice for the poor, workers, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ), indigenous peoples, and for ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities as well. The signifier "justice" and its *chain of equivalences* are key because "justice" allows for the agency of the oppressed to mobilize against what they deem *oppressive* and challenge the conditions and forces that deny the oppressed their *dignity*. Here, "dignity" refers to one's recognition of his or her immutable *social rights*: to live without the structural and institutional hindrances that impede the agents' personal and social *self-realization*. These hindrances are the effects of denying the necessary social, economic, political, and legal

conditions for the (perceived) individual and collective self-realization, by those who wield power over social, political, and economic institutions. Only when one can fight for the rights that enable individual and collective self-realization does the notion of social justice find a social and political expression and becomes actable. Acquiring justice is therefore a *socialized* process. This is why *struggles for social justice are always inevitably democratic, participatory, and collective struggles.*

These condensed observations on the meaning of "social justice" require two important clarifications. *First, social justice primarily involves struggles against structural violence.* Human entitlement to subsistence (food, shelter, clothing), and in modern societies, to have access to *proper* education, healthcare, and employment, constitutes the fundamental principle of *social rights*—the rights that are by and large absent in the current liberal discourse of human and citizenship rights. The historical experiment of welfare state in the West was an attempt at reconciling political rights with social rights, but it is rapidly diminishing in our neoliberal age. Withdrawing the basic necessities to which humans are universally entitled, and imposing structural and institutional obstacles against the people's obtaining these necessities (despite their best efforts), constitute denial of the proper social development of individuals and collectives. Social rights are not simply expressions of values: they capture the human capacity for personal and collective growth that depend on nurturing social conditions that, to borrow the idea from Johan Galtung, *reduce* the distance between one's actual and one's potential. For Galtung, social justice leads to the amelioration of personal and structural violence (1969: 185). Galtung rejects the "narrow concept of violence" as "*somatic* incapacitation, or deprivation of health … at the hands of an *actor* who *intends* this to be the consequence" (Galtung 1969: 168; original italics). Instead, he states: "*Violence is here defined as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual*, between what could have been and what is. Violence is that which increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance" (Galtung 1969: 168; original italics). Dying of a treatable disease due lack of access to healthcare constitutes violence. A child's working instead of attending school because her or his family earn below subsistence will diminish the child's future life chances and increase the distance between her or his present actuality and future potentialities. Once the actual falls below the potential, there is violence (Galtung 1969: 168–169) and social injustice. Unfortunately, *this form of violence—social injustice—is often concealed by*

policy implementations and legal codes. Social justice, therefore, requires resource redistribution through participatory decision-making, based on the agreed-upon principles of "resource equity, fairness, and respect for diversity, as well as the eradication of existing forms of social oppression" (Feagin 2001: 5).

Second, democratic life is a socialized process. Meaningful and creative social rights are inseparable from political rights associated with citizenship. However, social justice will require the expansion of the sphere of citizenship beyond the nominal membership in body politic. This means that the disenfranchisement of the working class, teachers, the poor, retirees, and minorities of their rights to equitable conditions in today's Iran is concomitant with the gradual but stealth political disenfranchisement. Social justice holds that, by virtue of citizenship, human individual and collectives are entitled not only to civil liberties and freedom of conscience, but also to fairness, equitable conditions, and participation in forging their communities according to the principles that simultaneously respect the dignity of the community as well as the dignity of others. Without democratic participation and public deliberations on the future directions of social justice-based programs, society will risk plunging into authoritarianism, unresponsive rentier state, and corruption.

Conclusions

The history of Iran's struggles for social justice goes back to the influential emergence of social democracy in the Constitutional Revolution (1906–1911). Since then, the Iranian Left—in all of its ideological shades and organizational embodiments, and notwithstanding its dogmatic streaks—has been the steadfast defender of social and democratic rights of Iranians and the articulator of demands of the oppressed. With the absence of the Left from the public discourse and political scene in the past three decades, the articulation of social justice in public discourse has significantly faded. Authoritarian state and repressive policies have created a backlash among activists and dissidents of the postwar generation who have borrowed, quite understandably, their terms of reference in their struggle for democratic rights from the liberal conceptions of human rights and citizenship. For a couple of decades, Iranian activists have regarded the rights discourse, articulated in the liberal vein, to hold universal utility and a solution to all of Iran's problems. Research on contemporary Iran was

for a while saturated with publications hinging on the politics of human rights. Concurrent with the discursive rise of neoliberal discourse on the side of the state, the discursive ascendancy of the human rights discourse among activists has inadvertently led to the gradual absence of the social justice public discourse. However, in light of the country's repressive policies in the past decades, it seems that the country's fast-moving turn to neoliberalism is gradually showing that the discourse of human rights must be reconciled with the social justice discourse. In a country run by a neoliberal and military-security oligarchy, the process of socialization of democracy and social justice now rests with the generative power of collective action of women, workers, youth, students, religious and ethnic minorities, and environmentalists. The relations of equivalence among these movements will lead them to focus on the nodal points of *democratic participation* and *social justice*. This means the Marxist-oriented Left is no longer the privileged articulator of social justice demands. A new postcolonial, feminist, and ecological Left—which will contain both (post-)Marxist and egalitarian–liberatory Shi'i elements—will need to be forged around the demands for both democracy and social justice. It seems that today the preferred term to bring back social justice and democracy among the majority of scholars and activists is "social democracy." What is important, however, is to stay with that which distinguishes the democratic-Left as a social project: "to *liberate* … fellow human beings from the *chains* imposed on them by the privileges of race, class, rank" (Bobbio 1996: 47; original emphasis), as well as gender, sexual preference, ethnicity, religious belief, and sustainable ecology.

As Iran seems to be slowly recovering from the clearance of the social justice activists, the struggles for social justice today are in need of ending the collective, discursive amnesia about the conditions that hurt the vulnerable sectors of the population, and to bring back solidarity and compassion as the requirements for reintroducing the conditions in which Iranians can live in peace and democracy, and of course with dignity.

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Gazing Upon the Land of Oil Through the Prism of Structure, Elite Action, and Civil Society

Hajar Amidian

Does natural resource wealth promote authoritarianism and construct states immune to democratic social movements? The key to understanding this relation is to investigate the political incentives produced by resource "rents." This constitutes a foundational research for studying social justice, since struggles for social justice are dependent on the process of democratization. My research attempts to advance the understanding of the correlation between the rentier state and degrees of authoritarianism through the lens of the structural, elite, and civil society levels in Iran during the presidency of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005).

The 1997 election of Khatami provided a political opportunity for change and the revival of civil society for the first time since the 1979 Revolution. To understand how a state "cursed by oil revenues" could experience instances of uprising and demand for change we need a rigorous typology that can describe indicators of authoritarianism and rent. To understand the relation between these concepts, I look into the state economic and political structures, elite action-oriented policies, and civil society activism. Investigating these three elements that synthesize the

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political structure and socio-economic relations between consumers and collectors of rent will offer a clearer depiction of change within the Islamic Republic.

FROM RENTIERISM TO AUTHORITARIANISM: A ONE-WAY STREET?

In the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many scholars predicted that the Middle East would also embrace democracy (Anderson 2006). However, the Middle East did not follow these predictions, and ever since, this region has become the focal point in studying the persistence of authoritarianism. Moreover, following the 2009 Green movement in Iran and the late 2010 uprisings labelled the Arab Spring, the rentier state's euphoria failed to persist and these supposedly authoritarian rentier states showed that they were not immune from demands for change, thus requiring the examination of the contexts and circumstances of rentierism and its relation to authoritarianism.

Studies show that countries with declines in freedom have outnumbered those that have gained for the past nine years (Freedom House 2015). So authoritarianism is not a particular phenomenon to the Middle East, but it is the endurance and density of it in some Middle Eastern countries that makes the region an interesting subject of analysis (Posusney and Angrist 2005). Authoritarianism is considered a stagnant condition in these countries, and they were left out of important studies on democratic transitions in the developing world. Scholarly attention has been paid to the analysis of non-democratic regimes, but the field lacks attention to theories about authoritarian policies. This scarcity of research is even more noticeable when compared to the plethora of work on democratization in recent decades. Due to hopeful, normative commitments to democracy in the 1980s and 1990s, scholars underestimated the possibility of transition from authoritarian rule leading to anything but a democratic regime, while scholars who established the transitional framework (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986) concluded that transition from authoritarian rule could lead to democracy, authoritarian regressions, revolutions, or hybrid regimes. In the following, I will discuss how in Iran's case, due to the diffused nature of state power and some democratic traits alongside limited pluralism and the importance of revolutionary mindsets, the state could be considered a semi-authoritarian regime with a combination of positive and negative traits.

Initial studies tried to explain the reason behind the success or failure of countries in becoming democratic based on "macro-structural variables like socioeconomic development and corresponding cultural change that fostered democratic politics" (King 2009: 19). For example, Lipset (1959: 72) studies values, social institutions, and historical events as important factors in sustaining political systems, while Almond and Verba (1963) look into national political culture as an element unifying individual attitudes with the overall political structure. These studies claim: "Structural factors such as economic development, cultural influences, and historical institutional arrangements influence the formation of actors' preferences and power, but ultimately these forces have causal significance only if translated into human action" (McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2004: 60). This emphasis on voluntarism focuses on individual elite choices as central drivers of human action. So the structural approaches that characterize the first approach to transitions need to be synthesized with the second, voluntarist (actor based), approach. However, as Przeworski and Limongi (1993) argue, the actor-centred approach emphasizes the role of politicians to bypass structural obstacles on the way of transition to democracy. It puts the onus solely on actors and hence disregards structure by explaining difficulties in transitioning to democracy as the incapability and wrongdoing of individuals. It also neglects the importance of civil society. However, "in non-democratic countries where democratic institutions are weak, civil society organizations could serve as multifunctional organs. They could educate and also aggregate the citizens' interests where the party politics is weak" (Mahdavi 2008: 144).

Another main aspect of understanding authoritarian characteristics in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region focuses on the rentier state model, which explains the links between authoritarianism and the state's rent revenue. Canonical studies have probed the effects of hydrocarbon rent on authoritarianism in MENA (Mahdavy 1970; Beblawi and Luciani 1987; Gause 1994). Other scholars have expanded this correlation to other parts of the world (Ross 2001; Ulfelder 2007; Aslaksen 2010; Clark 1997; Jensen and Wantchekon 2004; Karl 1997), other types of natural resources (Ross 2001), other sources of non-tax revenue (Morrison 2005), and other outcomes (Jensen and Wantchekon 2004; Smith 2007). While some of these studies look into the relation between oil revenues and authoritarianism by emphasizing differences or change in the degree of democracy others focus on the transitions from authoritarianism in

light of the survival of autocracies. However, the rentier state literature looks into the issue of authoritarianism mostly through a narrow lens provided by Ross in his "oil hinders democracy" thesis (Ross 2001). In his "first law of petropolitics," Friedman concludes that high oil prices undermine democracy and sustain autocracy (2006: 3). However, this simplistic explanation does not take into account the wide range of elements involved in the correlation between oil revenue and authoritarianism. These approaches usually take the state as a homogenous entity associated with underdevelopment, authoritarianism, dictatorship, or populism.

In Iran, however, different administrations have displayed varying approaches to using the oil revenue. While Khatami's pre-election statements focused on social and cultural aspects of governance, he refused to outline any specific economic proposal other than implementing social justice. His solution for dealing with Iran's unsupervised inflow of oil revenue was to establish the Oil Stabilization Fund and its supplement the National Development Fund, a national reserve fund for saving the surplus oil and transforming oil and gas revenues to useful investment for future generation. On the other hand, one of Ahmadinejad's principal campaign slogans was to bring the oil proceeds to the tables of the people (direct distribution of oil income). While his government had the advantage of receiving the highest oil revenues compared with any other post-revolutionary administration in Iran, he failed to meet the expecting 8 per cent growth rate of the Fourth Five Year Plan (Pesaran 2011). Despite these differences in policy implementation, the existing literature generally relates Iran's oil revenues to lack of democracy, generalizing Friedman's "oil hinders democracy" thesis (Boix 2003; Friedman 2006; Schubert 2006). When it comes to authoritarian characteristics, the literature on Iran usually focuses on how a theocracy lends itself to authoritarian features in a state, without considering historical perspectives (Bina 2006).

Katouzian and Shahidi (2008) and Gelb and Grasmann (2010) look into the heterogeneity of countries and conclude that in the case of poorer countries *the manner in which oil wealth is used could be interpreted as a curse, but oil revenues are not a curse in and of themselves.* Hence, a general shortcoming in the rentier state literature is that the state is considered a homogenous entity. In the Iranian case, an array of voices can be heard from inside the society. Moreover, in the literature on rentier states, there is no consensus on the direct relation between authoritarianism and rentierism. Contrary to Ross (2001) and Beblawi and Luciani (1987), Dunning (2008) argues that based on recent research in political economy

and political sociology, rents could push a country towards the process of becoming more democratic. In Iran, however, the more recent arguments are rarely taken into consideration, mostly because of the focus of scholars on the first waves of rentier theory. In addition, even scholars like Dunning, who take a longitudinal and more critical approach to rentier theory, do not consider separate administrations and usually suffice to a cross-national method.

Nevertheless, the rentier character of the Iranian state structure plays a major role in explaining the causes of authoritarianism in the literature. Regardless of different approaches, most scholars have settled on identifying two broad categories when studying the effects of resource rents on regime type. They place emphasis either on the state or on society. Studies that emphasize the state focus on the position and power of individuals alongside the institutions and agencies within a country. Studies focusing on societal variables study the interactions of the ordinary citizens with the government.

Resource rents eliminate the need for governments to tax their citizens, hence reducing the involvement of citizens on matters of government accountability (Luciani 1990). So government accountability declines due to reduced popular pressures and the key argument here centres on taxation or the lack thereof. This is while state autocrats resist and suppress any demands for democratization through the internal security apparatus they have secured through rent; hence, suppressing any demands for political change (Bellin 2004; Clark 1997; Jensen and Wantchekon 2004).

By challenging distinction and distance between state and society, the boundaries of which are fluid and permeable, *I propose that the rentier state theory should be refined by including factors such as state strategies, political choice, and social groups into the equation. In other words, the state socio-economic structure is not the only factors that should be considered when examining the rentier characteristics of Iran; elite action-oriented policies and the civil society must also be deliberated upon.*

What About Iran?

Is Iran considered a rentier state? Beblawi and Luciani's disputed observation qualifies those states that receive 40 % of their revenue from rents as rentier states (1987: 70). However, Beck argues that many states that receive rents at lower levels could be easily categorized as rentier states (Beck 2009: 9). As Gause contends, Luciani's qualifying percentage

actually fluctuates due to diminishing oil reserves in some of these countries (1994: 46). Beck further argues that despite this discrepancy, "Iran has been a rentier state 'par excellence' … since the 1960s at the latest" (2009: 9). The reason is that Iran's economy relies heavily on crude oil export revenues, representing an average 60 % of government revenues in annual budgets (Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran 2013). But as Mahdavy (1970) claims, the condition upon which a state could be called rentier is arbitrary; hence defining the moment when Iran could be considered a rentier state is not plausible. Also states are not homogenous, neutral economic entities, and hence labelling them as rentier or not is more complicated than simply relying on statistics.

For the purpose of this research, I consider post-revolutionary Iran as a rentier state based on the existing statistics and the vast rentier state literature (Mahdavy 1970: 455; Najmabadi 1987: 215; Karshenas 1990: 82). According to the recent British Petroleum statistical Review of World Energy in June 2015, at the end of the year 2014, Iran had 157 billion barrels of proven reserves, which compared to other figures in the same report, shows Iran ranks second in the world in natural gas reserves and fourth in proven crude oil reserves. This figure could also be interpreted in the total share of the country from oil, which ranks Iran fourth with 9.3 % after Venezuela with 17.5 %, Saudi Arabia with 15.7 %, and Canada with 10.2 % (BP 2015: 6). The statistics also demonstrate that Iran will be able to produce oil and natural gas at the level of 2014 for over 100 years (BP 2015: 6). According to US Energy Information Administration, "Iran's crude oil and condensate exports started increasing in late 2013 and averaged 1.4 million b/d in 2014, almost 150,000 b/d above the 2013 level" (2015). Also, oil exports make up 80 % of Iran's total export earnings and around 50–60 % of its government revenue (EIA 2015). Hence, it could be concluded that Iran possesses the main characteristics of a rentier state, namely, (1) a predominating rent economy; (2) reliance on substantial external rent; (3) state as principle recipient of external rent; and (4) involvement of the majority of population in distribution or utilization of rent.

External capital pouring into the reserves of the state makes it financially independent of domestic production. This independence is argued to both strengthen and weaken the state. Theoretically, the strengthening of the state occurs through minimizing conflict by breaking the "taxation" bond between the state and the society. In other words, without the need for any fiscal extraction from their population, the state insulates itself from citizen demands and expectations. Also, since the stream of oil

revenue lies in the hands of the state apparatus, the only way to access oil rent is through state institutions. This dominance over oil revenues is thought to be the reason behind patronage politics in rentier states, hence plummeting the probability of any type of conflict. This rent also weakens the state, since the productive domestic sectors like industry, agriculture, and manufacturing remain largely underdeveloped, thereby undermining the overall power of the state in the long run (Chatelus and Schemeil 1984).

In the rare case of any disruption in this clientelist relation and the occurrence of any demand by social groups, Shambayati argues that the financial independence of oil-rich states not only "allows them to function without being responsive to the demands of the domestic society [… but this] autonomy allows it to function without developing the means to negotiate with domestic interest groups" (1994: 309). This apparent independence from the society leads some to believe that the oil-rich Iranian state is an autonomous and independent acting agency.

Hence, the rentier state theory could be categorized as one of those theories that emphasizes the constraints put on human behaviour posed by macrostructural variables compared to those that privilege human agency. What I argue is that *while rent influences the nature, structure, and functions of the state, it cannot be held solely accountable for the disinterest of the state in society and therefore the tendencies towards the situation that we call authoritarian.* In what follows, I will study the three elements of state structure, actor-based policies, and civil society as interrelated factors during the Khatami Presidency in order to show how we should encounter rentier theory.

Structural Level

In relation to discussions above, two structural factors are to be considered.

Economic Structure

Since the discovery of oil in Masjed Suleiman in 1908, the government has been the collector of capital and the sole manager of the Iranian economy. Hence, natural resources have played a significant role in Iran's domestic and foreign affairs and have dominated its economic structure. This dominance and the importance of state-controlled oil revenue led to further state intervention in the economy and the authority of the public sector over the private. Oil revenues and its allocation residing within the hands of the government have not only created competition for gaining favours

and proximity to the government but have also caused a destructive social function, rent-seeking mentality which represents a break between the work–reward causation, to prevail in place of a productive entrepreneurial society. While oil revenues created a strong state independent from the society, they also served as an important tool in the country's speedy economic development and growth rate during the 1960s and 1970s (Amuzegar 1992).

With the fall of Pahlavi regime, new political and economic institutions emerged based on the newly developed Constitution. This Constitution recognizes "the economy as a means, not an end" and considers the private sector, as a complement to the major State and Cooperative Sectors (IRI Constitution, Article 44). Economic liberalization, and later privatization, in Iran began in the late 1980s, when the phenomenon was gaining popularity in both developed and developing countries. The initiation of the policy began with Hashemi-Rafsanjani in 1989, and has since been around during the later administrations. Despite this, and 24 years after the initial steps towards privatization, many Iranian politicians, including Gholamreza Kord Zangeneh (former Head of Privatization Organization; *Sazman-e Khosoosisazi*), Mohammad Baqer Nobakht (Spokesperson of the Government), and Abbas Akhundi (current Minister of Transportation), recount it as a policy that leads to corruption, rent, and embezzlement, which allowed a dominant political minority to maintain control over oil revenues and the country's economy in general (Shargh Daily 2015).

In 2006, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, urged the government to follow through with privatization projections of selling 80 per cent of state-owned companies, mainly in the banking, media, transport, and mineral sectors (Khamenei 2005). Hence, the Iranian Privatization Organization (set up in 2004) practically commenced its activities based on these new mandates as a governmental company affiliated to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance in 2008. Over a decade after the implementation of the Privatization Act, one could examine how the results have maintained the dominance of certain groups in the state economic and political structure by creating a new class that some call "*khosulati*" (a Persian portmanteau of private, *khosusi*, and public/crown, *dowlati*). In an exclusive interview with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) TV2, the Head of Privatization Organization announced that "at times the government also had no desire for privatization, and viewed the private sector as an enemy, and instead quasi-governmental agencies have been supported by the government" (Khabar Online 2015). He later

added that during the past 14 years about 50 per cent of the designated companies have been privatized while about 13–14 per cent have either been liquidated or amalgamated. The remaining 37 per cent are generally hard to privatize due to their nature—that is, due to the government unwillingness to privatize them in anticipation of potentially unmanageable social consequences. However, privatization has to be viewed not as an end itself, but as a means to change the dynamics between the public and private sectors aimed at increasing the efficiency of the latter and hence creating an independent socio-economic class.

Political Structure

It is somewhat difficult to categorize post-revolutionary Iran within a specific regime type or subtype. Iran lacks features of a totalitarian regime and maintains aspects of an authoritarian one. Unlike many Muslim countries in the Middle East, Iran experiences regular non-violent elections, albeit contested ones. The initial inclination towards a single party system (Islamic Republican Party) has conclusively failed, and currently there are several Conservative, Centerist–Reformist, and Reformist parties. Iranian economy is by Constitution divided into State, Cooperative, and Private sectors. Under the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, sovereignty belongs to God and is delegated to all humans (IRI Constitution, Article 56). A combination of both "religious and secular principles, democratic and anti-democratic tendencies" lends considerable platform for dispute and a regularly changing political landscape (Boroujerdi 2001: 14). The executive, legislative, and judicial powers are formed through both popular elections and appointed officials that act as pious legal experts (Keshavarzian 2005). This amalgamation of religious experts within a republican entity creates a complex state structure.

The disputed nature of Iran's regime type requires independent research. But what is of paramount importance in the rentier state literature in regards to not only Iran but also most other countries categorized as rentier is the underlying logic that assumes a bounded, autonomous, and stable state agency in all these cases. This literature creates the illusion of categorical unity, disregards historical differences and actor-oriented policies among these states, and ultimately limits itself to the physical and institutional boundaries of the state (Karl 1997). However, to avoid a misrepresentation of the Iranian state, I will examine the power of governing elites, their policy choices, and the civil society.

As discussed earlier, the driving economic force within the Islamic Republic is still based on oil rent, which has made the state independent of its citizens' tax. This independence is argued to have largely shaped the relations between the state and civil society. Other characteristics include extensive state intervention in the economy, unprofitable and unproductive enterprises controlled by state foundations (*bonyads*), multi-tier exchange rates, capital control, price control, and unsustainable subsidies (Saeidi 2004). Iran's economy exemplifies the overpowering of state foundations (*bonyads)* and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (Harris 2013). Meanwhile, we witness an urge within a faction of the political elite for a privatized economy. Harris contends that this paradox is shifting the Iranian economy from the state "toward a variety of parastatal organizations including banks, cooperatives, pension funds, foundations, and military-linked contractors. The result is not a praetorian monolith but a subcontractor state" (2013: 45).

It is difficult to imagine competing groups or actors that could exert much influence on this tightknit structure around oil revenues. But while the distribution and allocation of oil rent impacts the society, the state is also not immune to the societal influences. This influence is more observable when exercised by social groups that are invested in the status quo and whose demands do not challenge the broader socio-economic situation. Hence, as Pesaran argues "the interconnectedness with the state of so many social groups has ensured that no single individual or institution can be targeted in expressions of public discontent" (2011: 14).

The Reformists could be considered a movement that is embedded in state networks and structure that frame the interests of a semi-authoritarian regime through alternative avenues. This argument could have held ground at the time of the first Reformist government of President Khatami. But with the advent of later administrations, and the making of a platform for comparison and also an opening for debate, it is hard to imagine this opening dying out easily. The greatest achievement of the Reformists was to reveal the contradictions within the internal powers in Iran. Strong state and semi-state structures which served as mechanisms for rent redistribution and consolidation of power, along with the presence of external threats, international sanctions, and the mistakes of the Reformists, maintained internal cohesion and provided legitimacy for the status quo and state institutions fed by external rent. Nevertheless, while oil revenues continue to be an integral part of the Iranian economy, administrations like Khatami's disrupt the falsely homogenous depiction of the state and require that we use a more nuanced explanation of rentier states.

Action-Oriented Policies

While political and economic state structures did not go through much change despite the different administrations in office, action-oriented policies that encompass the ruling elites and their policy choices also could transform structural impediments into opportunities. Khatami's election in 1997 came to represent the Reform Movement in post-revolutionary Iran. His political agenda was based on concepts of moderation, tolerance, accountability, and the supremacy of the rule of law. His campaign platform entailed the cultivation of civil society by invoking the neglected articles of the Constitution such as activating the City Councils and upholding the dignity of citizens and civil rights based on Article 3. These changes entailed an inclination towards liberal tendencies in the political, social, and economic sectors. This liberal interpretation of the Constitution led to an increase in the number of press outlets during Khatami's first two years in office, which facilitated the repoliticization of a generation—a potentially disruptive challenge to the prevailing orthodoxies. He encouraged "the population as a whole to break down the barriers to the establishment in Iran of a democratic and pluralist state" (Ehteshami 2003: 61).

Khatami's agenda focused its liberalization tendencies more in the realm of sociocultural aspects of the Iranian society. Following Hashemi-Rafsanjani's reconstruction effort, the country was left in an economic stagnation and international isolation. Voting for Khatami was *not* a negative response to the statist economic policies of his predecessor since Khatami and his advisors were also invested in those policies. What differentiated Khatami and gave him a landslide victory was mostly his stance against the culture of bribery, corruption, and a considerable socio-economic gap that followed Hashemi-Rafsanjani's economic reconstruction. In his campaign, Khatami insisted he did not want to change the economic policies of the Islamic Revolution into capitalist policies, but at the same time he asserted that he did respect the value of capital (Maloney 2015).

Maloney argues that the reformists chose to approach the situation by making small political changes rather than tackling the economic issues first hand. Khatami's Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh, explained this tactic as "rearranging and reorganizing ideas and thoughts as creating the grounds and necessary conditions for facilitating economic activities" (quoted in Maloney 2015: 264). With the reluctance of the hardliners and the state to significant change and the economic hardship that the general public felt, Khatami's administration gradually lost public support. Right before Khatami commenced his second Presidential term, Behzad Nabavi,

Member of Parliament from Tehran, stated, "We announced before the 2 Khordad [Khatami was elected on 2 Khordad 1376 or 23 May 1997] that Khatami was not a man of action for the economy" (ISNA 2001). This gradual but widespread consensus undermined the Reformist power and they slowly gave in to the hardliners. The Reformists believed if they could help recover the Iranian economy and the middle class, they could expect a strengthening of the civil society and thus the latter's increasing political opposition against right-wing politics and the status quo. This case reveals the fallacy of the rentier theory depicting the state as a homogenous entity. In a complex state structure like that of Iran, the state could potentially disrupt the status quo.

Civil Society

Civil society is another aspect that challenges the rentier theory's carelessly attributing static characteristics to different states. State officials in the Middle East use the term "civil society" to promote their projects of mobilization and "modernization." The Islamists use it to demand a legal share of public space, while independent activists and intellectuals use it to expand the boundaries of individual liberty (Bellin 1994: 509).

Within the Iranian circle of politicians and activists, "civil society" can have different interpretations pertaining to relations between civil society and the state. According to Chaichian, the liberal interpretations reject the involvement of the state in controlled economies and call for a free a market economy that could lead to the realization of a strong civil society (2003: 28). A developmentalist–pragmatic approach considers civil society as a public sphere between the state and the citizen. A developmentalist–democratic approach argues that civil society works as a mediating entity between the state and citizens by protecting both sides (citizens and government) from over-expectation of the other side. Khatami was an advocate of an Islamist approach to civil society, which saw the Islamic state as a major supporting force behind a sustainable civil society. This interpretation analogized the Iranian society historically and theoretically to the early Islamic community (*umma*) led by Prophet Mohammad and argues that "personal and or group dictatorship or even the dictatorship of the majority and elimination of the minority has no place … citizens of the Islamic society enjoy the right to determine their own destiny, supervise the administration of affairs, and hold the government accountable. The government in such a society is the servant of the people and not

their master …" (Khatami quoted in Chaichian 2003: 32). In light of this approach, Khatami introduced the discourse of civil society into the public sphere (Bakhash 2003). However, this attempt creates some confusion on where human subjectivity stands both in early Islamic and modern definitions of civil society. In other words, universal citizenship rights can range between modern concepts of civil society and the early Islamic society, and Khatami's attempt at it was not well defined.

Despite this confusion, supporters of Khatami developed his vague position in regards to civil society by emphasizing on the independence of the civil society from the state, political democratization, and the supremacy of the people's will. These groups challenged privileging certain social groups after the Revolution that they asserted was against their initial revolutionary ideals. The vagueness in defining Reform and a lack of theoretical and practical definition for the concept was manifested in the student uprising of July 1999. It was during this time that a difference of understanding in the meaning of reform created a rift between the Reformists and the student movement. Nonetheless, peaceful demonstrations of discontent remained a major characteristic in Iran. As expected, the authorities imprisoned student activists to contain the movement. Despite the Reformists' struggle to help the student movement achieve their demands for strengthening the mechanism of democracy, the Khatami administration failed to overcome the stronger authoritative state apparatus. "The relation between Khatami's administrations and the main student umbrella organization in Iran, *Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat*, offers an example of how conflicts and cleavages move and shift without disappearing while the concept of civil society is constantly reshaped" (Rivetti and Cavatorta 2013: 650). As mentioned, this opposition was partly fostered by how oil revenues were distributed by privileging certain social groups and creating a considerable socio-economic gap within the society. This is why the rentier state theory relegates civil society demands and the way they are dealt with to structural economics. Hence, rentier theory could benefit from associating state structure with the broader significance of the civil society. Looking at rentier states from this perspective creates a more nuanced version of what rentierism could mean, which is sequentially significant in understanding the heterogeneity of state structure.

With the limitations imposed on civil society by state structures and occasional agential factors like the President, the question to ask in regards to Iran would be, how far can this force from below make significant changes to policy and institutional reform?

Conclusion

A synthesis between the three concepts of state structure, elite action-oriented policies, and civil society undermines the contention that rentier states are immune to change. While the term "rentier state" might convey a purely economic state of affairs, I tried to tie in other factors, namely civil society and the actions of elite to demonstrate that social and political factors influence, if not determine, desired political outcomes such that simplistic explanations, based on strict correlation between oil revenue and authoritarianism, fail to see because the dominant rentier state literature takes the state as a homogenous entity and attributes underdevelopment, authoritarianism, dictatorship, or populism to it. I showed that this is not the case, and while a state like Iran has both negative and positive traits in terms of its proximity to democracy, there are other major concepts to be considered before reducing the state to a position of stagnation. While state structures are important, it is not the structure that pushes a state towards democracy or dictatorship. Actor preferences and power and the demands of the civil society both are influenced and influence these presumably stagnant structures.

So we go back to the initial triangle that we depicted: structuralism, voluntarism, and civil society. As mentioned, Khatami came to Office with sociocultural liberalization in mind, and his presidency attempted to push civil society towards breaking down barriers to achieve a democratic and pluralist state. But the rentier socio-economic structures remained intact and prevented Iranian civil society to take a giant leap towards change. Unfortunately, with strong state and semi-state structures that are based on a rentier economy, the fate of civil rights movements remains at the mercy of the voluntarist angle of the equation and also the dynamics within the movement itself. Meanwhile, these contending groups are required to reconcile with the heterogeneous state structure through negotiation, cooperation, and reinterpretation.

Oil and its following functions did not form a state or society like Iran in a void. The situation that we call rentierism came into an already existing array of identities, social forces, and processes among and between the ruler and the ruled. Hence, it is important to remember that oil revenues, while important to the current existence of certain states, cannot be held solely responsible for the inclinations of these states to democracy or authoritarianism. It is rather the manner in which rent is deployed that makes all the difference. Therefore, going back to question posed earlier,

does natural resource wealth promote authoritarianism and construct states immune to democratic social movements?

I must say that the question itself feeds into the incompatibilities of rentier theory by erroneously creating a direct link between rentierism and the non/existence of democracy.

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The Unmaking of the Iranian Working Class since the 1990s

Mohammad Maljoo

Today, despite the increasing economic difficulties of the working-class families in their own daily lives, one hardly witnesses effective workers' individual and collective action in the Iranian scene. The question arising here is: what transformed the Iranian workers into a set of economic actors who have had little bargaining power since the 1990s.

In answering the question, the conventional economic argument often rests heavily upon the relation between the demand and the supply of labour in the labour market, holding that the decreasing bargaining power of the workers and their own consequent deteriorating conditions have their roots in the permanent excess of supply over demand in the labour market. Of course, this argument has certain validity, adding to our knowledge. The Iranian economy's double-digit unemployment rate throughout the post-revolutionary years has undoubtedly contributed to the decreasing bargaining power of the workers and their subsequent diminishing economic conditions. Nevertheless, one problem from which the conventional argument suffers is its one-dimensionality, according to which it, by exclusively emphasizing on the permanent excess supply of labour in the Iranian labour market, explains the decreasing bargaining

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power and deteriorating living and working conditions of the workers as an unfortunate natural process, neglecting the state-made dimension of the phenomenon.

By focusing on the decreasing individual and collective bargaining powers of the workers, mostly made by certain state policies implemented in employer–employee relations since the early 1990s, this paper aims at shedding light on the state's role, through policy and legislation in the deterioration of the living and working conditions of the Iranian workers. Strongly adhering to the idea that the demand for labour in the labour market is a derivation from the capital accumulation, since the end of Iraq–Iran war in 1988 the policymakers have tended to restructure labour relations in order to stimulate capital accumulation in the Iranian economy. In doing so, some substantial changes were gradually implemented in the labour market against the workers and in favour of the employers, be they private, public, or semi-public. In this way, what was expected to be a solution for improving the living and working conditions of the workers has conversely given rise to a part of the problem of the workers' decreasing bargaining power.

WEAKENING OF THE INDIVIDUAL BARGAINING POWER OF WORKERS

The legislation and enactment of several labour laws in the past 20 years have contributed to the increasing disempowerment of Iran working class.

Labour Casualization

In 1990, only 6 per cent of workforces had temporary contract (ISNA 2010). Today, according to the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Cooperative, Labour, and Social Welfare, about 90 per cent of workers have temporary contract ("90% of Workers" 2014), being deprived of job security. The severe job insecurity has immensely contributed to the weakening of individual and collective bargaining power of workers at both workplace and labour market throughout Iran's post-war years. It was the 1990 Labour Code which prepared the legal basis for such contracts. According to the Second Clause of the Article 7 of the Labour Code, "Jobs of continuous nature shall be considered indefinite in case no period shall be mentioned in the employment agreement." Another way of stating the above is that if the nature of the work is continuous, the employer

can determine a set amount of time in his or her contract with workers, and employ them on a temporary basis in types of work that are nevertheless continuous. Also, according to one of the clauses of Article 21 of the Labour Code, the employment agreement may be terminated in some cases including "expiry of duration of definite employment agreements and their non-renewal explicitly or implicitly." Nevertheless, the legal valence of the Labour Code for making temporary employment contracts was discovered but never used earlier than early 1995. Before this time, it was customary to accept the point of termination of a given temporary employment contract only once, such that its renewal for another definite term would lead to considering the contract as non-temporary contract. "But in the early 1995 the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs officially notified a direction to allow employers to successively conclude temporary contract with a given worker for many times and any set amount of time" (Monshizadeh 2010: 19). It is clear that the Labour Code not only legitimized the signing of temporary contract in the continuous works, but also legally facilitated expulsion of workers whose contract was temporary, producing a phenomenon which was not widespread before the end of Iraq–Iran war, namely, the temporary employment contract through which the employers can lay off the workers as they wish. By depriving the majority of workforce of job security, the policy of labour casualization has most strongly resulted in diminishing the individual bargaining power of workers at both workplace and the labour market.

Labour casualization as a project has been implemented in different economic sectors through many ways, even though there are few comprehensive researches in this regard. The oil sector is probably the only one we can cite the way in which the labour had been trapped in the casualization project. The implementation of this project in the oil sector was made possible in several phases.

The first phase began during Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani's first term as the President, when oil workers were invited to take advantage of a promotion to change their formal contracts from blue collar to white collar. In the words of an oil worker, "We asked: what does this change imply? We said that the task of white-collar staff in the oil industry is not to do manual labour but to supervise the manual labour. Now if we blue collars are to become white collars, then who should do manual labour in the oil industry? We were told this was only a formal change without changing our job description" (Rahmani 2010: 63). As another oil worker said, the majority of blue-collar workers filled out the new employment forms and

were turned into the so-called white-collar employees while still defined through their previous job description (JAFK 2011).

A minority of the blue-collar workers refused to change their contracts and hence found themselves in a vulnerable situation. Although they were legally entitled to protest in face of the financial difficulties which had gripped them, they could not muster sufficient numbers to negotiate effectively because they were now a minority within the workforce. They were left with two options: to join the white collars or to opt for voluntary early retirement in exchange for receiving their severance pay. The majority of this small group opted for the latter option (Maljoo 2014).

Ultimately, the fate of the majority of the previously blue-collar but newly white-collar staff was the same as those who had been terminated with severance pay. However, this happened through a different route and with a time lag. As a rule, the white-collar category in the oil industry is in some way considered "managers." Unlike blue-collar workers (*kargaran*) who follow the regulations of Ministry of Labour, white-collar employees (*karmandan*) follow the regulations of the Oil Ministry. Hence, as "managers," they do not have the right to complain to the Ministry of Labour against Oil Ministry, thus losing the right to bargain collectively. This kind of change in the oil industry in fact legally deprived the newly white-collar staff from any right to protest or file a complaint with the Ministry of Labour. Although they were many in number, now they had no right to individually or collectively report to Ministry of Labour of their new problem when their white-collar classification benefits were gradually eliminated over the course of two years and when they faced financial pressures imposed by their managers. This sector of the labour force only had two choices: to opt for either early retirement or forced termination with severance pay (Maljoo 2014).

The second phase in making the oil labour casual involved preparation of administrative and legal prerequisites for enforcing these early retirements and terminations with severance pay. Using both early retirement and termination methods had its origin in the idea of downsizing government through, according to the Third Five-Year Development Plan, "reducing the size of the public sector, beginning from the bottom rungs of the administrative pyramid" (National Office of Management and Planning 2003). Thus, the burden of downsizing government was shifted unto the weakest shoulders.

The third phase was put on the agenda concomitant with the first and second phases. This phase consisted of implementing an avalanche

of outsourcing the projects of the oil industry. Not only the outsourcing widely took place within the oil industry, but it was also carried out within the whole governmental structure and was particularly aided by an enactment under the heading "the giving of administrative organizations' backing activities to non-public sector," ratified by Supreme Administrative Council (*Showra-ye ʿAli-ye Edari*) in 2000. The first clause of this enactment ordained that all public organizations should give their service and support activities to the private sector and eliminate all related positions from their organizational charts (Deputy of Human Resources and Management Affairs in Management Organization 2002: 61). As far as the oil industry was concerned, Clause 33 of the Third Five-Year Development Plan ordained that "the government is allowed to give activities of refinement operation, transportation and distribution of petroleum materials and their primary and subsidiary products to real and legal domestic persons" (National Office of Management and Planning 2003). Also, the Article 9 of Solutions of Administrative Plan for Energy Sector (*Rahkarha-ye Barnmeh-ye Ejra`i-ye Bakhsh-e Enerzhi*) decreed that "those parts of refinement activities which are separable from main section, including oil-making branch, container-making branch, and auxiliary and repairing services, should be given to cooperative and private sectors" (Mehrazma 2007: 109). "By signing of such contracts and creating a middleman between the company and its labour force," as a worker of National Iranian Drilling Company in Khuzestan states, "the Oil Company divested itself of responsibility towards its employees, thus spreading the role of brokering through paying large amounts of money to the subcontracting firms." He continues:

> The procedure was as follows: National Iranian Oil Company [NIOC; *Sherkat-e Melli-ye Naft-e Iran*] would put its projects to tender. The subcontractor whose bid was accepted would sign a contract with NIOC and receive funds from it. NIOC would then introduce its personnel to the subcontractor. Ultimately, all services such as payment of wages, insurance, benefits, etc. were put in the hands of the subcontractor. NIOC had rid itself of its responsibility towards workers. (Peyman 2010)

However, the crude oil production increased from 2947 thousand barrels per day in 1989 to 3557 thousand barrels per day in 2008 (Central Bank of Islamic Republic of Iran 2010). Also, the production of gas increased from 32 billion cubic metres in 1989 to 144 billion cubic metres in 2007

(Central Bank of Islamic Republic of Iran 2010). Therefore, it is clear that, during the years after the Iran–Iraq war, the level of production in the oil and gas industry steadily increased and required hiring a new cadre of workers.

The fourth phase addressed this need. The mushrooming of human resource contract firms in fact responded to this need. However, it is interesting to note that the bulk of the labour force hired by this kind of contract firms consisted of the personnel who had retired early or had been terminated with severance pay. It is said that "about 200 human resource contract firms in Abadan Oil Refinery Company are involved in recruiting temporary contract labour" (Javaher Langarudi 2008). The distinguishing feature of the type of employment offered by these contract firms was the temporary character of the employment contracts. The common feature of all employment agreements they made was job insecurity for the workers, which substantially weakened the workers' individual bargaining power.

Exclusion of Small Workshops from the Labour Code

Exclusion of small workshops from the Labour Code had already been officially recognized by the 1990 Labour Code. According to its Article 191, "Small workshops with less than 10 individuals", as considered expedient, may be temporarily exempted from some of the provisions of this Law. The cases of expediency and exemption shall be in accordance with the bylaws to be proposed by the High Labour Council (HLC; *Showray-e 'Ali-ye Kar*) and approved by the Cabinet. Nevertheless, this Article did not come into effect until early 2000, when the "Act of Exemption [Exclusion] of Workshops with less than five individual from the Labour Code" was ratified by the Parliament for only three years. After the expiry of this period, the "Bylaw of Exemption of Small Workshops with less than 10 Individuals from some Provisions of the Labour Code" was approved by the Council of the Ministers in late 2002, again only for three years. According to the Article 1 of the 2002 Bylaw, these workshops were exempted from 36 articles of the Labour Code as well as from the relevant Clause in Article 10. Also, according to the Article 2, the duration of the exemption was three years. After expiry of this period, the same Bylaw was extended for another three years in late 2005. But, before the time of expiry of the extension in late 2008, this second Article on a temporary three years "was nullified by a legal precedent issued by the Court of Administration Justice in 2007" (Elahian 2010: 64). With this

last attempt, as if the Exemption Bylaw was extended indefinitely, even though this legal precedent was not consistent with the Article 191 of the Labour Code with its emphasis on the temporariness of the Exemption. In any case, the Exemption has deprived many workers of the support of non-market institution of the Labour Code not only in small workshops but also in other workshops whose managers pretend to be running small workshops. It is exactly this legal exemption of the support of the Labour Code which has substantially diminished the individual bargaining power of a wide range of workers whose relative size is more than 50 per cent of total employed workforces.

The Rise of Human Resource Contract Firms

The human resources contract firms are the highly organized and well-connected contract firms. They were born in the first half of the 1990s, achieving mushroom-like growth throughout the Reform era of 1997–2005. Selling themselves as experts in collective bargaining, they function as mediators between workers and employers, public, semi-public, or private. They are main agents of the triangular employment relations whereby an employee works under the direction of an employer but is actually employed by a private third party called a human resources contract firm. The employer sets the working conditions but the workers receive their remuneration from the third party. The portion of the budget intended for salaries and wages is delivered to the private contractor, which divides the given amount among the workers. If employees want to bring legal action against the public employer for whatever reason, they have to do so through the private firm. Many of the owners have close ties with the top echelons of the Ministry of Labour as well as with other power centres within the establishment. But the contractors seldom have face-to-face interactions with the workers they hire, except when the workers try to bring legal action against the employers. By using their close ties with different branches of the Ministry and thanks to their full-time con-centration on recruitment process of labour force, human source contract firms are experts in providing employment contract against the employees and on behalf of the employers. They are very articulate and organized. Their most well-known collective organization is "the Centre of the Guild Societies of Employers of Service, Backing, Technical and Engineering Firms" (*Kanun-e Anjomanha-ye Senfi-ye Karfarmayan-e Sherkatha-ye Khadamati, Poshtibani, va Fani-Mohandesi-ye Sarasar-e Keshvar*) with

nationwide network. The Centre has strong ties with the decision-making and policy-making body. "The Centre enjoys the high position," according to the head of its Board of Directors. "Those organs that work with us, such as the Social Security Bureau [*Sazman-e Ta`min-e Ejtemaie*], the Ministry of Labour, its provincial offices, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the National Tax Administration, the Expediency Discernment Council of the Country (*Majma'e Tashkhis-e Maslehat-e Nezam*), and the Social Affairs Subcommittee of the Parliament have good relations with us," he maintained. "Our provincial branches can easily contact and negotiate with all these organs" ("A Conversation" 2010).

Although there is no official data on the number of these human resource contract firms, they have played a crucial role in weakening the individual bargaining power of workers by cutting off the direct legal relations of the employees with their own employers.

Contracting Out State Employment Umbrella
Since the early 1990s, the number of low-echelon official state employees has gradually decreased, so that there has been a decline in the share of state employees in total employment from about 31 per cent in 1986 to 24 per cent in 2006 (Behdad and Nomani 2009). This adjustment has been supported and directed by all upstream and downstream official policy-making documents. Depriving the low-echelon employees of protection of state employment umbrella and dispatching them to the free labour market has contributed to the weakening the individual bargaining power of workers.

Atomizing Effect on the Workers' Weakened Individual Bargaining Power

The consequence of restructuring labour relations in the Iranian economy since 1990s was the atomizing the labour force. The spread of temporary contract labour "means that job security and collective bargaining have been abolished" (Mather et al. 2007: 16). Recruiting the workers through temporary contract allows the employers to bypass the Labour Code in such a way as to employ labour force at the lowest possible wages. While securing a cheap and flexible labour force, such temporary contracts have the effect of atomizing the workforce and hence undermining the workers' solidarity in the workplace, because workers within a plant are now subject to very different rules and regulations, various levels of wage, and

different contract terms, and as a result, they do not identify with each other. Each employer decides its own rules, determining its own wages. Also, every worker now faces not a single employer but many contract firms, just as he or she is not a part of a collective but rather a specific contract with his or her contractor(s). The workers are now proportionally less able to construct their own collective identity. Facing relative lack of collective class identity, the workers find it easier to resort to individual solutions for solving their own problems.

The narratives stated by the workers themselves on the political consequences of spread of temporary contracts are suggestive of the atomizing effect. An account made by a worker in the car-making industry shows how the high rate of unemployment forces workers to submit to temporary contracts: "The temporary contract and the army of the unemployed are the main factors in imposing the high rates of exploitation on the workers. The rate of unemployment is so high, so that currently more than 12,000 unemployed workers have applied for jobs with minimum salary and any contract terms in Pars Khodro Company" (Naseri 2008: 19).

The next process after the recruitment in such a labour market can be traced in a narrative made by an oil worker in Assaluyeh. "Our contracts are called 'blank paper,' which means a blank paper is signed by the worker. Frankly there is not even such a paper. In fact, we are dismissed every three months, then hired back immediately," states the worker. "We are also entitled no fringe benefits such as insurance. Whenever the employer wishes he could throw us out … But to get our wages from the employer is really hard. Our wages are always paid after six to eight months' delay. The employer always owes us." He adds,

> Only after exerting ourselves … the employer pays our wages partly in cash and partly by post-dated cheque. If you don't submit to this process, you are told to resign. Then having received a post-dated cheque, you would still be dismissed. Now you would find that cashing such a cheque is a big problem. Nobody is willing to cash the cheque. Sometimes the cheque is a bad cheque. And, you know, no bank notices why a large firm has written a bad cheque … With this procedure, the worker has no choice but continue on his job in the contract firm in order to be paid some day in the future. By using such a procedure, the employers are able to keep the workers dependent on the company … For making their own subsistence, all workers have no choice but borrow money from usurers … The employers' profit from workers' delayed wages, and the usurers from the interests paid by workers … We are situated in such a way as to always be both creditor and debtor. (Koosha n.d.)

The way in which a dismissed textile manufacturing worker recounts the consequences of temporary contracts for trying to create collective action among the workers is true with all temporary labour forces as well. As he laments, "due to the prevalence of blank contracts, although many workers are aware they cannot come to the scene for imposing their will because they are deeply involved in finding and keeping their job." He adds,

> They say to find job is too hard to give up this job by people like us who have a number of dependents and children. Their involvements are mostly focused on finding and keeping a job for financing their own family. They are conscious but are unable to come into the scene exactly because of this problem. (Asgari and Maleki 2000)

But an oil worker mentions that even "when somebody among the workers is elected as workers' representative, the managers of the contract firm as the representative of the Oil Ministry put strong pressure on him through various ways such as postponement in paying his wages or fringe benefits, threatening him with changing his workplace, and dismissing him, so that he is forced to either resign or stay quiet" ("Workers of Bandar Abbas Oil Refinery" n.d.).

Moreover, a group of labour activists in Assaluyeh emphasize on a key precondition for the continuous presence in the temporary contract labour market: "No protesting worker can be employed by any contract firm. His name would put on the blacklist. This is so because any worker who finishes his work in a firm should receive a recommendation letter, otherwise he would not be recruited by other contract firms" ("Asaluyeh" n.d.).

Finally, to the question if there are any ties between workers who work in different contract firms, another oil worker in Abadan Oil Refinery Company replies with emphasis on the spatial consequences of restructuring labour relations for the oil workplaces: "There is no such tie at all since its objective conditions have been destroyed. One of these conditions involved the permanent work contracts. Another condition was that workers of different units visited each other on the daily basis in the canteen of the Company during lunchtime and were so informed of the situation of each other" He adds,

> For example, about 500 workers gathered in the canteen at lunch and chatted with each other. There is no longer such canteens in the Company. Workers who work at the contract firms have no lunchroom. In addition,

the Abadan Refinery was compartmentalized, and every unit was enclosed and fenced. When this happened, workers from different units can no longer see each other at all. (Rahmani 2010: 64)

The main function of the economic project of restructuring labour relations was atomizing the labour forces (Maljoo 2014), while there has been a political project in the post-revolutionary Iran whose function was to prevent the atomized workers from getting out of their own isolated situation.

Weakening of the Collective Bargaining Power of Workers

In addition to weakening the individual bargaining power of workers by the four aforementioned state policies, there has been a set of legal approaches that successfully prevent the formation of independent organized labour, thereby contributing to the diminishment of collective bargaining power of workers.

According to the Clause 4 of Article 131 of the Labour Code, "The workers of a unit may have only one of these three cases: an Islamic labour council, a guild society, or a workers' representative." The Labour Code does not officially recognize other possible labour bodies. According to Article 15 of the "Law of Establishing Islamic Labour Councils" (ILC; *Qanun-e Tashkil-e Showraha-ye Eslami-ye Kar*), ratified in 1985, only units employing more than 35 permanent workers are allowed to establish an ILC. Also, those units that already have an ILC are not allowed to establish a Guild Society (GS; *Anjoman-e Senfi-e Kargari*). Finally, according to the first article of the "Directive on Electing Workers' Representative," units that have neither ILC nor GS are allowed to elect a workers' representative.

Nevertheless, all authorized labour organizations suffer, legally speaking, from five fundamental deficiencies, which in turn contribute to the unmaking of the collective bargaining power of workers.

1. No Right of Organization for the Unemployed

The Labour Code officially recognizes the right of organization, at best, only for the employed workers. According to official estimation, for example, the unemployment rate was 13 per cent in 2006. The right to organize this large population is legally denied.

2. No Right of Organization for the Employed Workers
of the Large Public Firms

In spite of this, it cannot be said that the Labour Code and the bylaws derived from it officially recognize the right of organization for all employed workers. Those workers employed in large public firms have been somehow deprived of right of organization. According to the Clause in Article 15 of the "Law of Establishing Islamic Labour Councils," the formation of an ILC in such large public firms as subsidiary and affiliated firms in the Oil Ministry, National Iranian Steel Company, and National Iranian Copper Industries Company were subject to the approval of the HLC (*Showra-ye 'Ali-ye Kar*). The HLC was set up at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, whose function is to perform all the obligations assigned to it under the Labour Code and other related laws and bylaws. But, until 1998, the HLC never practically allowed any large public firm to establish an ILC. It was only in 1998 that the HLC decided to remove such an obstacle for establishment of ILCs in large public firms. Since then the establishing of ILCs in these firms was legally allowed. But we should note that this happened exactly when the number of permanent workers of large public firms had already decreased substantially because of the successful implementation of labour casualization project implemented since the early 1990s, as a result of which the permanent labour force became an absolute minority in a defensive situation facing Article 1 of the "Bylaw of Elections" in the "Law of Establishing Islamic Labour Councils," which allows only units with more than 35 permanent workers to establish an ILC. Clause 3 of this Article also adds that "permanent employed workers are those who are employed in one of the permanent occupations in the unit." Moreover, although establishing ILCs has been legally allowed since 1998, administratively speaking, the attempts at establishing ILCs in large public firms have always faced many administrative obstacles. These laws and procedures mean that the right of organizing for workers of the large public firms was officially recognized when paradoxically the numbers of permanent workers had already decreased substantially in such a way as to make it practically rather than legally impossible for workers to use this right.

3. No Right of Organization for Workers Employed in Small Workshops

By the same token, there is no clear way for workers employed in small workshops to organize themselves. More than 50 per cent of the total employed workforces are employed in small workshops with less than ten workers. None of three authorized options for using the right of organization are legally accessible for workers of the small workshops. These workers are not allowed to establish ILC because, as mentioned, Article 15 of the "Law of Establishing Islamic Labour Councils" only allows workers in units with more than 35 permanent workers to establish an ILC. Workers are not allowed to establish their own guild society either, because according to the Article 2 of the "Bylaw on the Manner of Formation, Scope of Functions, and Powers as well as the Modes of Operation of the Guild Societies and their Centres, subject of the Article 131 of the Labour Code," the required minimum number of workers in small workshop for establishing GS is ten. Finally, workers are implicitly not allowed to have their representatives because the "Bylaw of Exemption of Small Workshops with less than 10 Individuals from some Provisions of the Labour Code" weakens the individual bargaining power of workers employed in small workshops so that they are practically unable to attempt electing their own representative(s). Therefore, the Labour Code and its subsidiary laws and bylaws legally or practically recognize no right for workers employed in small workshops to organize themselves.

4. Dependency on Employers

Apart from the lack of right of organization for unemployed workers as well as employed workers of large public firms or small workshops, even those workers whose right of organization is officially recognized suffer from being dependent on employers. The "Law of Establishing Islamic Labour Councils" defines ILC as a council consisting of workers' and employees' representatives qualified by the General Assembly and the employer's representative. This is the case with both GS and workers' representatives. As one of the publications of the Labour and Social Security Institute (affiliated to the Ministry of Labour) correctly says, "None of the collective labour bodies authorized by the Labour Code can be regarded as pure labour organization because those not elected by the workers themselves are likely to become a member of these bodies. And this is not consistent with the definition of a labour organization" (Zahedi 2010: 28–29).

5. Dependency on the Government

The labour organizations recognized by the Labour Code are dependent on the government too. ILCs are dependent on government because, according to the note of the Article 2 of the "Law of Establishing Islamic Labour Councils," the candidates of ILCs should be qualified by a board consisting of the Ministry of Labour's representative, the relevant Ministry's representative, and the representative elected by the Board of Employees. ILC elections should be held under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, according to the Article 3 of the Law. Also, GSs are dependent on government because, according to the Article 19 of the "Bylaw on the Manner of Formation, Scope of Functions and Powers as well as the Modes of Operation of the Guild Societies and their other Centres, subject of the Article 131 of the Labour Code," the elections and activities of GSs should be supervised by the Ministry of Labour. Finally, the workers' representatives are dependent on government because, according to Article 5 of the "Directive on Electing Workers' Representative," all candidates for representative should be qualified by a Board of Control consisting, among others, of the local representative of the Ministry of the Labour.

Legally speaking, these five characteristics have most strongly prevented workers from establishing their own independent organizations, contributing in weakening their collective bargaining power since the late 1980s.

Conclusion

It is as if since the 1979 Revolution the Iranian workers have entered a crucible of events, gradually emerging with decreasing bargaining power. However, the workers diminished bargaining power is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but as it is the result of a set of state policies.

Having swept the majority of pre-revolutionary-affiliated economic elites away while creating some new revolutionary economic ones instead, the newly established revolutionary regime, which was engaged in a severe war, caused a retrenchment of capital and disruption in capital accumulation in the first decade of the Revolution. With the end of the war—now that a newly ideologically tested economic elites had been created in the first revolutionary decade—it was the right time for the now well-established regime to reinvigorate capital accumulation with the help of the newly established economic elite highly connected to the political power centres. The weakening of the working-class' bargaining power is

traceable within the economic and developmental paths adopted by the post-revolutionary regime to provide the requisites for reinvigorating capital accumulation with the ruling economic elites as pioneers of capitalist economic development.

Nevertheless, the restructuring of labour relations was one necessary rather than sufficient condition for reinvigorating capital accumulation. To achieve the goal, other requisites were required but scarcely met. Firstly, owing to the prevailing of unproductive over productive capital, a great deal of economic resources of the upper classes has been tended to channelize into a wide variety of speculative economic activities. Secondly, due to the prevailing of commercial capital over the domestic production, domestic producers do not have sufficient effective demand for their products in the domestic markets substantially conquered by foreign producers with the help of commercial capital as mediator. Last but not least, since tendency towards accumulating capital within national frontiers tends to be weaker than tendency towards flight of capital, the rate of reinvestment has been too insufficient to make capitalist development functional in the post-revolutionary Iran. Therefore, the failure in achieving these three prerequisites has tended to strongly prevent reinvigorating capital accumulation in the Iranian economy, hence causing a serious weakness in the capitalist production.

Since the early 1990s, insofar as the living and working conditions of the Iranian workers are concerned, the compromise made by the social and political ruling classes for reinvigorating the capital accumulation in the Iranian economy has remained politically rather than socially unchallenged, with a thickening texture of economic corruption and Islamic fundamentalism. As if the social justice challenge has altogether dispersed, even though the spectre of a social justice discourse revival is often conjured up. Between bourgeoisie and unproductive fractions of the ruling political class, the unmade Iranian working class must now steer its course.

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Charity or Mass Mobilization? Public Religion and the Struggle for Economic Justice

Siavash Saffari

In this chapter, I use the two categories of charity and mass mobilization to examine the relationship between public religiosity and the struggle for economic justice in contemporary Iran. A case is made that in the course of the late 1970s revolutionary uprising the synthesis of public faith and egalitarian ideals played an important role in mobilizing the economically disenfranchised masses, and this mobilization, in turn, compelled the post-revolutionary state to take steps toward creating a more equitable society. Since the late 1980s, however, the Islamic Republic has gradually moved away from its early pro-poor commitments and toward economic liberalization. This period has also witnessed a corresponding rise in charitable

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activities undertaken by religiously inspired groups. I end the chapter by offering my analysis regarding the decline in religiously based mass mobilization initiatives aimed at advancing the cause of economic justice. It is also proposed that the dual factors of (a) the continuation of economic liberalization policies under Hassan Rouhani's presidency, and (b) the long-term unsustainability of the charity approach for realizing economic justice, will inevitably necessitate a revival of mass mobilization initiatives.

Faith and Justice in Comparative Frames

In his 1843 essay, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," Karl Marx famously described religion as "the opium of the people," positing that the true emancipation of humanity required, among other conditions, "the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people" (Marx 1982: 131). Religious faith, for Marx, was part of the superstructure at once reflecting and reinforcing the dominant economic relations that formed the base of all reality. But perhaps he would have held a somewhat different view had he known that nearly a century later many from around the world, representing various religious traditions, would seek to wield the power of faith in the service of emancipating the disenfranchised classes by combining theological beliefs with modern socialist ideas. In Iran, this synthesis was abundantly present in the intellectual discourses of Mohammad Nakhshab, Ali Shari'ati, and Seyyed Mahmood Taleqani, among others. It was also the main ideology of such groups as the People's Mojahedin (*Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran*). Still, in Iran as well as elsewhere, pious individuals also engage in justice-focused and antipoverty initiatives that are outside of socialist, or leftist, modes of analysis and action. My objective here is to briefly examine some of the approaches used by religiously oriented individual and groups for advancing the cause of economic justice.

By economic justice, I have in mind a condition under which all persons are enabled, through some form of redistribution of wealth, to live life in dignity, to exercise self-determination, and to engage in creative activity beyond labor. Such a conception is consistent with C. B. Macpherson's definition of the term as a standard that imposes "on economic relations some ethical principle deduced from natural law (or divine law) or from a supposed social nature of man [*sic*]" (Macpherson 1985: 3). It also corresponds to the capability approach to justice, as articulated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, among others (Sen 1990; Nussbaum 1992). In light

of this conception, it is possible to distinguish between at least two types of religiously inspired collective action aimed at attaining economic justice: charitable activity, and mass mobilization.[1] In the *charity* approach, religious entities (REs) and faith-based organizations or initiatives (FBO/Is) set out to provide services to the poor in the areas of health care, education, housing, sanitation, and so on. Their services function to either complement or substitute public, state-provided, services. In the *mobilizational* approach, religiously oriented groups and activists work to mobilize the poor (or other sectors of the population on behalf of the poor) in order to move forward, often by means of applying pressure on the state, an egalitarian agenda of economic restructuring and legal reform.

As distinct approaches to attaining economic justice, charity and mobilization offer both capacities and limitations. The indisputable advantage of charity is the capacity to address the immediate needs of those affected by homelessness, hunger, disease, and a variety of human and natural disasters. Take, for instance, a 2006 study by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicating that in various sub-Saharan African countries FBO/Is were responsible for providing 30–70 % of all health services (ARHAP 2006: 20). Other examples can be recalled. In the months following Haiti's catastrophic 2010 earthquake, in addition to raising $192 million in donations, Catholic Relief Services maintained 600 volunteers in the country offering a range of services, from HIV/AIDS work to emergency food and shelters (Grossman 2011). In Gaza, to take yet another example, where nearly 80 % of the 1.8 million inhabitants depend on food assistance, Islamic Relief provided direct food assistance to more than 100,000 families during the Israeli invasion of 2008 (Islamic Relief 2010: 6).

There are, despite these examples of benevolence, a number of problems associated with the charity approach. To evoke the oft-repeated criticism, charities are not in the business of challenging the structural causes of poverty. Moreover, it is not an insignificant fact that many charities are themselves products of the neoliberal age. The worldwide proliferation of charitable nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since the early 1990s is directly related to the implementation of a series of structural adjustment programs, promoted throughout the global South by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which have severely undermined the ability of national and local states to deliver public services, and to reduce the levels of poverty and inequality (Clarke 2006: 837). Thus, today even the World Bank acknowledges that the increased NGOization of development has contributed to the withdrawal of states from this vital

sector (World Bank 2004: 17). A charge is also made by critics that in most areas NGOs have been poor substitutes to states and ineffective in delivering services to the needy (Salehi Esfahani 2005: 498). What's more, there currently exist few mechanisms for making NGOs accountable and democratically representative. The condition imposes further restrictions on the agency of the economically marginalized groups who are at the receiving end of charity services (Arena 2011: 170).

Mobilizational Approach in Shi'i Liberation Theology and Leftist Islamism

Near the middle of the twentieth century, Iran witnessed the rise of a religious-political current which may be identified as Shi'i liberation theology. Aside from its adherence to a monotheistic-Islamic frame of reference, the twin doctrinal pillars of this current, and what links it to other liberation theologies (i.e. Catholic liberation theology in Latin America, black liberation theology in the USA), are humanism and egalitarianism. These features also determine the nature of the relationship between Shi'i liberation theology and two other (nontraditionalist) religious-political currents in modern Iran: Islamism, and Islamic liberalism. Shi'i liberation theology's humanist position distinguishes it from Islamism's opposition to human sovereignty, even though its egalitarian ideas are mirrored by some Left-leaning Islamists. On the other hand, whereas Shi'i liberation theology's egalitarian views are at odds with the pro-market orientation of Muslim liberals, the two groups often find themselves in a pro-democracy political alliance.

Mohammad Nakhshab (1923–1976) must be credited as a pioneer of this radical current. In a real sense, his particular brand of thought was neither explicitly Shi'i nor strictly Islamic, but rather broadly monotheistic. He was, nevertheless, among the first Iranian thinkers to bring together modern European socialism with an Islamic worldview. Islam, according to his narrative, was at its origin "a socialist religion that brought peace and social justice, transformed the dominant class structure, and created a classless society in which the most powerful and least powerful individuals lived under similar material conditions" (Nakhshab 2001: 20). In an essay titled "The Material Man," he went after those who appealed to the jurisprudential principle of *taslit* (ownership) in order to justify their opposition to redistribution of wealth. Invoking another jurisprudential principle, *zarar* (harm), he argued that in Islam private ownership was protected only (a) "when gained justly and through the application of

one's own labor," and (b) "to the extent that its accumulation did not harm or disadvantage others" (Nakhshab 2001: 20). Elsewhere, citing a call on the faithful by the first Shi'i Imam, Ali ibn Abi Talib, to "always fight against the oppressors and on behalf of the oppressed" (Nakhshab 2001: 113), he condemned the political quietism of Muslim traditionalists and called for mass mobilization led by a revolutionary vanguard party (Nakhshab 2001: 115–129).

If Nakhshab laid out the foundation, it was Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977) who skillfully articulated an indigenous ideology of revolutionary mobilization in his radical rereading of Islam and Shi'ism. According to Shariati, although Islam initially emerged as a social revolt with the promise of *tawhid* (unity) and the elimination of class and other forms of social stratification, its institutionalization soon led to the rise of a reactionary and oppressive current (Shari'ati 1977). The deviation from the original path first became evident during the Third Caliph Uthman's rule, and though Islam regained its revolutionary spirit during Imam Ali's reign as the Fourth Caliph, the corruption continued with the founding of the Umayyad caliphate. Shi'ism in this context became the leading voice of opposition to materialism, excess, class-based privileges, and the worship of money (Shari'ati 1977). However, with the advent of the Safavid dynasty in 1501, Shi'ism too produced its own religion of domination, and "Shi'i jurisprudence assumed a position of rewarded obedience by the side of the Sultan's throne" (Shari'ati 1977). In *Class Orientation in Islam*, Shari'ati provocatively declared that "the entirety of what is called Islamic economics is actually petite bourgeoisie economics …, all to do with rent, lease, and sale. This religion belongs only to the middle class and addresses the economic concerns of this class … Islam must be emancipated from such relations" (Shari'ati 1977).

Like Nakhshab, Shari'ati rejected the use of the principle of *taslit* to defend the interests of capital. Recalling the dual voices of religion, he argued that reclaimed by a progressive jurist *taslit* could become "a weapon in the hands of slaves, peasants, and workers, requiring that the added value that is produced by the worker but appropriated and turned into private profit by the capitalist class must be returned to the worker and the peasant" (Shari'ati 1977). The *zarar* principle too, he held, could be used to stipulate a total prohibition of any economic activity that causes harm by means of exploiting others (Shari'ati 1977). To refer to the poor masses, Shari'ati often used the Quranic term of *mostaz'afin* (downtrodden). Citing a verse from *Sura al-Qasas* (28: 5), in which God

promises his favors to the *mostaz'afin*, he proclaimed that the historical conflict between oppressor and oppressed will come to an inevitable end with the triumph of the *mostaz'afin*, the total collapse of all systems of oppression, and the formation of a classless society (Shari'ati 1969).

Whereas Nakhshab and Shari'ati were lay religious intellectuals, Seyyed Mahmood Taleqani (1911–1979), another leading figure of Shi'i liberation theology, was a senior cleric, an Ayatollah within the Shi'i ecclesiastical hierarchy. Taleqani's concern for the poor and his open sympathy toward socialism had earned him the nickname the "red Ayatollah" (Jabbari 1983: xiii). He had once stated that although he disagreed with their "belief in the prominence of matter," he held "common views with the Marxists in so far as we too reject colonialism and oppression, and defend freedom" (qtd. in Jabbari 1983: xiii). In *Islam and Ownership*, Taleqani argued that Islam imposed restrictions on private ownership in the interest of advancing "public welfare"; otherwise, he wrote, "property ownership leads to concentration of wealth, exploitation, and rise of class difference" (Taleqani 1983: 71). The formation of classes in Muslim societies was not a product of Islamic economics, but rather of "the deviation of individuals and society from the principles of truth [and] justice" (Taleqani 1983: 148). By invoking the notion of "deviation," Taleqani made the same distinction that Nakhshab and Shari'ati did between two contesting currents within Islam: one represented by Ali and his "revolution against the feudals and oppressive landlords," and another by Uthman and a sequence of corrupt caliphates (Taleqani 1983: 97). He called on the Shi'i *ulama* to return to the Quranic principle of *qest* (justice) and to rid Shi'i jurisprudence of capitalist permeation (Taleqani 1983: 147).

Shi'i liberation theology's religiously mediated political radicalism and economic egalitarianism attracted many among the ranks of the urban poor in the years leading to the 1979 revolution. Among the major political organizations of this period, the militant People's Mojahedin had adopted an ideology based primarily on the teachings of Shi'i liberation theology. Two of the original three founding members, Mohammad Hanifnezhad and Said Mohsen, came under Taleqani's influence while in prison in the early 1960s, and when the initial nucleus of the group was formed in September 1965, Shari'ati's and Taleqani's works were among the first texts to be studied and discussed (Abrahamian 1989: 88). There were, in addition to the Mojahedin, a number of other groups formed in the late 1970s that adopted a pro-poor, often socialist, Islamic discourse. Ali Shari'atis followers established the Aspirations of the Oppressed

(*Arman-e Mostaz'afin*), the Revolutionary Monotheists (*Movaheddin-e Enqelabi*), and the Council of Muslim Socialists (*Showra-ye Mosalmanan-e Sosiyalist*). Mohammad Nakhshabs allies were gathered primarily in two organizations: the Revolutionary Movement of the Muslim People of Iran (*Jonbesh-e Enqelabi-ye Mardom-e Mosalman-e Iran; JAMA*) under the leadership of Kazem Sami, and the Movement of Combatant Muslims (*Jonbesh-e Mosalmanan-e Mobarez*) under the leadership of Habibollah Peyman. Both groups were offshoots of the remnants of the Movement of God-Worshiping Socialists (*Nehzat-e Khodaparastan-e Sosiyalist*), which Nakhshab had cofounded in 1945.

Though it played a vital role in mobilizing the masses, Shi'i liberation theology was not the sole religious-political current in prerevolutionary Iran to adopt a discourse of economic justice. Islamist forces under the leadership of Ruhollah Khomeini also espoused a pro-poor position in the course of the revolution. However, if concern for the poor was a basic tenet of Shi'i liberation theology since its initial surfacing in the mid-1940s, economic justice issues were late, arguably strategic, additions to Khomeinis discourse. As Ervand Abrahamian notes, it was only in the late 1970s that Khomeini adopted a pro-poor rhetoric, declaring that the goal of Islam was to liberate the *mostazain* "from the clutches of the rich" (Abrahamian 2008: 148). Asef Bayat too argues that by successfully appropriating the Lefts discourse of social and economic justice, Khomeini and Islamists were able to mobilize the urban poor in the critical revolutionary period of 1979 and 1980, and in doing this they managed to create an important social base for their power (Bayat 1997: 43). The most prominent Islamist figure at the time to articulate a pro-poor position was Seyyed Mohammad Beheshti (1929–1981). Discussing the principles of Islamic justice in a sermon, he once pledged that in a society organized on the basis of such principles "stomachs are full and no one sleeps hungry; the sick receive medical care and no one is left without a doctor and proper medication; everyone has shelter and a place to stay, and there are no homeless people" (Beheshti n.d.). Beheshtis economics ideas, one economist observes, were much closer to the positions of Taleqani and the Mojahedin than to those of the high clergy and the merchants of the bazaar (Valibeigi 1993: 810).

Consistent with the Islamists newly adopted pro-poor discourse, in the early years following the revolution the Islamic Republic introduced a number of measures aimed at actualizing the promise of economic justice as well as boosting its own political legitimacy among the lower classes. These measures included an extensive antipoverty program bringing

electricity, safe drinking water, health services, and schools to millions of poor households in urban and rural areas, as well as a generous system of subsidies for basic goods (Salehi Esfahani 2005: 499). The implementation and continuation of such poverty-reducing policies was made possible, to no small degree, by a rentier economic structure inherited from the previous regime (Badiei and Bina 2002: 15; Alizadeh 2014: 79). Another important pro-poor measure taken by the new state was the creation of a number of autonomous public foundations (*bonyads*) to facilitate public service delivery and redistribution of income to the poor (Salehi Esfahani 2005: 499; Alizadeh 2014: 80). In the immediate postrevolutionary context, some of these newly founded *bonyads* were also actively coordinating mobilization efforts by the poor and working classes. As Bayat reports, such organizations as the Office of Housing for the Downtrodden (*Daftar-e Khanesazi Baray-e Mostaz'afin*), founded by Hassan Karroubi, had a key role in promoting, facilitating, and consolidating the takeover of abandoned homes and unused properties by the poor (Bayat 1997: 63). Considering the combined effect of these measures, economist Djavad Salehi-Isfahani observes that the 1979 revolution "has been as a whole a very successful anti-poverty endeavor," substantially reducing Pahlavi era poverty rates (Salehi-Isfahani 2009: 7).

Neoliberal Shift and Proliferation of Charitable Initiatives

During the first decade after the revolution, in addition to implementing a number of economic justice programs, the Islamic Republic also advanced a violent and systematic suppression of its Leftist (religious and secular) opponents. Then, in the late 1980s, the Islamist state began a gradual shift away from its early egalitarian commitments and toward economic liberalization. This shift has been documented in a number of economic studies. Thus, nearly two decades after the revolution, Sohrab Behdad identified three distinct phases in the evolution of postrevolutionary economic policies: revolutionary disruption (1978–1981), Islamic populism (1981–1989), and liberalism (post 1989) (Behdad 2000: 100). What captured, for Behdad, the essence of the first phase was "takeovers and confiscations" of land and property, in some instances by newly formed workers councils and in other cases by the Provisional Revolutionary Government or the Revolutionary Islamic Courts (Behdad 2000: 101).

Behdad's second proposed phase, Islamic populism, corresponded roughly to the eight-year period of the Iran–Iraq war. In this period the "populist-statist" faction of the Islamic Republic, concentrated in the Majles and in Mir-Hossein Mousavi's administration held the upper hand over the promoters of laissez-faire economics who were concentrated in the Council of Guardians (Behdad 2000: 104). Mousavi's "Islamist Left" government, according to Peyman Jafari, was generally successful in protecting "the lower classes against the effects of economic crisis and the war," and increasing "the relative share of income going to poor and middle income households" (Jafari 2009). The third phase began when, under the administration of Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, Iran embarked on an economic liberalization agenda "with its three essential components: (i) exchange rate unification and floating the currency, the rial; (ii) decontrolling prices and eliminating subsidies; and (iii) privatization of the state owned enterprises" (Behdad 2000: 115). According to Assadzadeh and Paul, by the mid-1990s "freeing the prices of consumer goods and phasing out the system of rationing" had already led to "a rise in income inequality" (Assadzadeh and Paul 2004: 645).

Mohammad Khatami, too, despite making several references to social and economic justice issues early in his presidency (Amuzegar 1999: 539), pursued for the most part the economic liberalization agenda of his predecessor. Near the end of his first term as president, Behdad assessed that although Khatami had initially "quietly discontinued" various aspects of Hashemi-Rafsanjani's economic liberalization policy, the "internal contradictions" of his coalition ultimately resulted in his administrations "zigzagging toward liberalization" (Behdad 2001). The contradiction to which Behdad points was the result of a tension between Right-leaning and Left-leaning forces within the alliance that brought Khatami to power. Following the June 2005 presidential elections, it was argued by some, including by leftist economist Mohammad Maljoo, that popular dissatisfaction with the neoliberal policies of Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Khatami was responsible for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's unexpected win (Maljoo 2006). The accuracy of this claim, however, is questioned by Salehi-Isfahani whose statistical analysis reveals that while inequality rates generally stagnated throughout the liberalization phase, poverty rates in fact declined (Salehi-Isfahani 2009: 24). Salehi-Isfahanis conclusions are consistent with Parvin Alizadeh's observations about the relative success of "poverty reduction" strategies implemented during Khatami's reformist era (Alizadeh 2014: 76).

Notwithstanding the reasons for his electoral victories, and despite running a populist campaign in which he positioned himself as a defender of the poor and the working class, Ahmadinejad continued the implementation of the economic liberalization program. Mere months after his appointment, then labor minister, Mohammad Jahromi, submitted to the Majles the draft of proposed amendments to Iran's 1990 Labor Law. The amendments, according to Maljoo, sought to weaken the mobilizational power of workers by "giving employers the right of expedited dismissal while not recognizing workers right to establish their own independent trade unions" (Maljoo 2007: 10). Two years later, in 2008, the government submitted to the Majles yet another major economic proposal, this to reform the country's subsidy system. The proposal was subsequently approved and became law in 2010, cutting subsidies on many staples, including fuel, food, and electricity. While advancing this neoliberal agenda, Ahmadinejad also introduced a number of ad hoc initiatives to transfer wealth to the lower classes. One such mechanism was *Justice Shares* (*Saham-e Edalat*), by which the government distributed at highly discounted prices 40 % of the shares of privatized public assets among low-income households (Habibi 2013: 3). Similarly, just as subsidy cuts on basic goods were introduced the government also began offering cash subsidies in the form of monthly payments (Habibi 2013: 4).

Alongside economic liberalization, a parallel development in Iran since at least the 1990s, is the increased NGOization of social services. A number of studies point to this important shift. A United Nations Development Programme paper published in 2000 reported that the Iranian government had "adopted a more positive attitude toward the idea of involving local NGOs as partners in development" (Namazi 2000: 38). Nearly a decade later, a study by Ali Akbar Bromideh showed that most of the country's estimated 7000 active NGOs had "blossomed in the past few years," and projected an exponential growth in the nongovernmental sector (Bromideh 2011: 198). Bromideh's research also indicated that most of the recipients of the services provided by these NGOs were women, children, and the poor (Bromideh 2011: 199). According to economist Hadi Salehi Esfahani the push for the NGOization of social services has been championed by the reformist members of Iran's elite who have come to view the state and autonomous public foundations as impediments to the development of civil society and the private sector (Salehi Esfahani 2005: 499). In the face of this push for further economic liberalization and the gradual removal by the state of protections offered to the poor and the working class, the representatives of Shi'i liberation theology have

generally failed to engage effectively in mobilizational initiatives with an economic justice focus. Instead, we have seen in recent years the increased appeal of the charity approach among religious citizens and FBO/Is.

A 2008 study estimated that nearly 75 % of all Iranian NGOs in the area of social services are set up by religious individuals and organizations (Bagheri et al. 2008: 87). The estimation appears inflated when compared to statistics from other countries; for example, 20 % in Egypt, or 18 % in the USA (Clarke 2006: 841). Still, the overall increase in the number of charitable FBO/Is in Iran since the early 1990s corresponds to a broader regional pattern, during the same decade, of the proliferation of similar FBO/Is across the Middle East, which is, in Clarkes analysis, "a result of political reform and economic liberalization" (Clarke 2006: 842). Many religiously oriented charities that provide services to the poor were formed after the Islamic Republics neoliberal shift. The Imam Ali Popular Students Relief Society (*Jam'iyyat-e Emdad-e Daneshju'i-Mardomi-ye Emam Ali*) is one such example. Founded in 1999 as an independent student group in Tehran's Sharif University of Technology, the organization currently has a countrywide volunteer base of over 5000 (mostly university students). Their activities include providing food, shelter, medical and social services to various groups of vulnerable youth (child workers, homeless children, out of school youth, young criminal offenders), women (homeless women, poor single mothers, women forced into sex trade), and other groups affected by poverty. Their organizational motto is a teaching by the first Shi'i Imam that, *all persons bare responsibility toward their society* ("IAPSRS Catalogue" n.d.).

A Return to Mass Mobilization?

A thorough investigation of the reasons for the decline of Shi'i liberation theology and its mass mobilization approach in postrevolutionary Iran must take into account a wide spectrum of factors at the local, regional, and global levels. Although some scholars look for its continued legacy in a number of recent social movements (Martin 2003: 82), Latin America's Catholic liberation theology too, which had emerged as a powerful pro-poor voice in the 1960s and 1970s, experienced, by most accounts, a notable decline in the late 1980s (Issa 2007: 127). Similarly, the implosion in the same period, of the number of charitable FBO/Is offering services to the poor is, as mentioned previously, by no means a phenomenon exclusive to Iran. Having acknowledged some of these broader patterns, however, I wish to set aside a discussion of regional and global factors for perhaps a future occasion, and instead simply offer my thoughts here about some of the local, internal, explanations of this decline.

One apparent factor is the severe impact of the violent suppression, including mass executions, of the (non-Islamist) religious and secular Left throughout the 1980s, and the persistence of a condition of political authoritarianism. In addition, there has been the Islamic Republic's relative success in reducing poverty and maintaining a critical degree of legitimacy among the lower classes. The continuity of this success during a period of over three decades is owed to the combined effect of the rentier nature of the Iranian state, the state's antipoverty programs, the role of *bonyads* and ad hoc wealth redistribution mechanisms, and the state's use of an expansive military and paramilitary apparatus (i.e. the Revolutionary Guards and the Basiji Militias) to offer a range of economic, social, and political opportunities to the lower classes (Golkar 2015). This relative success, along with an effective appropriation of the pro-*mostaz'afin* discourse of Shi'i liberation theology, has on the one hand allowed the Islamist state, despite its neoliberal turn, to claim a position as the defender of the poor, while eroding on the other hand the ability of the religious and secular Left to launch economic justice–focused mass mobilization initiatives.

Furthermore, unlike the prerevolutionary context, Shi'i liberation theology is today faced with a theocratic state that draws its legitimacy, in large part, by appealing to religion. While appealing to the power of public faith provided important opportunities for mass mobilization in the course of confrontations with a secular monarchy, the strategy may not be as effective for challenging a religious state. Still another factor to take into account is that faced with an authoritarian religious state, many Iranian religious reformers have focused their efforts on advancing a liberal–democratic discourse of sociopolitical development and promoting the values of human rights, democracy, and political pluralism. Although the champions of this discursive shift are, for the most part, Muslim liberals including Abdolkarim Soroush, Mostafa Malekian, and Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari, many followers of Shi'i liberation theology too, including the Left-leaning faction of the Council of Nationalist-Religious Activists (*Showra-ye Fa'alan-e Melli Mazhabi*), seem to have prioritized sociopolitical issues over socioeconomic concerns.

If the decline of Shi'i liberation theology as a pro-poor voice is indeed due to some combination of the factors noted above, then it is not difficult within the current context to imagine the reemergence of objective conditions in which mass mobilization initiatives for demanding economic justice can be launched. Under Rouhani's presidency, the Islamist state continues apace with the policy of economic liberalization. Still, the clearest

manifestation of Iran's neoliberal turn is to be found neither in poverty nor in inequality rates, which according to Salehi-Isfahani's analysis have either declined or stagnated over the past three decades, but rather in a sharp increase in workforce insecurity and the loss of protective measures for workers. In 2013, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) reported "70–80 per cent of Iranian workers are working on temporary contracts without any job security" (ITUC 2013: 69). Two years later, in December 2015, Ali Beigi, chairperson of the High Coordinating Centre for Islamic Labour Councils informed reporters that no less than 93 % of workers were employed on the basis of temporary contracts ("Over 93% of Workers on Temporary Contracts" 2015).

The continuation of Iran's neoliberal turn is bound, on the one hand, to alter the relationship between the Islamic Republic and the poor and working classes, and on the other hand, to test the limitations of the charity approach for advancing economic justice. The gradual deterioration of workers' rights and protections has been met, since at least the late 1990s, by a continued wave of workers' protests, most notably those organized by schoolteachers and bus drivers. The possible persistence and growth of such collective actions for social and economic justice will also provide an opportunity for Shi'i liberation theology to reclaim its radical past and utilize its mobilizational capacities in the service of supporting emancipatory struggles waged by economically vulnerable groups. To seize such an opportunity, however, would require, among other factors, reviving the egalitarian discourses of the original articulators of Shi'i liberation theology, while at the same time abandoning a view of religious identity as the singular motivator of radical sociopolitical engagement, embracing diversity and alterity, and forging solidarity with ongoing workers' mobilizations against austerity and neoliberalism.

Note

1. The two approaches, charity and mass mobilization, are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and it is not uncommon for REs and FBO/Is to simultaneously pursue both. Consider, for example, the case of Hezbollah in Lebanon. As a political party it enjoys a tremendous mobilizational capacity, as well as the capacity to affect decision making at the state level. As a FBO, however, Hezbollah has since its foundation in the mid-1980s provided hundreds of thousands of people in Lebanon's Shi'i areas with charitable education, health, and welfare services.

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Iran's Cooperative Movement: Agony of Development

Kaveh Sarmast

Social justice is a complex, multidisciplinary subject, deeply rooted in the social, economic, historical, and cultural circumstances of any society. Social justice can be observed through the angle of various topics, among which perhaps we may find such significant areas as class interests, global geographical location, the principal social contradictions of the era, the degree of socioeconomic development, economic and political relations, harmony with the outside world, and so on. Dealing with such a vast area of related domains of study requires a lifetime. This chapter, therefore, takes the task of shedding light on one specific aspect of Iran's present socioeconomic development, namely the condition of the cooperative movement and its influence in providing just social and economic relations in contemporary Iran. Cooperative movement represents a socioeconomic order instituted by groups of people for the purpose of addressing their needs. The cooperatives constitute inherently democratic and egalitarian economic and social relations. Therefore, they stand in contrast with the capitalist mode of economic and social order whose main component is capital and its accumulation. The social relations arising from capitalist economic order would inevitably generate separation of interests between,

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on the one hand, those who have financial power and take advantage of their investment to participate in the economy with the goal of increasing their wealth, and on the other hand, those who lack sufficient financial resources to become investors and therefore have no way of participating in the economy other than as working people. This brings about the discrimination between large groups of people or classes. Contrary to profit-driven capitalist economy, it is the cooperative economy that carries social justice forward. This chapter offers a brief outline of the principles of cooperative economy, and then it presents a quick review of the cooperative movement in Iran and its specific path of development, before, finally, discussing the present situation and offering an assessment of the cooperatives in Iran.

Cooperatives: Socioeconomic Organizations for a New Era

Iranian cooperative movement has had some unique paths of development while sharing some common elements with those of most of the developing countries. To understand these elements, we should first have a proper understanding of what constitutes cooperatives. Although cooperatives are present in all countries and play a significant role in the economic and social life of the people, they may still not have been properly understood. Sometimes, this lack of knowledge can even be seen among social sciences experts, including economists and sociologists.

What Are Cooperatives? What Is Cooperative Economy?

After several years of teaching cooperative theory, I have noticed that to use the principle of *reductio ad absurdum* can be a very effective technique to describe cooperative theory, because usually, the immediate feeling is more understandable than pure theoretical phraseology. We therefore begin by analogizing cooperative economy with the present socioeconomic order (private enterprise), which is understandable for most.

Cooperatives are different from private enterprises. A private business is, obviously, based on ownership: any business has an owner or owners, or put simply, a business is privately owned. Generally, taking "ownership" as a noneconomic term, we can arrive at two kinds of conceptions: ownership as a legal phenomenon and ownership in the psychological sense.

Legal ownership can be called proprietorship, whereas its psychological aspect produces a "sense of belonging." Proprietorship represents capitalist ownership: having assets that can turn materials to commodities that are exchangeable into money in the market. One can sell the ownership, expand it, give it to others, or leave the business dormant. Generally, the owner in this sense has the full power and control over what he or she owns. In business circles, a logical behavioral expectation is to invest your ownership for producing commodities and to turn it into money with profits. This is a never-ending process. The entire process aims at gaining and maximizing profit. Therefore, profit is an income out of investment. Since the aforementioned process goes through repetitive cycles, profit tends to increase and accumulate.

Nonbusiness ownership, however, is by nature different from commodity–money relations within the market framework. It involves a sense of belonging defined in psychological and sociological terms, in the way that a country or a city belongs to its citizens, just as a school belongs to the students. I say "my country," "my city," or "my school," but I do not have the right of proprietorship and have no power to sell my country or school. Such "ownership" produces no commodity or profit, and the concept of ownership is not grounded in market value. As a result, when referred to cooperative members as owners, this sense of ownership is evoked.

The second characteristic that makes cooperatives different from private businesses is profit. This is quite a well-known fact about cooperatives. Nevertheless, that there are no profit-making incentives behind cooperatives that strike us as remarkable. Cooperatives are social organizations because they respond to the needs of the deprived sectors of the population, those without proprietorship kinds of ownership. Therefore, *cooperatives primarily build a living and active body of social movement.* The history of the cooperative movement around the world has shown that cooperatives have emerged as a powerful social current under certain socioeconomic circumstances, and they survive and grow as long as the existing socioeconomic circumstances that gave rise to them continue to exist. To enumerate such circumstances in the mid-eighteenth century England that gave rise to the cooperative movement is unnecessary here. However, as a quick reminder, we should mention the social and economic needs and demands of the English working class. A cooperative is not merely a social organization but also an economic one. The economic aspect of cooperative societies does not suggest that they are businesses. They are built and advanced to respond to the needs of the working class primarily

for subsistence and then for their growing life needs. Cooperatives literally do not "invest" because their primary objective is not to earn profit; they want to have jobs, or in proper phraseology, to earn wages. The wage they earn is an income based on labor, and therefore cooperatives cannot be considered businesses.

The third aspect that makes cooperatives different from private businesses is that they do not compete with each other. No business can ever be imagined without competition, but cooperatives can. Cooperatives are inclined to establish constructive, complementary, and progressive social and economic solidarity. Even those cooperative scholars who believe that cooperatives are a constituent part of capitalist socioeconomic order since cooperatives should engage in markets and therefore are businesses still believe that cooperatives are people's business (Birchall 1994). Consider the masses of the underprivileged (especially the working people) that globally comprise of billions of people. Imagine how large and effective it might be when they establish their own cooperative economy. Cooperatives are not meant to be a part of market economy; on the contrary, in a cooperative society the market becomes a part of cooperative economy and is subsumed under its governing rules. For cooperatives, markets are reduced to exchanges of commodities but not the primary regulators of every single aspect of life. Cooperative economy is therefore qualitatively different from neoclassical and neoliberal capitalism.

Cooperatives are mission-based organizations. This is the fourth reason for not calling the cooperatives private businesses. Unlike privately owned enterprises, the cooperatives' ultimate objective is not the maximization of profits but fulfilling their organizational mission. It has become an established procedure for private corporations to use techniques of classic strategic management where they set a mission for their businesses to maximize profits. Prominent corporate strategic scholars have explicitly declared this fact and have even recommended that the highest corporate mission is "wealth creation" (Hamel 2002: 192, 225–226, 286, 288), which is another expression for maximization of profits. In contrast, the mission of all cooperative organizations is to satisfy the needs of their members and community in a single or multiple defined areas. They may grow and develop new needs, diversify or abandon old needs, but as long as they remain operational they address certain needs. In this way, they help develop real but new forms of natural economy, an economy where all the people are engaged in production of their ever growing needs. There are no major social conflicts of interests in cooperative economy. Such mission, therefore, distinguishes cooperative economy from private enterprise.

Modern Features of Cooperative Economy

Now, in the context of this chapter, the main question is how cooperatives meet the social justice elements in a modern society? To answer the question of how and why cooperatives lead to a modern and socially just economy, the following remarks should be helpful. (a) Cooperatives are democratic in essence. Unlike the capitalist company where decisions are made by the capital owners, cooperatives are democratically managed and planned by membership and employees. (b) Cooperatives can take limitless forms, as they are capable of providing all the needs of society. Cooperatives can be set up in rural and urban areas, or within manufacturing and service industries. (c) In contrast to private business, which produces the needs of society through profits, cooperatives directly respond to these needs. (d) Cooperatives underlie sustainable and dignified employment, an employment that secures livelihood and is consistent with the individuals' identity. (e) In cooperative economy, wage competition does not exist, because it does not focus on extraction of surplus value out of labor force. The wages in cooperatives are fair. (f) Cooperatives have a significant, serious, and literal share in the socioeconomic development of both developed and developing countries. (g) Private investment in cooperative economy is meaningless, because they are not seeking profit. No capitalist venture is interested in investing on cooperatives. (h) The cooperatives are the messengers of equality and social justice for the essential reason that their functional processes are free of those specifications that lead to antithetical social classes and groups. (i) Cooperative economy aims at reducing or eliminating poverty. Fair distribution of resources and incomes in cooperative socioeconomic relations constitutes one of its most important principles. (j) Cooperative economy is based on education, and not just education of cooperative theory and principles; general education also occupies a prominent place in a cooperative economy. (k) Cooperative economy aims at facilitating accessibility to affordable and qualitative healthcare. (l) Cooperative economy guarantees gender equality. (m) Cooperative economy strives for the reduction of gap between wealthiest and poorest social strata. (n) A specific section in cooperative economy is dedicated to securing cultural needs and therefore leads to the escalation of cultural and artistic life. (o) Cooperative economy is the messenger of peace and alleviation of tension among social groups. "They [cooperatives] contribute or can contribute to the peace process, consciously and unconsciously, in their own different ways" (McPherson 2013: 6). International Cooperative Alliance website is a great source for firsthand information about cooperative values and principles, facts, figures, and successful stories (http://ica.coop/).

History of Iranian Cooperative Movement

Now let us attend to Iran's cooperative movement. General sense of cooperation, particularly in agriculture, has always been present in Iranian history. However, it is obvious that the historical–cultural sense of cooperation work is not the same as today's modern cooperative organizations. The spirit of cooperation in Iran arises from a long-lasting record of understanding and practice. It is not surprising that cooperation and mutual help have been historically institutionalized: Iranians have been constantly challenged by very harsh environmental, economic, and political conditions. Poverty, lack of security, the threats of governments, constant danger of foreign invasion, natural malice, lack of adequate water resources, and many other factors have made the Iranian rural population tend to establish joint efforts. This has not been specific to Iran; the ancient peoples everywhere had to face series of hard challenges they could only face collectively.

There have been many different collaborative and cooperative types of work in Iran for a very long time. Examples include grassroots-initiative building of roads, bridges, water storages, *Kariz*,[1] and farming in Iranian villages where peasants work together based on customs and traditions instead of modern cooperative organizations. *Boneh*[2] and *Vareh*[3] constitute examples of traditional forms of cooperation that still exist and are practiced. Therefore, the tradition of cooperation, above all in rural areas, have already existed and been practiced in the country (Taleb 1988). The modern Iranian cooperative organizations do not have a long tradition compared to Europe or even such Asian countries as India. The origin of Iranian cooperative movement only goes back a few decades. Thus, the modern cooperative movement in Iran can practically be divided into two phases: *phase one*, from the beginning to the 1979 Revolution, and *phase two*, between 1979 and today, in the era of Islamic Republic.

Phase One: Exogenous Development

The official birth of cooperative movement in Iran has been accompanied with the legislation of the Law of Trade (*Qanun-e Tejarat*) in 1932. Some sections of this Law discuss consumer and productive "cooperative companies" (*sherkatha-ye ta'avoni*). Section Seven of the Law is titled, "Consumer and Productive Cooperative Companies and is consisted of five Acts. Article 191 states, "Productive cooperative is a company established by a group of tradesmen who produce and sale their commodities"

(Law of Trade 1932 in IPRC 2016). Likewise, Article 192 states, "The consumer cooperative is a company for the following purposes: (1) sales of commodities needed for general consumption, either made or purchased by cooperative members; (2) distribution of profit or loss in proportion to their purchase" (IPRC 2016). But there were still no cooperative companies until 1935 when the first agricultural cooperative was established in a village near to the city of Garmsar in central Iran. From this date until 1941, two more agricultural cooperatives were established and a total of 1050 peasants were members of these three cooperatives (MCLSW n.d.). The establishment of these cooperatives was due to the attention and efforts of those who had studied and worked in Europe for a long time and were therefore familiar with the advantages of cooperative societies especially for rural areas (MCLSW n.d.).

These cooperatives did not prove successful and did not bear the expected results. The main reason behind their failure was claimed to be the lack of education of the peasants (MCLSW n.d.). Unfortunately, there are no accounts about the prevailing socioeconomic relations of the countryside. We know that the emergence of cooperative movement is a result of development of industry and creation of working class as wage earners while still feudal socioeconomic relations were dominant in Iran. There was neither agrarian reform and distribution of land nor market economy and commodity–money relations. Peasants did not possess land and were not entitled to freedom to participate in economic transactions. Nevertheless, this very first cooperative organization in Iranian countryside has truly acted as a decisive breakthrough within stagnant rural socioeconomic conditions that had lasted for centuries. A bright new era was therefore opened before the eyes of the peasants. Although these very first cooperatives failed, they were the result of the endogenous initiatives of a handful of intellectuals. However, this was a very brief period in the outset of cooperative movement in Iran, and therefore it cannot be called as a separate phase. The very first cooperatives became the basis for beginning of the exogenous phase.

After 1941, the government endorsed a plan to introduce the concept of cooperative economic activity and its advantages to the large groups of the peasants. To facilitate the promotion of cooperatives, the government handed over the distribution of certain state-produced commodities such as agricultural tools, machinery, and groceries to rural cooperatives. Unfortunately, the outbreak of WWII hit these programs to doom (MCLSW n.d.). After the war, the interest in cooperatives reappeared in

the works of some individuals. However, in the meantime on behalf of specific countries especially the United States and international agencies such as FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and ILO (International Labour Organization) necessary technical and financial helps for the foundation and development of cooperative organizations were granted (MCLSW n.d.).

With the participation of UN delegates and American experts of the Fourth Truman Principle (US President Harry Truman's 1949 technical assistance program for "developing countries"), the first Cooperative Commission was held in National Planning and Budgeting Department (*Sazman-e Barnameh va Budjeh*) in 1951. At this time, the number of cooperatives including consumer and rural credit could hardly reach 100 (MCLSW n.d.).

The first Cooperative Law was enacted in 1953. This law was similar to the laws in European countries. In fact, it seemed like a copy of cooperative acts of these countries. Nevertheless, this law, with its 1955 amendments, became the foundation for the establishment of many other cooperative companies (MCLSW n.d.). Agrarian reform appeared in 1963 and land was distributed to the peasants. According to the Law of Land Reform, to receive land only those peasants were eligible who were already members of a cooperative. This fact caused a mass inflow of peasants to cooperatives. The result was registration of 8000 cooperatives in a short period of time by 1967. Later some of these cooperatives ceased to exist while others merged with each other, as a result of which the number of cooperatives declined to 3000 (MCLSW n.d.).

To spread the true concept and principles of cooperative movement all over the country and to endow them with the necessary tools and facilities for further development of cooperative economy in Iran, Central Cooperative Organization (CCO; *Sazeman-e Markazi-ye Ta'avoni-ye Keshvar*) was founded in 1967. All cooperative companies were now covered by the administrative authority of CCO. The members of CCO consisted of all productive, service, distributive, consumer, housing, credit, and manufacturing cooperatives totalling 1340 organizations including the 20 cooperative federations that have already been established (MCLSW n.d.).

Later, emulating the model of CCO, the Central Rural Cooperative Organization (CRCO; *Sazeman-e Ta'avon-e Rusta i ye Keshvar*) was established. CRCO aimed to provide cooperative education for the management of rural cooperatives, grant credits to cooperative companies for the purpose of increasing peasants' revenues, help marketing and sales

of their products, establish lateral relations with consumer cooperatives, and finally, represent Iranian rural cooperative movement in international organizations. Until 1979, a total of 2939 rural cooperatives containing 3,010,202 co-operators, and 153 rural cooperative federations covering 2923 cooperative companies joined the CRCO (MCLSW n.d.).

The main characteristics of the first, exogenous stage of the development of cooperative movement in Iran can be summarized as follows: (a) the authentic, grassroots endogenous cooperative movement was halted due to circumstances and failed to develop further. Exogenous cooperative movement was prevented from growing further mainly because the stagnant precapitalist socioeconomic conditions especially in the rural areas have not yet been in the position to allow for the idea of cooperative organization. (b) Instead, a new path of development of cooperative movement was introduced and implemented through the intervention of international and foreign organizations and countries, particularly the United States. (c) This shift depleted the national development of the cooperative movement from its natural and historical process of progress. This was not a phenomenon initiated by the people and for the people. (d) Promoting comprador capitalist social relations was the main reason behind this intervention. (e) Due to the above factors, this stage of development of cooperatives can be characterized as "*exogenous.*"

Phase Two: Endogenous Attempts

The first, exogenous stage can also be correctly called the "developmental stage"; however, as mentioned, the stage was initiated and mainly shaped up by outside forces rather than being the result of the domestic social and economic development. But the second stage can hardly be called a developmental phase. That is why I have chosen the term "attempt" in referring to the fact that in spite of the growing numbers in cooperative organizations and members, a widespread and effective cooperative movement did not form and did not become an essential part of the economy. In spite of abundance of errors, mistakes, obstacles, and disruptions, there have been genuine and sincere attempts to develop a real and efficient cooperative movement in the beginning of the second phase. "Through Local Consumer Cooperative (LCCs), poor urbanites attempted to secure easy success to inexpensive consumer goods by removing greedy middlemen" (Bayat 1997: 97).

The second, *endogenous* phase of cooperative development in Iran begins with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Certain leaders of the Revolution were enthusiastic about cooperatives, and consequently the status and importance of the cooperatives as third economic sector of the economy, besides state-owned and private sectors, is confirmed in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, Chapter IV, Article 44. A devoted promoter of the cooperative movement was Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, a prominent leader of the Revolution. He mainly interpreted the cooperatives as democratic means of economic practice in which major, chronic shortfalls of the capitalist economy such as unemployment and inflation would be alleviated. He advocated the cooperative economy also because it provided both production and distribution in a single economic entity and eliminated several points in the distribution channel. "Another point in cooperatives … is getting rid of unnecessary middlemen in the supply chain. In the capitalist systems [supply] is transferred through number of middlemen till it finally reaches the final consumer, [a process] that is absolutely unnecessary, but it [the product] can be reached to the consumer directly … Elimination of middlemen is fight against quasi-employment and quasi elements [*eshteghal-e kazeb va anasor-e kazeb*] that are imposed on the producer and consumer" (Beheshti 1996: 5). Ayatollah Beheshti also believed that cooperatives are a kind of common property: "there is no doubt that property in cooperatives is definitely a sort of common property, i.e., shareholders in productive or consumer cooperatives all share the total assets, presuming a pen, or a paper, or a chair, car, building, or any agricultural machinery; these all belong to all the members. Therefore, the property is common in cooperatives" (Beheshti 1996: 8).

For the first time after the Revolution, the Law of Cooperation (*Qanun-e Ta'avon*) was passed in the Parliament in 1991. Act 1 in the Law reveals the objectives of the Law as follows: (a) providing the conditions and facilitating for employment of all the people (i.e., full employment); (b) providing means of production for those who do not afford to acquire it; (c) preventing concentration of wealth in the hands of certain people or groups in order to bring about social justice; (d) preventing the state from growing into a monopolist entrepreneur; (e) binding capital and labor together; (f) preventing monopoly and inflation; (g) encouraging public participation in cooperative work (Islamic Consultation Assembly 1991).

The Law of Cooperation contains provisions for productive, distributive, and multipurpose cooperatives. The productive cooperatives include

agricultural, livestock breeding, fishing, industrial, mining, housing, and similar rural and industrial institutions. Productive cooperatives have a preference for government support including financial support. Members of productive cooperatives are those who work in the cooperative. This is very similar to labor cooperatives elsewhere. The distributive cooperatives are those that either supply the needs of productive cooperatives or distribute their products among the people. It is claimed that these cooperatives mainly aim at cutting costs and keeping prices low. Members in distributive cooperatives are not obliged to work in them. Lastly, there is another type of cooperative considered under in the Law of Cooperation: multipurpose. Multipurpose cooperatives are a mixture of productive and distributive cooperatives. These hybrid cooperatives can mainly be established in rural areas for the purpose of development of the village. All residents of a village are entitled to be members of this cooperative but they are not required to be employed in it. The managing board and the Director must be selected from the members, according to the Law of Co-operation (Islamic Consultation Assembly 1991).

The Law of Cooperation also specifies detailed information about the cooperative governance, membership, registration, taxation and dividends, termination, and so on. Moreover, another kind of cooperative organization that was introduced in this period of cooperative movement was the so-called "Common Utilization Lands" (*Ta'avoniha-ye Tolidi-ye Mosha'*). These are units of lands distributed to groups of five to ten peasants. These peasants are expected to jointly work on the land and sell their products to the government. Machinery and tools in these units are owned by the group. This kind of work arrangement is rather different from the cooperative spirit, but these units are sometimes considered to belong with the cooperative sector (Ghanbari and Barqi 2010).

Cooperative organizations in the endogenous phase show a tremendous growth. According to General Secretary of Iran Co-operators Chamber, there were 191,077 cooperatives by the September 2013 of which 43 percent were inactive and 6 percent were closed down (ISNA 2014). But despite the considerable growth of the cooperative organizations in numbers, unfortunately the share of cooperative economy, in terms of net income, has not exceeded 5 percent of the total GDP. Therefore, 5 percent cannot be used as a basis for the general development of the cooperative movement. The reason lies in the fact that cooperatives suffer from a number of problems that are approximately captured as follows:

(a) The real cooperative share in the economy is even lower than the 5 percent figure mentioned above, because there is a large number of cooperative companies with very limited membership, most of them consisting of only seven individuals (the minimum required number of individuals for registering a cooperative company with Ministry of Cooperation, Labour, and Social Welfare). These cooperatives are mainly established to take advantage of the opportunity to benefit from the low-interest credits. As a matter of fact, members of these cooperatives do not regard the principle of openness and treat the cooperative more or less like a joint-stock company.

(b) Cooperative economy in Iran can hardly qualify as cooperative movement. The so-called cooperative movement has expanded as a result of the government's need for the distribution of food and other basic commodities during the Iran–Iraq war when commodity shortages were common due to war economy. In fact, in the 1980s the cooperatives were developed under excessive control of government. Despite existence of cooperative federations, there are no *genuine* cooperative federations. The existing federations more or less act as trade unions. Cooperatives are not aware of or do not bother to join efforts in a nationwide network. Their tendency toward working in isolation resembles the environment dominating private joint-stock companies. The highest national body of cooperative organizations is the Ministry of Cooperation, Labour, and Social Welfare (*Vezarat-e Ta'avon, Kar, va Refah-e Ejtema'i*). All the matters regarding cooperatives including laws, regulations, credits, initiatives, and registration are decided by this Ministry, and the cooperatives do not possess their own central independent body such as national federation. Therefore, the relations among cooperatives are not harmonized by the overall strategic plans of a national body.

(c) The democratic and economic justice ideals of the first years of the Revolution have been changed into today's orthodox and prevailing ideas of free-market economy and neoliberalism. Most of the Iranian economists are constantly repeating the theories of the neoliberal economic bodies such as International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and other conventional theory-generating think tanks, and the current economic course is based on the same ideals

and theories. There are continuous dialogues about globalization and privatization. Particular attention to cooperatives is at best very little and ineffective. Private business is considered to be the ultimate ideal of economic development and all efforts are directed to this purpose. Propaganda for privatization is extended in all corners. "Unfortunately, the last 20 and some years have been the peak of formation of this new bourgeoisie comprador social class during which the economic adjustment theory has been implemented" (Razzaqi 2015). Therefore, there is no room for cooperatives. Skepticism about cooperatives among economists and official authorities is evident. Cooperatives are considered to be superfluous simply because it is alleged that they heavily rely on government assistance, while a "real economy," it is claimed, must survive autonomously or else it had better stop working. These simplistic ideas about market economy are unfortunately in boom at the moment, preventing the weak cooperative movement from growing at a natural pace.

(d) Cooperative education plays an insignificant role. Most people seem not to believe that cooperatives can help them fulfill their needs. Cooperatives are mostly considered as vendors that distribute low-quality state-produced goods at cheap prices and/or as a tool for distribution of rationed commodities at the time of shortage. A general awareness about cooperatives is not present at this time in the public discourse.

(e) There are no official statistics about the total number of cooperative members in Iran (or if there are any statistics, unfortunately it is difficult to get hold of it). However, it is a general knowledge of cooperative activists that today the cooperatives consist of a total membership of 30 million nationwide. But very little of this huge number really gain from their cooperative membership. A large number of cooperative members either are not even aware of their membership or simply have no interest knowing about it. Therefore, statistical reliance on cooperatives is misleading, because the majority of the cooperative members are simply passive.

The endogenous phase of cooperative movement in Iran, we can conclude, has been unsuccessful.

What are the Causes?

Countries like India or ex-socialist countries of the Eastern Europe are good examples of the successful and impressive role of the cooperatives in the lives of the masses. In India, for example, "the cooperative movement has made significant progress. Cooperatives have extended across the entire country and there are currently an estimated 230 million members nationwide" (Das et al. 2006: 2), or in ex-socialist countries cooperatives were one of the main sectors of the economy. The importance of the cooperatives in socialism can be seen in the words of V. I. Lenin. "Indeed, since political power is in the hands of the working-class, since this political power owns all the means of production, the only task, indeed, that remains for us is to organize the population in cooperative societies" (Lenin 1965 [1923]: 467). But incomplete and faulty development or rather underdevelopment of Iranian cooperative movement has failed to present better and hopeful life for the deprived and underprivileged classes. Why has Iran failed to cultivate a genuine cooperative economy that works for the people? What are the reasons and causes behind it? While these questions require an independent study, we can venture indicating the following causes.

The first cause relates to the prevailing belief that the 1979 Revolution changed Iran's path of development. As a major participant in the Revolution, the traditional mercantile bourgeoisie—that is, the bazaar—occupied the key positions in the leadership of the Revolution. *The bazaar practically prevented the Revolution from reflecting the interests of the working people.* On the contrary, with the growing power of traditional bourgeoisie, the popular slogans reflecting the interests of the oppressed and marginalized were gradually forgotten and replaced by strong inclination toward overt capitalist socioeconomic relations. This trend has gone so far that in the last couple of decades the official social and economic policies of the government openly advocated the development of neoliberal principles including privatization and globalization (see Rouhani 2010). Now the predominant socioeconomic stream in the country is neoliberal policies. The state's fascination with market economy and the development of the country based on private initiatives (mainly based on foreign capital intervention through the so-called Direct Foreign Investment [*sarmayegozari-ye mostaqim-e khareji*]) has led to the stagnation of alternative modes of socioeconomic development including the cooperative economy. The anti-labor positions of the present economic order can easily

and openly be observed. The ruling bodies strongly defend the interests of large capital.

Second, cooperative organizations are under the influence and control of the government. The main trustee and operator of cooperative organizations was the Ministry of Cooperation (*Vezarat-e Ta'avon*) which a few years ago was combined with the Ministry of Labour (*Vezarat-e Kar*) in order to scale down the government, and as a result the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare arose. Authorities in the Ministry do not exert any effort to transform the existing cooperative organizations into a real and genuine movement.

Third, cooperatives are deliberately transformed into private organizations. The majority of Iranians either do not believe in the effectiveness of the cooperatives or consider them more or less as private enterprises. The difference between the two options lies in that if cooperative directors have key connections in various related offices, they can benefit from low-cost credits and other benefits provided under the Law.

Fourth, the majority of people have never had a chance to actually and *genuinely* participate in cooperatives. The prime incentive for the participants in cooperative organizations is basically having access to easy and lucrative capital return, an aspect that is absolutely contrary to cooperative philosophy and principles, according to which cooperatives aim at providing their members with supplies that address their various needs at an affordable price. Cooperatives are primarily labor-economic organizations, but the working class has little active participation in cooperatives today.

Fifth, neither popular nor academic cooperative education exists today. Most of the cooperative courses have been eliminated from university curriculum, and there are no or very few active centers for cooperative education.

Sixth, Act 44 of the Constitution clearly emphasizes the priority of the state and cooperative sectors of economy, but for the last two decades a dominant, adverse interpretation of the Constitution has resulted in bringing private enterprise to the frontline. And finally, cooperative Ministers, one after another, underline their priority of raising the status of cooperative in the national economy from the present 5 percent to 25 percent. One of the latest comments was given by the Cooperatives Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare: "the Fifth Development Plan forecasted the share of cooperative sector will be 25 percent of the GDP by the end of the program, but unfortunately we have long way to that point" (Kalantari 2013). However, there have

been no detailed programs, nor any practical projects for that matter. One of the ways claimed to increase the share of cooperative economy is the allocation of the so-called "Justice Shares" to the cooperatives, but the nature of Justice Shares is not clearly known, and no instruction has been provided on how this increase should take place.

Conclusion

This chapter provides the overall picture of the cooperative movement in Iran. Today, cooperative organizations play no major role in improving the living conditions of millions of working class and wage earning Iranians. A great deal of deeply rooted social shortcomings and deficiencies are not addressed by the government, let alone by the private sector. One of the popular and effective ways to address the people's needs in today's socioeconomic conditions will involve the rebirth and growth of a genuine cooperative movement in which working people can establish their own economic organizations for the purpose of improving on their lives. Within this gloomy picture, however, there are exceptionally positive cases that show genuine cooperatives could prove their value to the working people. An example is the Housing Cooperatives (*Sherkatha-ye Ta'avoni-ye Maskan*) that emerged within the first decade after the Revolution through which millions of people including laborers, government employees, and even university professors managed to build their own homes. "Up until the end of 2012 there has been 25,000 housing cooperatives for workers, government clerks, teachers, and various other groups of people comprising of 3,000,000 members" (IRIACF 2014). The Housing Cooperatives provides a success story but, unfortunately, they have not been so active in recent years (see MCLSW 2012).

Since 1935, when the first agricultural cooperative was established, until today, nearly 85 years has passed, but the cooperative movement in Iran is still challenged in the agonizing process of its development.

Notes

1. *Kariz* is a long tunnel dug underground used more or less as a technology like pipeline to transport water from mountains to the flat terrains. There are still thousands of underground *kariz* networks in Iran underutilization. Some of these tunnels are more than 4000 years old and some are as long as 70 kilometers.

2. *Boneh* is a farming unit consisting of groups of peasants who utilize a few patches of land together for one year. The land either might belong to the farmers themselves or to a third person (Taleb 1988: 11).

3. *Vareh* is a kind of women's sheep breading cooperation in villages. Peasant women agree to take their livestock together to the pastures and distribute the milk proportionately.

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Social Justice; Anti-imperialist, Racist, Persian-centric, and Shi'i-centric Discursive Formations of the Ideal Citizen and Iranian School Textbooks: A Social Biography Response

Amir Mirfakhraie

This chapter offers a deconstructive analysis of post-revolutionary Iranian textbooks from a poststructuralist and anti-racist perspective. I deconstruct the *present* and *non-present* discourses that inform the narration of national and global relations of power. An important issue that has not been critically explored after the Revolution of 1978–79 is: whose vision of national identity and social justice pedagogy informs official/mainstream school knowledge? How are factors such as nationalism, "race," ethnicity, patriarchy, religion, development, progress, and rights and obligations constructed/represented for students? This intersectional anti-oppressive critique of textbooks explores how national and global ethnic/racialized relations are portrayed in various editions of Iranian elementary and middle school textbooks. I argue that despite the revolutionary propaganda of the Iranian state, school knowledge does not represent the oppressed

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groups across the globe through emancipatory discourses that are representative of their struggles/histories. Iranian school textbooks function as hegemonic tools of domination that identify the ideal citizen as the leader in anti-imperialist movements without questioning the role of the Iranian Self in promoting discrimination against various forms of *internal/external Self-Other-Other*. This analysis of school curricula is informed by the argument that anti-racist/anti-oppressive educators in non-Western parts of the world must become critical of the ideological dispositions of those post-colonial subjects, such as the revolutionary elite of Iran, who claim to promote anti-oppressive policies and represent their approaches to social justice as anti-imperialist. It is imperative to account for the extent to which such self-acclaimed progressive movements advance nationalist/imperialist frameworks of domination and hegemonic relations of power and *ideological codes* that undermine the broader social justice agendas they profess for their "subjects." I argue that an inclusive anti-oppressive social justice requires a critique of imperialist possibilities of anti-imperialist movements, or what I refer to as the *imperialism of anti-imperialist discursive formations*, by accounting for the effects of dialectical relations of oppression on marginalized groups across and within categories of difference from multiple intersectional perspectives.

I explore how racialized/ethnicized identities are constructed in various editions of Persian-Reader (P), social studies (SS), history (H), geography (G), and Teacher's Guide (TG) textbooks by exposing the *ideological codes* that inform the narration of nation. I maintain that school textbooks invoke a racialized nation-centric understanding of Iran and the world without accounting for how the processes of racialization/ethnicism have affected marginalized groups within Iran or across the world. Such a construction results in positioning school-aged readers to imagine themselves differentially/hierarchically in relation to the national Self and multiple/contradictory constructions of *internal/external-Others* that are depicted as either *friendly-insiders/outsiders* and/or *enemy-insiders/outsiders*. The curricula construct the ideal Iranian Self in relation/opposition to multiple forms of Otherness through a set of binary oppositions that situate the ideal citizen as a resilient anti-hegemonic subaltern Other that has freed itself from the shackles of imperialism by depicting marginalized/subaltern and Western Others through racist and modernizing discourses of domination that ideologically/hierarchically distinguish between the ideal citizen, Western Self, and national/transnational Muslim and non-Muslim oppressed and oppressor Other(s). The narration of nation is based on interlocking sets of

discourses that act as logocentric metanarratives, providing homogenized/concrete/essentialized accounts of the history of Iran. The ideal citizen is constructed by references to conflicting/contradictory discourses of *Iran-dusti* (Loving Iran), *mostaz'afin* (the oppressed), *jihad-e sazandagi* (development/modernization), *'ashayir* (nomadic tribes), *mardom*, *Ummat-e Islami* (Islamic Nation/Community), militarization, violence, martyrdom, soldier, the Aryan migration, *Velayat-e Faqih*, (Shi'i Leadership), and colonialism and binary oppositions such as believer/non-believer (*ba-iman/bi-iman*), developed/underdeveloped, rural/urban, civilization/paganism/barbarism, Sunni/Shi'i, Aryan/Semite, and Pars-Aryan/Non-Pars-Aryan. In their discursive formations, nationalist, anti-imperialist, Islamic (Shi'i), middle-class, and Orientalist narratives construct a fixed Iranian citizenry who has always been active in scientific, anti-oppressive, and emancipatory regional/global relations of power. Through the invocation of several "shifting collectivities," the ideal citizen is normalized/presented as "White," male, Shi'i, Aryan-Pars, progressive, independent, pious, modernizing, and a leader in the Islamic world.

The Discourses of Loving Iran, Protection, Development/Modernization as Ideological Codes: Homogenizing Diversity and Silencing the Voices of Others

Central to the narration of Iranian nation is the discourse of Loving Iran as an *ideological code* that normalizes caring for the nation as a fundamental characteristic of the ideal citizen (*P1* 2015: 47; *P1* 2004: 51; *P2* 2015: 79). In the lesson "Beautiful Iran" (*P2* 2015: 79), for example, students read that they live in Iran and love their country. They are textually positioned to be proud of their beautiful country, its natural resources, and historical sites. Iranian men and women are constructed as faithful individuals who will defend their nation against any foreign incursions. This requires the ideal citizen to be vigilant and to defend Iran against invasion by external forces, another *ideological code* that is formalized in light of the invocation of the discourses of martyrdom, militarization of Iran, soldier, and self-sacrifice (*P1* 2004: 49). For example, in a lesson entitled "Prosperous Iran" (*P3* 2015: 80–81), which is based on student-centred pedagogy and dialogical approaches to teaching and learning, the teacher divides students into several groups such as history, geography, and

language, and asks them to research the topic of "Country/Fatherland (*mihan*)" and present their findings to the class. During the debriefing session, the "Geography Group" elaborates on the role of those citizens who live at the borders of the country (the reference is to non-Persian ethnic "minorities") as the first line of defence against Iran's enemies and expresses their love and affection for these ethnic groups. The "History Group" discusses the importance of knowing one's national history as a central ideological component to defend the nation. The protection of the Persian language and culture is another topic of discussion that is presented by the "Language Group." The lesson highlights the importance of Persian as the national language and as the source of national pride and a central component of guarding the country/Fatherland against non-Persian influences. Although the group members acknowledge that many Iranians speak their own mother tongues and regional languages, which are referred to as national treasures, it is the Persian language that is presented as the only viable element that unites the diverse population of Iran and brings the nation together. In this lesson, qualities such as developing Iran, defending the country and the Islamic Republic, and martyrdom intersect one another as important characteristics of the ideal citizen. The accompanying pictures of the martyrs of the Iran-Iraq War and the fighter jets, furthermore, symbolize the centrality of the discourse of militarization in the narration of nation. The "Knowledge Group," moreover, emphasizes the importance of scientific discoveries in various fields to make Iran into a developed and "prominent country in the world." The term "*abad*" (prosperous) in the title of the lesson, thus, is an *ideological code* that propels students to position themselves as individuals who will be active participants in the modernization of Iran by fighting its enemies, developing the economic infrastructure of the nation, and becoming vigilant citizens. Such *ideological codes* are pervasive elements of the curricula: in *P1*, for example, students had already been informed about their basic functions and roles in the rhyme: "*abad*, *abad* [prosperous], *Iran abad* [Iran prosperous], *bidar*, *bidar* [vigilant], *Irani bidar* (Iranian vigilant)" (*P1* 2015: 44; *P1* 2004: 48). Moreover, in "Dear Iran" (*P3* 2015: 73–74), the natural and physical resources of the country are depicted as belonging to all Iranians, which, they learn, must be protected from abuse and plundering by external forces. Iran is narrated as an ancient country that has contributed to the world's culture and produced many important scientists and scholars (the discourse of civilization). This lesson also emphasizes preserving the name of the

"Persian Gulf" into perpetuity, which is *non-presently* informed by the Aryan/Pars-centric assumptions of the authors of the textbooks. In fact, in another lesson in *SS6* (2012: 91), the authors reference a number of Aryan/Persian, Arabic, and Orientalists texts and historical maps as evidence that this waterway in southern Iran has always been referred to as the Persian Sea/Gulf since the arrival of the Aryans into Iran. This is a paternalist construction that dictates that the students must love and care for Iran and preserve Iran's cultural heritage in the region. It is in light of the discourse of Loving Iran that the ideal citizen must become an active participant in the economic, social, and moral development and prosperity of Iran (*P1* 2015: 48–49; *P1* 2004; *SS4* 2015: 98), assisting the country to become a competitive force in global economic affairs (*SS8* 2014; *SS3* 2004). The discourses of development and progress intersect the discourse of protection by positioning the ideal citizen to view his/her main responsibility to guard the country in light of his/her obligations to modernize Iran in order to secure its independence (*P4* 2004: 143; *SS3* 2004; *SS5* 1993: 204; *SS5* 2004: 144; *P5* 2004: 42–43).

Loving Iran is a Persian/Shi'i-centric framework that obliterates cultural/religious diversities and turns them into hegemonic tools of domination. It is constructed in light of a number of historical/contemporary *internal/external-enemies* that must be feared and controlled (see below). The love for the nation/country, Iranians, and non-Iranians, irrespective of their ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds, is narrated within a nationalistic discourse with Orientalist sentiments that is devoid of any references to inequalities and violence experienced by "minorities" in Iran and other parts of the world. The history of nation is framed through Aryan/Pars Muslim Shi'i male perspectives, excluding the historical memories/voices/experiences of diverse groups of women as important elements of the nation-building process (*SS3* 2004; *SS7* 2015; *SS8* 2014; *P3* 2004). The narration of nation is a heteronormative construction that celebrates the role of heterosexual male leaders/heroes of the nation (*P4* 2015: 54–55; *P5* 2015: 56–57). "Race" and ethnicity are reified/essentialized as objective categories of difference in imagining the national Self and contrasting/relating it to other populations in the world. Colour of skin, facial characteristics, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and clothing are drawn upon to present diversity globally without critical reflections on how "minority" peoples view the effects of racist ideologies and paternalistic policies. Love for Iran/Iranians is devoid of any critical intersectional analysis of how oppressive ideas/practices have been the basis for unfair treatments of individuals/groups due to the intersection of various

categories of difference. Loving Iran is a discursive myth that normalizes hegemonic relations of power that have been effective tools of assimilating the non-Persian populations of Iran (see below). It is an *ideological code* through which Iran is constructed as a country that has always been involved and been a leader in peaceful policies and collaborative relations with other countries/peoples of the world (*P4* 2012: 22–25).

Rights, Laws, and the Discourses of Loving Iran, *Mostaz'afin*, the Constitution, *Mardom*, and *Velayat-e Faqih*: Islamic Laws are Supreme

The *non-present trace* in the narration of nation is the discursive formation of the legal rights of Iranians: that irrespective of one's "race," gender, colour of skin, and language, Iranians are equal before the law and their human/legal/political/social rights are protected by the state (*SS7* 2015, p. 16). Iranians have natural rights, which are determined by God, such as the right to life, to work for their needs, to form families, to learn to choose their own paths in life, to satisfy their basic needs, and to improve their status (*SS7* 2015: 2). They also have the right to be treated equally and to express their opinions (*SS7* 2015: 3–5).

The inclusion of these rights, however, is framed within a nationalist/ Islamo-centric perspective that requires Iranians to submit themselves to the laws of the state that, as the curricula assert, are designed to ensure the prosperity of all citizens and to safeguard order in society (*SS3* 2012: 24–27). Personal rights are considered as provisional (*SS7* 2015: 11–12), and those who do not abide by the laws of society, some of which cannot be questioned and/or ignored since they are ordained by God, are considered to cause harm on others and are, thus, categorized as *outsiders* and *enemy-Others* (*SS7* 2015: 15). The Islamic constitution of Iran is symbolized as the supreme law of the country or "the mother of all laws," and the responsibility of Iranians is idealized to protect the constitution and the leadership (*SS7* 2015: 15). The Islamic Republic signifies a return to the rule of law and the first community of Islam established by Prophet Mohammad. The establishment of the Islamic Republic that has resulted in true equality/independence/progress/freedom is normalized as the third stage of evolution of the nation (*SS4* 2004: 130). In "What Is the Role of Our Leader in the Government" (*SS8* 2012: 51–54), for example, the role of the revolutionary leadership in resisting the Shah's regime as the agent of imperialism and the concept of the *Velayat-e Faqih* are discussed. The *non-present ideological code* that informs this lesson emphasizes the

axiom that the Supreme Leader of Iran is a representative of God and the Prophet; thus, obeying him is central to accepting the sanctity of God and "his" rule over humanity. This is a patriarchal and Shi'i-centric construction that does not account for whether or not non-Shi'i/Muslim people and/or women could ever rule the state and act as its Supreme Leader. The male leader of the nation is depicted as a fair and learned individual who is well-versed in current issues and is aware of the needs of the nation. *Intertextually*, opposing him (the Supreme Leader) is equated with undermining the constitution, nation, Islam, and God. Moreover, the lesson "The Constitution" (*SS5* 1993: 214), with its accompanying drawing of the Iranian constitution symbolized as a tree with the icon of the Islamic Republic, Allah, written in the middle of its branches, idealizes the Islamic Republic as a sovereign state that adheres to the principles of freedom and equality. In this depiction of Iran (the country) and the Islamic Republic (the state), tribal and ethnic groups are represented in their traditional clothing encircling the tree looking up towards the symbol of Allah, implying that they both celebrate and protect the nation, the country, and the state. This representation of the state is based on an *ideological code* that assumes that the legal, cultural, economic, and political rights of both male and female ethnic Iranians are protected by the Islamic Constitution. The Islamic Republic is constructed as an ideal society with unified citizens who have common goals, despite their perceived ethnic differences. These differences are normalized and viewed apolitically as reflections of cultural diversity rather than as manifestations of years of Persian-centric and racist policies of the central government(s). The *non-present* discourse that defines the tree, however, is the Aryan thesis that assumes that the Pars tribe is the founding "father" of the nation and the core of national identity (see below). The discourses of the constitution, '*ashayir*, and the Aryan migration *intertextually* define Iran as a White and Shi'i nation/country and as such sanitize the history of state violence against "minority" groups.

The Aryan migration and the introduction of Islam into Iran are considered as the first and second stages of evolution, respectively (*SS8* 2014: 63–64). The lesson, "A Trip to the Historical City of Hamadan" (*SS4* 2015: 47; in the previous editions, the title of this lesson was "The Migration of the Aryans," *SS4* 2008: 86–88), represents and objectifies Iran as "the land of the Aryans" and, *intertextually*, identifies Iranians as members of the White "race." The map illustrates the migration patterns of three Aryan sub-tribes into Iran: the Parthian, the Pars, and the Medes. The location of the Pars settlement corresponds to the geographical space where the Achaemenidan civilization also established the first world

empire. The leader of this civilization, Cyrus the Great, is, furthermore, represented as an intelligent, rational, and sensible person who treated the people of the territories he conquered with fairness and care (*SS4* 2015: 51), thus historicizing and affirming the qualities associated with modern and contemporary Iranian leadership. Moreover, in the lesson "A New Epoch in Iranian History" (*SS8* 2014: 63, 64, 66), the introduction of Islam into Iran is narrated as a new era in Iranian history (the first epoch being the migration of the Aryans, read the settlement of Pars group in Iran proper). Although the initial Muslim "invasion" of Iran is positively constructed, the formation of Sunni Caliphates is depicted in light of their oppressive practices. Iranians, students learn, openly accepted Islam and were one of the first groups that converted to Islam. They are also presented as active participants in the dissemination of Islamic faith and as supporters of Shi'i Imams who resisted the hegemonic policies of Arab Sunni rulers. In these lessons, the Islamization of Iran is celebrated but in the context of Persian supremacy. The Aryan, Shi'i, and Islamic identities intersect one another to construct a unified and fixed image of Iran despite intense social, economic, and political changes that accompanied the Aryan migration and the Arab "invasion" of Iran.

The curricula construct the Islamic/Iranian leaderships through a patriarchal/Persian-centric lens. The Iranian nation and people (the discourse of *mardom*, which does not distinguish between Persians and non-Persians and lumps them under one category of sameness with specific shared norms/values that highlight Persian cultural capital, thus subsuming ethnic "minorities" under Persians) are supposed to follow/obey/care for their male religious leader (*SS6* 2008: 69), who is conceptualized as the representative of the Prophet. The Supreme Leader is a fair/rational/learned individual and "a complete Muslim," a *faqih* (jurist), which is a position that very few Iranians can actually achieve (*SS5* 2013: 144–146). The current leader of Iran is also constructed as a trailblazer within the *Ummat-e Islami*, whose leadership is accepted by the oppressed Muslims of the world (*SS5* 2013: 133–134; *SS4* 2015: 97–98; *H8* 2008: 85–87). The discourses of *mostaz'afin* and *Velayat-e Faqih* intersect one another and depict the Islamic Republic as the source of resistance against imperialism and hope for the poor and oppressed of the world (irrespective of their religious beliefs) to free themselves from domination through Irano-Islamic–inspired transnational anti-imperialist revolutions (*SS7* 2015: 8). Those who question/undermine the legitimacy/sanctity of the central

government/the ruling elite (i.e., those who question institutionalized state forms of oppression) are constructed as anti-God and *insider-enemy-Others* (*SS8* 2008: 47–49).

PERSIANIZATION OF DIVERSITY; THE DISCOURSES OF *MARDOM*, *ʿASHAYIR*, AND THE ARAB OTHER; AND THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS: "PERSIAN IS OUR NATIONAL LANGUAGE"

The curricula Persianize diversity and affirm/legitimize the superiority of Persian culture/traditions over all other groups (*TG P1* 2012: 102). The racialized biases of the nationalist discourses remain important elements of the education system despite the Islamization of the curriculum. The identities of ethnic "minorities" are only superficially reinforced as part of the collectivity of Iranian people through the discourses of clothing, colour of skin, *mardom*, and *ʿashayir* that are devoid of critical analyses of the politicized forms of difference and their consequences (see below). They function as *ideological codes* that represent diversity without providing oppositional spaces for the marginalized peoples to critique the nation-building policies as hegemonic Persianizing discourses of power. The histories of opposition to the Persianization process is ignored and ethnic "minorities" are presented as passive citizens who support the central government and the nation-building process (see above). Despite their differences, the people of Iran (the discourse of *mardom*) are constructed as a homogenized/essentialized entity that have a common past and, for centuries, have defended their common religion and country (*SS4* 2004: 132).

This common past is narrated through Persian-centric sources and historical documents such as Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (*Letter on Kings*, orig. 1010 CE), which is symbolized as a quintessential source of how to imagine and think about the Self in relation to various forms of Otherness. The *Shahnameh*, along with the poetry books of Hafez and Saʿdi as well as the Quran and *Nahj ul-Balagheh* that every ideal family possesses in their home libraries, defines the cultural capital of the ideal citizen (*P1* 2015: 2; *SS3* 2004). In the lessons "Welcome to Our House" (*P1* 2015: 2) and "Reading Book[s]" (*P1* 2015: 2), for example, students are introduced to a homogenized image of the family that defines and sets the characteristics of all other families discussed and depicted in the curricula. It is

a representation of the model family, which is portrayed as a White family that owns a collection of Persian and Muslim/Shi'i books. It is not a Black Arab family that collects and reads Arabic or Sunni religious books. This family represents the ideal middle-class Persian(ized) family. It is a consuming unit that is proud of its Persian (read Pars) culture and values. The daughter of this family, for example, reads from the "Stories of the *Shahnameh*" to her brother at bedtime (*P1* 2015: 2). This choice of reading materials highlights the Persian-centric biases of the authors of the textbooks who reference a manuscript that has also been used as a scientific and historical source by Iranian historiographers to justify Persian supremacy (see below). The *ideological code* in this construction is the assumption that the *Shahnameh* provides a comprehensive history of all Iranians in antiquity, and by reading it, non-Persian students can also learn about their (read: Persian) history. This supposition ignores the fact that this poetry book only celebrates Pars culture and its heroes by demonizing the historical, non-Persian enemies of Iran. In such lessons, the Aryan discourse *non-presently* informs how students should conceptualize Iran and relate to the stories of *Shahnameh*: they must love these stories, as they must also love Iran. As such, the hegemonic status of Pars/Shi'i identity of the ideal Iranian family is affirmed early on in students' educational journey.

The love for the nation is also expressed through emotional attachments to and respect for the heroes of Iran documented in books such as the *Shahnameh* (*P1* 2015: 75; *P4* 2012: 37; *P6* 2012: 27–30). These poetry and religious books function as *ideological codes* that reinforce the cultural capital of the middle-class Persian/Shi'i majority. They institutionalize the Persian language as the source of identity and as an indication of the Persian character and resilience to protect Iran's rich national cultural heritage (*P3* 2015; *G8* 2004). Persian represents the language of art/sciences and the discourse through which Iranian scientists have been communicating with the world (*P6* 2012: 25; *P3* 2013: 81). To be Iranian implies speaking Persian, and to undermine the national language is to question the legitimacy of the nation (*P1* 2015: 75; *P3* 2013: 80–81; *P6* 2012: 23–24, 26; *SS8* 2014; *TG P1* 2012: 127). "Ethnic" languages are not viewed and considered as legitimate national languages, and the linguicism of the dominant society and its effects on marginalized groups are not interrogated.

Such constructions of Persian language ignore the politics of linguistic diversity and the hegemonic aspects of the national language as a source of domination/exploitation. They silence the experiences of non-Persian–speaking students and ignore the cultural violence they have faced

(*P6* 2012: 34–38). Although linguistic differences amongst students are acknowledged, the curricula emphasize their shared nationality, religious beliefs (however, not all Iranians are Muslim; there are a significant number of Baha'i Iranians, who by definition are considered as *enemy-insiders* and agents of Zionism/imperialism, *H8* 2004), and cultural values/norms that unite Iranians into a cohesive/resilient collectivity. The enemies of Iran are blamed for trying to destabilize the country using language as a political tool of divisiveness (e.g., setting the different provinces and their populations against one another over language issues). The *ideological code* that is disseminated assumes that questioning the legitimacy of the Persian language and emphasizing the right of "minority" students to learn in their own languages promote divisive politics that is promoted by *external-enemies* of the country who want to instigate disunity/chaos (*P6* 2012: 34–38).

The construction of Persian culture/language is also based on racialized/Shi'i-centric discourses that depict Iranians as active agents of change who have always revolted against their invaders, such as the racist Arab *Other* after the Muslim invasion of Iran. Sunni Arab rulers are constructed as ineffective/incompetent administrators, who relied on the expertise/knowledge of Iranians to administer their territories (*SS5* 2004: 95). They are also depicted as violent/ruthless individuals who not only murdered many of the Iranians who assisted them to rule over the country, but also martyred several Shi'i Imams who rose against the exploitation of the people during the reign of unjust Sunni Arab rulers (*SS8* 2014: 66). The artistic/moral/scientific progress experienced during this period is credited to the efforts of Iranian Viziers who encouraged writers/poets/scientists to pursue knowledge production (*SS5* 2004: 98). For example, in "The Government of Abbasid Caliphate" (*SS5* 2012: 97–99), which narrates the rise of the Abbasid Caliphate, the history of Iran is told in light of the depiction of the Umayyad Caliphate and their rulers as racist and un-Islamic individuals, who considered the Arab "race" as superior to others. Students learn that Imam Hussein was martyred during the reign of the Umayyad Caliphate, which resulted in Muslims' anger and uprisings against this Caliphate's rule over the Islamic territory (*SS5* 2012: 94–96). In these lessons, the Arab non-Shi'i Other is normalized and symbolized as racist and violent, and Iranians as the "victims" of racism, which *non-presently* reaffirms the construction of the Aryan/Pars category as a peaceful and fair group of people whose civilization promotes justice and equality. In "The Scientific Progress of Muslims" (*SS6* 2015: 49–50), furthermore, the authors explore the role of science and progress in the

Islamic world. However, the emphasis is mainly on Iranian scientists' functions in the progress of knowledge. Students learn about the names of five Iranians whose contributions to the fields of medicine, chemistry, mathematics, and astrology have been significant. Science is narrated through Islamic- and Iranian-centric frameworks that do not explore the contributions of other non-Persian and non-Arab scholars to the development of science after the introduction of Islam across the globe. *Non-presently*, the discourse of *Ummat-e Islami* is Persianized and Aryanized, and the descendants of the Pars tribe are constructed as mavericks and the leading figures within the Islamic world. For example, in a lesson that explores the establishment of independent dynasties after the "invasion" of Iran by Arab Muslims, the role of Nizam al-Mulk in the creation of Nezamiyeh Schools is discussed (*SS5* 2012: 103). Students are informed that Iran was also ruled by the invading Turkish tribes who formed a number of dynasties during this period. Furthermore, they learn that Iranian Viziers played important roles in the governance of Iran during the reign of these various Turkish dynasties, which are constructed as cruel and oppressive *outsiders* who "migrated" into Iran after the introduction of Islam (thus, also constructing their descendants as eternal *outsiders within*). Nizam al-Mulk is referenced as an example of one of these Iranian Viziers who was responsible for the establishment a series of institutions of higher learning known as Nezamiyeh all over the country. In this and similar lessons, the role of Iranians in promoting science and knowledge is celebrated, and the resiliency of Persians to not succumb to the assimilationist policies of their invaders is also emphasized: the invader Others have not been able to alter the Persian character and integrate Iranians into their respective cultural traditions. In other words, the various Others have not been able to annihilate and/or assimilate the Iranian Self: The Aryan/Pars core of the Iranian identity remains intact throughout Iranian history. The role of Iranians in promoting science and knowledge during these periods is objectified as a reflection of the historical involvements of Aryan/Pars Self in promoting progress—locally and globally. The discontinuities between Islamic and Aryan periods are textually resolved by highlighting the roles of Iranians as leaders in the promotion of arts, architecture, and sciences.

The curricula represent Iranians as resilient people who have continued to speak Persian and practised Iranian cultural traditions. Iranians are also celebrated as active social actors who freed themselves from, for instance, Arab control by establishing a number of independent local governments such as the *Sāmāniyān* Dynasty (819–999 CE), which is also credited to have played an influential role in promoting scientific progress (*SS5* 2004:

100). The Persian revival is also associated with the efforts of *Sāmāniyān* rulers and Iranian poets such as Rudaki (referred to as the father of Persian poetry) and Firdowsi, who is constructed as a national hero who kept "alive the Persian language that Iranians speak today" (*P2* 2004: 135–136; *P2* 2013: 73; *P5* 2014: 14–17, 8–10, 21–26). Heroes of the nation are constructed in light of a Persian-centric lens and religious perspective. For example, in the lesson, "Aryo Barzan" (*P5* 2012: 130–131; the title of this lesson changed to "Defending the Fatherland/Country" in *P5* 2015: 56–57), the discourses of martyrdom, sacrifice, and Loving Iran intersect one another as *ideological codes* through which General Aryo Barzan, who defended the country against the Greek invasion, is idealized as the symbol of heroism, much in the same way that the martyrs of the Iran–Iraq War protected the nation during the 1980s. He is represented as a historical role model. All Iranians are required to *non-presently* act and behave like this "Glorious" Aryan/Pars. In fact, in "The Champions of Iran in Antiquity" (*SS8* 2014: Worksheet Number 18), students learn that Aryo Barzan means the "Magnificent Aryan." His bravery is illustrated in light of his desire to die for Iran as he defended the capital of the Achaemenidan Empire against the enemy invaders. In addition, students also read about General Surena, a Parthian warrior, whose name, they learn, means "Powerful." Surena, the text asserts, defeated the Roman army and killed Crassus, the Roman Legion Commander (*SS8* 2014: Worksheet Number 18). The important *ideological codes* in these depictions of the historical heroes of the nation are the idealization of self-sacrifice and bravery as two of the most important characteristics of the Persian/Iranian character since antiquity: the "Magnificent" and "Powerful" Persian will never give up the land of the Aryans. The Aryan thesis informs the construction of Iran and its citizens, whose characteristics are reflected not only through Eurocentric Orientalist accounts, but also in the light of references to Persian historical documents (e.g., the *Shahnameh*): we will rather die than submit to domination (*P5* 2012: 130–131). The curricula *intertextually* narrate the defence of the fatherland in light of the construction of the ideal citizen as the reincarnation of the "Magnificent" and "Powerful" Aryan Self. By referencing the *Shahnameh*, the Achaemenidan dynasty as the symbol of one of the greatest civilizations is constructed as one of the central defining elements of Iranian national identity (*P5* 2015: 56–57). The *ideological code* of such lessons promotes the assumption that the Iranian Self is dependent on the preservation of Persian culture and traditions. The task of defending the nation is historicized as a characteristic

of the Persian "race." As already mentioned, "our land" (read: Persian land) is idealized and normalized as an important historical space that will never be surrendered. The discourses of *fadakari* (sacrifice) and martyrdom intersect one another from a highly paternalistic perspective to situate the Aryan/Pars people as the founding nation of Iran by references to a poetry book that all Iranians are supposed to cherish and celebrate. For example, in the lesson, "Arash the Archer" (*P4* 2015: 54–55), students are introduced to another hero of the *Shahnameh*. This lesson historicizes the undeniable love Iranians have for Iran in light of the discourse of sacrifice and the mythical wars between Iran and Turan in antiquity. Arash the Archer (*Arash-e Kamangir*) is presented as a historical champion who was not only God-loving but also willing to sacrifice his life for Iran in order to protect the country against its enemies (*P4* 2015: 54–57, 129). He is also credited for establishing the historical boundaries of Iran. In this and other similar lessons, the discourse of sacrifice is constructed as a chief characteristic of Iranian/Aryan/Persian/Muslim culture and the ideal citizen (see also *SS4* 2015: 46–53; *P4* 2015: 54–57; *SS7* 2015: 115–134; *SS8* 2014: 98–99). To die for the nation, country, and state is normalized and celebrated in the light of nationalist, religious, and Orientalist discourses.

The *ideological code* in these depictions of Persian poets/scientist/administrators/heroes is the normalization of Persian cultural capital (*P1* 2015: 75; *P4* 2015: 129; *P3* 2012: 73–74, 66–67; *SS3* 2004). The *Shahnameh* is idealized/normalized as a historically verifiable source of information about Iran and its nemeses in antiquity through which the Self is contrasted to multiple forms of Otherness (one of them being the racist Arab Other) that have always threatened Iran. It is through an emphasis on the *Shahnameh*, as a central component of the discourse of Loving Iran, that the willingness to defend the country and the state as a historical invocation of the Persian "race" is also normalized/celebrated (*P4* 2004: 143). The heroes of the *Shahnameh* historicize the discourses of sacrifice/martyrdom from nationalist/Shi'i perspectives as the defining elements of the ideal citizen (*P4* 2015: 54–57, 129; *SS4* 2015: 46–53; *P4* 2015: 54–57; *SS7* 2015: 115–134; *SS8* 2014: 98–99). In these constructions, the Shi'i Islamic state and the Pars/Aryan nation are intertwined entities. The history of Persian and Shi'i Iranians is presented as the common past that unites all Iranians irrespective of the diverse languages spoken by them or their ethnic/religious affiliations. The land of the Aryans is Islamized, and the Islamic Republic as its heir is *non-presently* depicted as the most independent era in Iranian history.

THE ARYAN MYTH, THE FOUNDING NATION, OTHERNESS, AND THE ORIENTALIST KNOWLEDGE: THE DRAVIDIAN OTHER, PARS SELF, WHITENESS, AND CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGY

The discourses of Loving Iran and the Islamic Republic are informed by the *non-present* discourses of Whiteness and the Aryan thesis without any critique of their Orientalist/Eurocentric and nationalist connotations. In various versions of the "Map of Racial Diversity in Asia" (*SS5* 1993: 67; 2004: 16; *SS8* 2014: 115), for example, Asia is represented through a racialized discourse that compartmentalizes specific regions of the continent according to skin colour differences: the colour yellow is used to represent the Yellow "race" (*nizhad-e zard*), white is used for the White "race" (*nizhad-e safid*), and black for the Black "race" (*nizhad-e siyah*). The Dravidian group in India is symbolized as the representation of the Black "race," and Arabs and Iranians are constructed as white-skinned people. In the 1993 edition of this map (*SS5* 1993: 67), Iranians and northern Indians are labelled as members of the Indo-European racialized groups. In the 2014 edition of this map (*SS5* 2014: 115), linguistic categories such as Farsi (Persian), Armenian, Turk, Urdu, Hindi, and Bengalis are used to represent language diversity in Asia, whereas in the 1993 edition, only racial labels are used as categories of difference to distinguish between various groups through the *non-present* discourse of Orientalism (e.g., Indo-European category). In these maps, language is racialized since it is associated with the colour of skin. The Dravidian Other, thus, is a reference to both racialized and linguistic categories. In the "Map of Religious Diversity" (*SS8* 2014: 116), furthermore, Judaism is constructed as a "minority" religion whose members reside in today's "Israel," which is *non-presently* defined as the enemy of all Muslims in other lessons (see below). In these maps, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and religious diversities within various parts of Asia are ignored. Iran is constructed as a nation where only Muslims (read: Shi'i), Persian speakers, and White Indo-Europeans live, ignoring the fact that many non-White, non-Persian-speaking, and non-Indo-European peoples also reside there. Diversity is homogenized by silencing multiplicity within these categories of difference. For example, in the "Faces of Various Asians" (*SS5* 1993: 67–68), pictures of various racialized groups in Asia—Japanese, Indo-Chinese, Mongolian, Indian (*Hindi*), Western Asian, and Dravidian—are presented to students, essentializing racial imagery of the Other and

homogenizing these groups without accounting for ethnic, religious, racialized, and linguistic diversities within each of these categories. The Dravidian *Other*, furthermore, is represented as partially clothed, rural, and "uncivilized," an image that is in contrast to how the Persian characters in modernity and antiquity are presented, as tall, fully clothed, and "civilized," which reproduce the Orientalist construction of the Aryan Self and the indolent Dravidian Other (see below).

As already mentioned, the curricula also symbolize the Pars sub-tribe of the Aryan "race" as the founding nation of Iran (*SS4* 2004: 86; *H6* 2004: 34; *H6* 1994: 23). The Pars tribe's final destination is represented as the core of "Our Land," excluding other groups such as the Kurd and the Lur (identified as descendants of the Medes) from the status of co-founding fathers of the nation. They are omitted from the ideal citizen category since they are not Pars (the Medes are distinguished from the Pars tribe, despite their Aryan heritage, and are constructed as part of the European tribe whose kings, after migrating to Western Iran, exploited the people, *H6* 2004: 35–39; *SS4* 2004: 86) (*Provincial Studies, Ilam* 2012: 77). The discourse of the Aryan-Pars migration historicizes/ legitimizes Persian cultural capital as the source of Iranian identity (*P1* 2015: 44, 48; *P1* 2004: 48; *G7* 2004; *SS5* 2004; *SS7* 2015; *SS3* 2004). They are constructed as civilized/noble/honest individuals (*TG, SS4* n.d.: Lesson 11), and the Pars culture is celebrated as a significant world civilization (*SS4* 2015: 37). The Achaemenidan Empire is idealized as a just/ fair "state" that promoted equality for all, including for those nations they conquered (*SS4* 2015: 49). Their military/administrative/legal innovations are considered to have global consequences/influences (*SS7* 2015: 115). The *ideological code* that is promoted assumes that the invasion of other parts of the world by Iranians did not result in the exploitation of Otherness and was not hegemonic. The history of Iran, students learn, begins with an event that was liberating due to the importance of equality/honour/freedom amongst the "Aryans." The founding "fathers" of the nation are idealized as peaceful men who pursued truth and struggled against evil (Vaziri 1993).

This narration of the genesis of Iran *non-presently* situates Whiteness as superior to various forms of Otherness (*G7* 2004). As already mentioned, in depicting India and Iran in the lessons about Asia, for example, Iranians and northern Indians are classified as Indo-Europeans (as the symbol of the White "race") and contrasted to a number of other non-White and

mixed racial groups such as Black Dravidians (see above, *SS8* 2014) whose members are presented in a picture as slender, partly clothed, non-urban, and non-developed (*SS5* 1993: 68). The *non-present* discourse in this representation of Asia is the centrality of Orientalist knowledge as the foundation to imagine the Self without any detailed critical reflections on the consequences of British imperialism and colonial policies in the region, despite the fact that students learn that Asians defeated colonial forces due to their shared religious convictions (*SS5* 1993). The consequences of nationalist movements in terms of genocidal policies/practices are silent aspects of the curricula. The representations of Asia based on factors such as colour of skin, nationality, and facial differences and the discourse of Indo-Europeanism, nevertheless, incite another *non-present* discourse: the Christian theology, which is informed by the European conceptualization of the Aryan thesis that emphasized language and its relations to ethno-cultural characteristics as the basis to prove the accuracy of the book of Genesis and the idea of monogenetism prevalent during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Students are not provided with critical oppositional knowledge to interrogate how Aryanism was a crucial framework for analysing the pre-colonial history of the colonized people and "for the interpretation of the imperial present" (Ballantyne 2002 p. 3).

The uncritical reference to the Dravidian category as the symbol of the "Black race" *non-presently* reproduces the racist distinctions made between the northern Aryan Indians and darker skinned indigenous southern Indians in the Orientalist writings: Aryans were imagined as tall/civilized/light skinned, and the Dravidians were viewed as uncivilized/backward/indolent/idol (Ballantyne 2002: 50). The inclusion of the Dravidian category highlights how the Orientalist knowledge continues to influence the extent to which subaltern people construct their national selves from highly charged racist perspectives that hierarchically relate them to other subaltern categories of difference. The racist epistemological assumptions of this construction cannot be rectified by simply vilifying colonialism/imperialism. The pedagogical discourses used to imagine the nation are based on a colonial language that needs to be interrogated. This means decentring the idea of Iran by rejecting the Aryan thesis and making spaces for the histories of other oppressed and subaltern groups as part of the definition of Self, expressed through their voices and critical epistemological standpoints.

The Aryan Myth, Multiple Arab Others, Shi'i Self, and the Discourse of Martyrdom

Another important exclusion within the narration of nation is any reference to the *internal* Arab "race" and how they fit into the Aryan migration myth and the "evolution" of Iranian society, despite the fact that the civilization of Elamites in today's Khuszetan (where Iran's ethnic Arabs live) is discussed (*SS6* 2015). The Iranian Arab population is excluded from the history of the nation in antiquity and contemporary Iran. They, like the Turkic "races," are constructed as *external-insiders*, as immigrants. Nevertheless, the Iranian Self is imagined in light of multiple images of Arab Others that situate them within conflicting binary oppositions of *friendly-insiders* and *friendly-outsiders*, and *external-outsiders* and *external-insiders* (*SS4* 2004: 104–105; *SS4* 1999: 113–114; *SS4* 1994: 126). The migration of Arab tribes from Arabia towards the borders of Iran during the Sassanid period (224–651 CE) is characterized as a destructive process (*H6* 2004: 67; *H6* 1994: 58–59). This first image of the Arab Other constructs them as historical *outsiders* and *dangerous external-Others*. They are also represented as *friendly-outsiders*, as in the case of a group of Arabs who were permitted to settle in southern parts of the Persian Empire in order to prevent further Arab encroachment into Iran (*H6* 2004: 67; *H6* 1994: 58–59). The authors' discursive account of history highlights that no Arab tribes had ever lived or migrated within the current boundaries of Iran before or during the reign of the Sassanid. The invading Arab Other is *non-presently* constructed as the unwanted historical Other whose descendants could never have any real political and geographical claim to Iran.

The pre-Muslim Arab in Arabia is also constructed as the pagan Other, who worshipped "man-made" gods (*SS5* 2004: 76–78; *SS5* 2001: 75–77; *SS5* 1993: 93–97), much the same way the Baha'i Other is depicted as the follower of a "man-made" religion and as the agent of colonialism (*H8* 2004) and some Black Africans are portrayed as followers of paganism (*G7* 2004; *SS8* 2014). The pre-Islamic Arab is an uncultured and illiterate person who lived in the state of "barbarism and paganism," was not involved in scientific discoveries, was ethnocentric and only concerned with his/her own tribal matters, and did not have any sense of justice towards non-tribal members (*SS8* 2014: 49). In contrast, after the introduction of Islam, the Arab Other is perceived as a spiritual Other who helped the poor and freed slaves (*SS8* 2014: 49). Faith in Islam is highlighted as the main reason for the success of Muslim Arabs in their quest to spread their new religion and rise up against tyranny (*SS4* 2004: 104–105; *SS4* 1999: 111;

SS4 1994: 122–123). However, Islam, and not the Arab Other (excluding the Prophet and Shi'i Imams), is presented as an emancipatory force that enabled Iranians to fight poverty and free themselves from the shackles of injustice (*SS4* 2004: 104–205; *SS4* 1999: 111; *SS4* 1994: 122–123; *H6* 2004: 67; *H6* 1999: 65; *H6* 1994: 65). Iranians are also represented as one of the first major supporters of Prophet Mohammad because of Islam's focus on equality and the Prophet and Shi'i Imams' emphasis on justice and peace. Imam Ali, for example, is depicted as an anti-racist individual who did not consider Arabs as superior to others, a message that attracted Iranians to his teachings. The *ideological code* in these depictions assumes that Iranian people (read Aryan-Pars) were subjects with agency who chose to accept Islam and become involved in its rise and dissemination, much the same way they promoted the Islamic Republic (*P3* 2004; *SS3* 2004). After the death of Prophet Mohammad and the arising conflicts over the leadership of the Islamic community, however, non-Shi'i Arab rulers are portrayed as ruthless leaders who martyred several Shi'i Imams (*SS8* 2014: 68).

The non-Shi'i Umayyad Caliphate is demonized: their rulers are constructed as racist individuals (*SS5* 2004: 95) who maltreated the people, abused their political power (*SS5* 2004: 97), and discriminated against Iranians and other non-Arab populations (*SS8* 2014: 66). However, not all Arabs are constructed as abusive *external-Others*. Representations of Shi'i Imams construct the Arab *Other* as *friendly-outsiders/insiders* (*SS8* 2014: 56–61). Their constructions as peaceful men who, at times, were forced to choose violence to stand up against tyrant leaders and bring about social justice is framed in light of the discourse of martyrdom (*SS5* 2004: 94–95; *SS8* 2014: 56–61), which is idealized as a necessary defensive political tool in resisting autocracy (*SS8* 2014: 66). In these constructions, the (non-Shi'i) Arab *Other non-presently* stands in opposition to the Persian category. Unlike the leaders of the Persian Empire who brought justice to the people they dominated, the non-Shi'i Arab Other discriminated against the "fathers" of Shi'ism and their Persian followers. The continuity between Iranian-Pars traditions and Shi'i Islam is historicized/normalized. Islam is *non-presently* Aryanized, and the superiority of the Shi'i-Aryan-Pars is legitimized. The textbooks present the religious genesis of martyrdom in light of a nationalist perspective and racialized process that textually turns the Aryan brave warrior into a Pars White Shi'i martyr. Iran, for example, is symbolized as the land of many thousand individual martyrs like *Aryo Barzan* (the Achaemenidan General who challenged the invasion of Persia by Alexander the Great, see above) who

have victoriously sacrificed their lives for Islam, Iran, and freedom (*P5* 2014: 130–134). The *ideological code* that is promoted assumes that the Iranian Self can never be dominated because an important characteristic of the Iranian consciousness is self-sacrifice, *fadakari* (*P3* 2004: 48–50; *P5* 2004: 42–43). The discourse of martyrdom signifies the importance of defending Iran against its enemies: Iran is idealized as the site of Islamic power, and sacrificing one's life is considered as a quintessential characteristic of Shi'i Iranians (SS5 2008: 162–164; P4 2004: 18).

The Discourses of Loving Iran, Martyrdom, *Ummat-e Islami*, Dispossessed Arab, the Zionist Oppressor, and Militarization: Normalization of Violence as a Means of Achieving Justice

The discourses of Loving Iran, *Ummat-e Islami*, martyrdom, leadership, and defending the nation require constructions of *enemy-Others* who must be resisted and oppressed Others who must be protected. In discussions about the political economy of Western Asia, a number of *enemy-Others* are juxtaposed against the *friendly-oppressed-Arab-Other* who must be saved by the ideal citizen (*SS8* 2014). Western colonial/imperialist forces and their regional agents are symbolized as *enemy-Others* who have created chaos in the region (*SS8* 2014). Zionist Israel is identified as a *dangerous-Other* that has historically benefitted from the support of American/British imperialism and has systematically discriminated against the oppressed Palestinians (*SS8* 2014: 128). In lessons such as "The Palestinian Teacher" (*P3* 2012: 133) and "*Fadakaran*" (Self-Scarifying Individuals), which reference the Iran–Iraq War youth martyr Mohammad Hossein Fahmideh (*P3* 2012: 59), the ideals of dying for the nation and defending the country against *enemy-Others* are emphasized from a transnational Islamic perspective. In "Palestinian Teacher," the youth involvement in the *Intifada* movement is narrated for students. This lesson highlights the valour of Palestinian children who resist Israeli soldiers and recounts how a three-year-old boy is martyred by the Israeli soldiers (*P3* 2012: 135). Palestinian kids are portrayed as self-sacrificing individuals (*fadakar*) who stand up to the murderous state of Israel and their agents. They are constructed as the innocent ones who are unfairly treated and their rights violated. The fact that the three-year-old boy resisted the *enemy-Other* and lost his life for the nation of Palestine (thus, Islam) makes him a great source of emula-

tion, just like those self-sacrificing Iranian youths who volunteered for the Iran–Iraq War and died for the country (*P3* 2012: 59). The state of Israel is *non-presently* constructed as an oppressive and evil regime that does not adhere to the Universal Rights of Children. The discourse of martyrdom is a central component of this lesson that in conjunction with the discourses of *Ummat-e Islami* and self-sacrifice offers Iranian students a standpoint to relate to other oppressed people as freedom-loving Persians/Aryans who will liberate, in this case, the *friendly* Palestinian *Other* from the enemies of all Muslims of the world, the State of Israel. In fact, in the lesson, "Mashhad" (*SS3* 2012: 56–57), which is about the travels of the Hashemi family from Shiraz, where the Pars tribe historically settled, to Mashhad, the region where the Shrine of the Eighth Shi'i Imam Reza and Ferdowsi's tomb are located, Mr. Hashemi, who is represented as a staunch supporter of the "Imam's Path" and the Supreme Leader of Iran, tells his children, "God willing, there will be the day that all Muslims will unite to free Palestine and Al-Aqsa Mosque [located in Jerusalem] from the enemies of Islam" (*SS3* 2012: 56–57; *SS3* 2004: 57; *SS3* 2000: 75–76). In this construction of the *enemy-Other*, which includes an image of the replica of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Shrine of Imam Reza, a transnational religious space is dislocated, and through its replica in the Shrine of a Shi'i Imam (who was martyred by the ruthless Arab Caliphate in Iran), the ideal Iranian Self is *non-presently* constructed in light of the discourses of *Velayat-e Faqih*, *Ummat-e Islami*, the Palestinian Other, the racist Arab Other, martyrdom, leadership, and the Aryan migration.

The liberation of Palestine from the hands of the Zionist occupiers is considered as the most important goal of all Muslims (*SS8* 2014: 131). The Palestinian Other (as the symbol of the oppressed *friendly-external-Arab-Other*, the discourse of *mostaz'afin*) and the Jewish Zionist element within Israel (constructed as the *enemy-external-Other* of Iran, Palestine, and Islam) provide the Islamic Republic a framework to affirm its leadership position in the *Ummat-e Islami*. This framework legitimizes its symbolic claim to the city of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque as important sources of pan-Islamic identity for Iranians, albeit through the binary oppositions of Shi'i/non-Shi'i and Pars/non-Pars that assume a hierarchical separation between Iranians and the Palestinian and Jewish Zionist Others (*SS3* 2008: 56–57; *SS3* 2004: 57; *SS3* 2000: 75–76).

The state of Israel is depicted as a violent entity that has murdered many innocent Muslim individuals, whose death must be revenged (*SS6* 2004: 47; *SS6* 1999: 39). The curriculum promotes violence as the main option to bring about social justice for this oppressed group; however, it

also distinguishes between Muslim and non-Muslim Palestinian Others. The discourse of revenge is a patriarchal and sexist framework that reproduces contradictory relations between *internal-* and *external-Selves* and *-Others*. It espouses both hate and love for the Self and Other through the normalization of the discourses of peace and violence. The proposed revenge of the murdered Palestinian fathers by the *enemy-Other*, for example, *non-presently* promotes violence against those Iranian Zionist Jews who have immigrated to the State of Israel since the 1930s, undermining the message of love, equality, and peace promoted in the textbooks. At the same time, it is the love for the Self and *Muslim-friendly-external-Other* that should impel Iranians to practise violence against the *external-enemy-Other*. This love is contrasted to the violence that is imposed on the Palestinian Other, which is memorialized in light of a historical amnesia regarding the unequal conditions that the Baha'i and other ethnic "minority" groups have endured in Iran.

The curricula problematize the violent Israeli Other and the discourse of Zionism as the ideological justification behind the hatred that is directed against Palestinians. The unity of the Islamic world is perpetuated and affirmed in light of an image of the *enemy-external-Other* that relegates it to the category of *non-human*. In contrast, the Iranian Self is represented as revolutionary, caring, seeker of social justice, and promoter of the rights of the oppressed. Yet, the discourse of Loving Iran is turned on its head as the ideal Iranian who should love all Iranians is *non-presently* asked to harm the Iranian/Israeli *Other*. The *enemy-Other* in this sense lives *within* the Self, which is conceived through a collection of global/national segmented/hierarchical *Self-Other-Other*. Violence as an act of loving the exploited *external-friendly-Other* and arising from revenge towards *enemy-external/internal-Other* is normalized, becomes normative, to the extent to which criticizing and escaping it is perceived and viewed as an act of betraying the nation, the leadership, and Islam (see Giroux 2014: 96). The violence of the authoritarian hold of the ruling elite over the power structure is turned into and promoted in light of the discourse of humanitarianism that collapses civic responsibilities into militaristic duties (Giroux 2014).

The normalization of violence is framed in light of the idealization of the militarization of the Islamic Republic, which is promoted as an essential element of the modernization and progress of the country (*P1* 2015: 45; *P1* 2004: 49; *TG P1* 2012: 102; *P5* 2014: 34, 50–60; *SS8* 2014: 128–130). The curricula celebrate the military achievements of the armed forces and their role in defending Islam and Iran against foreign imperialist

forces and their internal and regional agents (*SS8* 2014: 128–130). The discourse of militarization, as a framework that both demonizes some foreign entities as the enemies of Iran's independence and idealizes the armed forces as a necessary requirement to protect Iranians and promote order in other parts of the world, is a *non-present trace* in the discourses of Loving Iran and development. The modernization of the armed forces is also a *non-present* element of the discourse of independence since a technologically advanced military force is represented as essential in ensuring the survival of the Islamic Republic.

However, the oppressive role of the military in the process of nation-building, especially in regards to ethnic "minorities," is not discussed. The historical memories and struggles of "minorities" are either ignored or only referenced by, for example, blaming *internal-enemy-Others*, such as the *Mojahedin-e-Khalq*, whose members allegedly burnt and destroyed villages in rural areas of Kurdistan and assassinated many important political figures of the Islamic revolution (*H8* 2004). Existing ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious conflicts are blamed on the efforts of the *external-enemies* of Islam and the revolution who take advantage of internal ethnic/religious differences to cause chaos (*Provincial Studies, Sistan & Baluchistan* 2012: 51). Ethnic "minorities" who populate the border territories of the country, nevertheless, are constructed as the first lines of defence against the enemies of Iran (see above, *P3* 2013: 80–81). The participation of the *'ashayir* as members of the paramilitary *Basij* during the Iran–Iraq War is also celebrated (*SS3* 2000: 14). However, the history of their domination through military conquest in light of the modernization policies since the early decades of the last century is silenced. In *Provincial Studies, Ilam* (2012: 60), for example, it is assumed that those *'ashayir* that were sedentarized had done so voluntarily and with the assistance of the central government. The settlement patterns and urbanization of this region is further narrated in light of uncritical approaches to the previous state's policy to control the boundaries of Iran and to establish strategic defensive positions in the region (*Provincial Studies, Ilam* 2012: 66). Ethnic and racial diversity is presented through de-historicized approaches to the militarization and modernization of Iran that perpetuate the idea that the process of nation-building has been non-violent (*SS3* 2004: 12–14; *SS4* 1999: 137). Although colonialism, Zionism, and imperialism and their consequences in Asia, Africa, and the Americas are criticized (*SS8* 2014; *G7* 2004; *G8* 2004: 73–75; *G8* 2002: 73–75), the imperialism of Iranian Self against its many internal and differential forms of Otherness is celebrated in light of a racialized and Shi'i-centric construction of Iran.

Conclusion

The *present* and *non-present* discourses that inform the narration of nation are multiple and contradictory, but in their discursive formation, offer a singular/homogenized history of Iran that is devoid of the voices of multiple *internal* and *external enemy/friendly-Others* and *-Selves*. Iranian school textbooks are politicized pedagogies (Giroux 2014) that normalize and inculcate a Pars/Aryan/Shiʿi-centric national identity. Iranian curricula do not provide a multicentric language of talking back (hooks 1989) to various forms of power in local or global contexts that is inclusive of the experiences and ways of knowing about the oppressed of the world. It silences the voices of dissent and anti-hegemonic standpoints as the bases for questioning nationalist/imperialist/racist ideologies and their destructive/violent consequences (hooks 1989). The curricula do not enable students to become reflective of and confront the internalized forms of racism and ethnicism that inform their lives and the structures of power within Iran and/or across the world.

Iranians school textbooks are racialized, Orientalist, Persian-centric, and Shiʿi-centric discursive formations that do not enable students to develop multicentred/oppositional critical consciousness. Iranian curriculm needs to be purged of its Persian-centric, Eurocentric, and Islamo-centric perceptions of *insiders/outsiders* through the inclusion of the voices of ordinary contemporary and historical forms of Otherness, which requires a rejection of the national Self, its dislocation as the centre of identity, and its replacement with a plurality of identities that reflect the histories and experiences of marginalized peoples from anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-nationalist perspectives. There is a need for a social biography approach to curriculum construction that highlights those points of divergence and convergence that frame the contradictory/dialectical sociopsychological–historical experiences of subaltern peoples (Burke Edmund and Yaghoubian 2006). As Gramsci points out, the production of critical consciousness should not be set in essentialist approaches to the role of differentiated Others in identity construction but in how the Other in its multiple forms intervenes in the production of the Self in dialectical, emancipatory, and oppressive ways (2000). Such a transformative and liberatory curriculum will enable students to critically know not only the Self through the historical memories of subaltern *Others* but also *Others* through the decentred Self (Gramsci 2000: 59).

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Justice Interrupted: The University and the Imam

Ardalan Rezamand

The University of Tehran was created during the reign of the first Pahlavi monarch, Reza Shah, in 1934. It promised to be the nation's premiere site for the acquisition and exchange of Western knowledge, providing the know-how necessary in authoritatively modernizing Iran while weakening the yoke of imperialism, a step toward justice and national self-assertion. As a Pahlavi project, conceived and directed by the Royal Court (*darbar*), University of Tehran was closely associated with the Iranian state. In addition to its function as the center of higher education, the University was used as a site to create, promote, and disseminate ideologies congruent with the Pahlavi's preferred national identity and modernity.

Concurrently, however, the University of Tehran became a recurring site of criticism of, and protest against, the state, with the voices of social justice and liberatory politics dominating student movements, up to the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a testament to the Pahlavi state's failure in providing social justice while modernizing the country. There was a qualitative difference between University of Tehran and Euro-American universities—namely, a visible absence of true academic "freedom" and "independence" from the state, hidden under the veneer of cooperation and national interest. As Iranian society witnessed greater political

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repression in the 1970s, conflict and tension manifested across universities in Iran. The dichotomy lay in the definition of university as a neutral and critical site of state policy in the Western sense that conflicted with the authoritarian-style enlightened monarchy that the Pahlavis tried to project.

The students welcomed the 1979 Revolution demanding an independent institution of higher knowledge, free of state influence. In the energized atmosphere of the Revolution, the promise of social justice through Islam seemed a reality. Ayatollah Khomeini's charisma and the promise of an equitable society ruled by *'adl* (justice) and *qest* (roughly: equal shares) under Islamic guidance had led many students to anticipate such a condition. By 1979, student councils, representative of the ideological plurality that existed on universities campuses, were created and voting took place for the selection of governing bodies that included students and faculty. For the first time since its inception, the University of Tehran seemed on the verge of breaking free from the arms of the state and following a free and independent path, with an egalitarian, civic-minded purpose. Instead, the university soon became an ideological and at times even physical battleground between various political factions of postrevolutionary Iran, in particular between students, in their plurality but united, versus the regime's forces and student supporters.

On March 20, 1980, Khomeini's televised New Year (*Nowruz*) speech initiated Iran's Cultural Revolution. With the mandate to cleanse Iranian society of Westoxication, those who answered the Imam's call helped purge the University of "undesirable" faculty, students, staff, and curricula. This article explores the impact of the Cultural Revolution on the University of Tehran, taking into account its historic development. I argue that the ideology, namely the Islamization of the University through elimination of Westoxication, employed in this Cultural Revolution as exhibited in the words, deeds, and decrees of the Khomeinists who would become vanguards of the new regime, was in fact a ruse, a calculated political action directed toward the elimination of Khomeinits' opponents from the University. Within the Islamists proponents of the Iranian Revolution (1979), the Khomeinists identified with the doctrine of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Supreme Jurist) and strove for the creation of an Islamic State modeled after Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas and under his leadership (Abrahamian 1993). Thus, the Cultural Revolution interrupted a process, initiated in particular by leftist university students, toward a democratic notion of social justice that challenged the Khomeinists absolutist vision for the University.

Founding of University of Tehran

Starting in the late 1920s, some civic associations in Iran that were also closely involved with the *darbar* pushed for the creation of a western-style modern university in Iran. Among these was the Society for National Heritage (SNH; *Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli*). The activities of this society demonstrate a legacy of cooperation between intellectuals and the government in various Iranian modernization programs initiated in the twentieth century. The goal of SNH was to use spatial imagery to create public (architectural) symbols in supporting a new national identity favoring Reza Shah's modernization plans. SNH was responsible for housing the emerging, modern institutions in architectural complexes with pre-Islamic motifs during the Pahlavi dynastic reign (Grigor 2004: 22). Several SNH members were responsible for founding University of Tehran. The Society's senior members were Cabinet Ministers under Reza Shah, but they maintained independence in their governmental activities from the Society. These members included the Royal Court Minister Abdolhossein Teymurtash; "the scholar Hasan Pirnia, who wrote *History of Ancient Iran* in four volumes"; Mohammad Ali Foroughi, who "was Reza Shah's first and last prime minister"; Justice and Finance Minister Ali-Akbar Davar; Isa Sadiq; and Ali Asghar Hekmat (Grigor 2004: 21). In the early 1930s, several members of this society approached Reza Shah with plans to create a modern university in the capital city.

The University of Tehran was founded in 1934, with the approval of Reza Shah and at the recommendation of Ali Asghar Hekmat. Hekmat was assigned with the task of creating the university with the aid of a committee consisting of Mohammad Ali Foroughi, Gholam-Hossein Rahnamah, Dr. Isa Sadiq, and Dr. Ali-Akbar Siyasi (Amir Faryar 2007: 30). Siyasi became the first elected President of the University and remained in that position for 12 years. The University itself was the conglomeration of several independent colleges that were created at the request of the Cabinet Ministries and preexisted the University, but then they were incorporated into the University as its faculties. These included the School of Political Science founded by Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1901, the College of Agriculture founded by Ministry of National Economy in 1902, elementary and secondary teachers training college called the Normal School for Boys founded by Ministry of Education in 1918, and finally, the School of Law established by Ministry of Justice in 1921.

Why Have a University?

The University of Tehran was to assume two functions—one was the practical function in furnishing skilled and modern labor as part of Iran's modernization program, while the other entailed an ideological function in creating a local intellectual base of support congruent with the Pahlavi regime's policies and orientation. Both functions envisioned students as automatons, cogs in the Pahlavi modernization machine, patriotic to the state, and void of independent and apposing political ideologies. In short, Reza Shah envisioned the University as an arm of the state for the acquisition of knowledge to help modernize the nation, *not* as a partner of the state in production, analysis, and critique of such knowledge. In short, the Pahlavi monarchy did not allow the University to have a voice in the direction of Iran's developmental policies. At a practical level then, the problem was the replication of a European site of higher education while suppressing the university's civic function (in Europe) as a site of critical analysis of the policies of state. This rift manifested itself in student movements that consistently challenged the Pahlavis approach to the University.

Reza Shah created a modern military and bureaucracy that employed hundreds of thousands of Iranians. This modern military and bureaucracy needed an education system to supply them with skilled labor. As a result, during Reza Shah's reign, there was an explosion in the number of modern schools and educators. The 1930s marked the beginning of mass modern education in Iran. According to Faghfoory,

> By 1936, the total number of schools rose to 4505 with an enrolment of 300,513 students, including 6495 girls. Educational expenses increased from Rls. 100,000 in 1925 to some three million by 1940. The government also sent students to Europe, and their total number exceeded 1651 by 1936. Meanwhile, many *maktabs* and *madreseh* were transformed into modern secular schools and some *vaqf* income was allocated to the establishment of modern educational centers. (1993: 301)

A function of the University was to create that local intellectual base of support. Mirsepassi argues that the clash of the all-encompassing effects of European modernity with the all-encompassing nature of Islam produced an uneven modernity (Mirsepassi 2000: 12). In particular, Mirsepassi states that the existence of modernity depends on having an "other," and in this case, the other was Islam (Mirsepassi 2000: 12). In addition, however, the lack of an institutionalized site for the production of modern state

ideology clearly contributed to the unevenness of this type of modernity. If modernization was projected from above (the state), then it needed a local site for the production and growth of its legitimizing discourse with the population; this site became a reality with the creation of the University of Tehran.

Two examples of collaboration between the state and University of Tehran support this view. During the reign of the first Pahlavi monarch, some university faculty participated in state-sponsored initiatives. According to Mohammed Reza Fashahi, Reza Shah intended to undermine the religious authority of the *Ulama*, replacing the *Ulama*'s projected Irano-Islamic identity with a new form of national mysticism. Doing so would create a national religion that was more conforming to modernizing reforms by undermining the ability of the *Ulama* to project an independent form of national identity based on a Shi'i epistemological worldview. A project for this purpose was implemented with the aid of two of the founding members (and lecturers) of University of Tehran: Mohammad Ali Foroughi and Ali Asghar Hekmat. Fashahi contends that Foroughi's ultimate plan was to replace Iran's official Shi'i religion with a form of Sufism, *Erfan-e monfa'el* or Passive Mysticism, a mixture of Islamic and Iranian Sufism and the teachings of masonry lodges. This form of Sufism even made its way into school and university texts and was promoted in other manners (Fashahi 2000: 168–169).

The second Pahlavi monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah, wanted to use Western science for economic and social development while practicing an authoritarian political model disguised under the veneer of pre-Islamic Persian kingship. This system was linked to Western political thought through the efforts of a specific group of intellectuals, some of whom were University of Tehran faculty. A member of the Department of Philosophy at University of Tehran at the time, Seyyed Hussein Nasr, was involved in this project. While at the University, Nasr used the philosophy of Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (1154–1191) to argue that the idea for *le despote éclaire* predated Voltaire and the "Enlightened" reign of Frederick the Second in Prussia, and it could be found in the twelfth century work of Suhrawardi titled *Hekmat al-Ishraq* (*Wisdom of Illumination*) (Fashahi 2000: 172).

Nasr was further involved in the creation of Tehran's *Anjoman-e Shahanshahi-ye Falsafi-ye Iran* (The Imperial Institute of Philosophy, est. 1975). This institute initiated a project in comparing thirteenth-century Irano-Islamic philosophy with Hegelian and Voltairean philosophy in order to promote the historical underpinnings for the Pahlavi monarchy.

More pertinent to this article, Nasr contends that in 1978, Empress Farah Pahlavi asked him to become the president of her "Special Office." Due to the Shah's illness, Farah and her "Special Office" became the *de facto* executive body in place of the Shah, and Farah directed the replacement and *paksazi* (purging) of many members of the *darbar*. It was through his position in this Office that Nasr was able to mediate between key *Ulama* and the Royal Court. Nasr claims that the majority of the *Ulama* did not favor an outright revolution but rather preferred reforms in Iran, and he, through his proximity and influence with the *darbar* and his long-term relations with many of the Ayatollah's in Iran, would act as a bridge for needed political reforms. In fact, he claims that the *Ulama* approached him with a plan for the creation of an Islamic Constitutional Monarchy (Nasr and Jahanbegloo 2006: 185–187).

Combined, the desire to train an educated middle class while orienting their ideological and national outlook to the Pahlavi's preferred model led to resistance in the form of student movements. In fact, *Dar al-Funun* (est. 1851), the precursor to the University of Tehran had already witnessed student protests against government polices as early as 1900 ('Alam 2009: 89). Events surrounding the Constitutional Revolution further compounded and gave some direction to student movements. The problem for the waning Qajars was to create a center of higher education while eliminating the free and independent discourse that is an extension of higher education. Furthermore, any discussion or discourse on freedom, liberty, and developmental needs to include the independent view of centers of higher education, a function of the Western university that was denied to the Iranian academy by the state.

The creation of the University of Tehran, mainly as an accomplice in the Pahlavi modernization plan, naturally led to the creation of an even more organized student movement. There were almost immediate student strikes in 1934 and again in 1936 about the cost of tuition, extra costs of royal "visits" to the university, and other "political issues of the day" ('Alam 2009: 89). The state's influence on the University hindered, not eliminated, student and faculty desire for a free and independent university. I will leave discussions of student's activities during this period to Roozbeh Safshekan (in this volume). In short, University of Tehran and its student body were engaged in the events surrounding Mosaddeq Premiership and oil nationalization in the early 1950s, as well as serving a site for recruitment of students by militant organizations in the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, leftist and Islamist critical and liberation theories of

the 1970s made an impact on the direction and desire of students leading up to the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

A function of university student organizations before the Revolution was to teach students about democratic procedures, such as weekly meetings, orderly discussions, and electing leaders and spokesmen. Most importantly, students were acquiring, through these organizations, the practice of democracy and how to disagree, debate, and develop policy without authoritarian pressures, a missing factor in Iranian politics. Student organizations, in Iran and abroad, such as the Confederation of Iranian Students–National Union (CISNU) helped fulfill this function among Iran's growing middle class. For example, CISNU members were not a monolithic block; they were not all liberals, or leftist or Islamists for that matter; they were nationalist pluralists engaged in a social movement demanding a growing voice in Iran's development and governance (Matin-asgari 2001). Change from autocracy to democracy involves, above all, a paradigm shift in the mentality of the ruling populace, from subject to citizen; this transformation requires both an ideological know-how and a technical–structural know-how. The university and student organizations such as the CISNU, during the Pahlavi era, provided both.

In short, there was a fundamentally divergent conception of the university's function between the creators and consumers of the institution. The Pahlavis envisioned the university as an extension of their modernization program, producing technically superb but politically inert experts for Iranian society. The students, on the other hand, envisioned the university as a forum for the acquisition of higher knowledge in becoming active participants in Iran's social, economic, and political development.

University of Tehran During and Following the Revolution

Following the repressive and malaise atmosphere of the University leading up to the Revolution, university students welcomed and widely participated in revolutionary protests and activities of 1978 and 1979. According to Sohrab Behnam, on February 11, 1979, protesting students liberated the first tank of the Imperial Army and moved it to University of Tehran's campus. Soon after, the militant-Muslim People's Mojahedin set up their headquarters in the Faculty of Sciences, while the Marxist-militant Fadai Guerrillas set up their headquarters in the Faculty of Engineering. Lagging behind these vanguards, Islamist students also created their own

organization, Imam's Committee, and set up headquarters in the University mosque (Behdad 1995: 193). More significantly, the University's soccer field became the territory of *Hezbollah* thugs and permanently changed the site into that of Tehran's Friday prayers (Behdad 1995: 194). In the ideologically charged atmosphere following the Revolution, anything even remotely Western, even sports, could be accused of leading to Iranian cultural decay and associated with Westoxication.

University of Tehran's student body was a microcosm of the coalition that overthrew the Pahlavi regime at the very site primarily created to train the Pahlavi regime's core civic personnel and to propagate state ideology. Thus, like the social coalition that disintegrated after the success of the Revolution and was subjected to the strict Islamic interpretation of state as promoted by Khomeini and the Islamic Republic Party, the campus of University of Tehran literally became an arena for conflicting views of the pro-National Front students, student supporters of the Mojahedin and Fadaiyan, as well as Islamist students forming the Islamic Association (*Anjoman-e Eslami*). By the spring of 1979, the campus was embroiled in political activity. There were cases of student supporters of militant opposition storing weapons in their university campus offices. The unrest and political activity at University of Tehran's campus, as well as other university campuses across Iran, caused great concern for the provisional government and escalated into riots and physical confrontations.

More significantly, while the Khomeinists were gaining political hegemony in state institutions and through the replacement of key civil personnel, they were losing the ideological battle within the universities where socialist, radical Muslim, and liberal views were popular and vocal (Behdad 1995: 193). For example, Mohammad Maleki, then University of Tehran President, commented that leftist organizations had gained control of university councils, and this enabled the Left to design the ideological orientation (socialism, Marxism) at the universities (Razavi 2009: 3). That is why by 1980, the Ayatollah and his followers regarded the current situation at universities as a major impediment to their consolidation of power.

The conflict between the Islamic Republic and the universities came from two different areas: epistemological and political. Epistemologically, as the modern institution of higher learning, the university challenged the traditional and clerical higher education system in Iran—embodied by Shi'i seminaries or *Howzeh-ye Elmiyyeh*. The university introduced a new source of knowledge in Iran. Politically, the universities were proven sites of social movements through student organizations, a voice of dissent to the

Pahlavis. In particular, the University had become, since the Revolution, a forum or public space for political debate and open criticism of the new regime (Razavi 2009: 2–3). The period between the Revolution and the Cultural Revolution, approximately 15 months, is significant, for it demonstrates how the political problem was resolved through an essentialization of the epistemological.

Before the initiation of the Cultural Revolution, many university students and faculty had organized for collective action, such as the *Sazman-e Melli-ye Daneshgahiyan-e Iran* (National Organization for University Professors). This organization issued a statement calling for the democratic management of and greater student participation in the university affairs (Mahdi 1999: 6). This organization and its demands were not unique to University of Tehran. Sharif University also experimented with joint student–faculty councils (*showra*) demanding greater participation in the affairs of the university. The fall issue of pro-regime magazine, *Daneshgah-e Enqelab* (September 23, 1981), alludes to these organizations, referring to the (democratically) elected committees that formed following the revolution ("Daneshgah az Enqelab" 1981: 29). This led to the creation of the *Showra-ye Hamahangi-ye Daneshgah* (Council for the Coordination of University), consisting of students, faculty, and university staff. The student composition of the Council, according to the article, was 15 members with a ratio of two pro-*Mojahedin-e Khalq* (*Daneshjooyeh Mosalman*) student representatives for every Leftist (*Chapi*) student representative ("Daneshgah az Enqelab" 1981: 29).

These organizations and associations were indicative of university students' desire for independent centers of higher education with a voice in Iran's future sociopolitical development. With a history of movements and opposition to preceding governments, and with active participation in the Revolution, students demanded and moved to create a university governing body reflective of this desire. University students, particularly those of the ideological Left, offered an alternative, egalitarian, democratic notion of social justice at the University Democratic and social justice tendencies of generations of university students since the foundation of University of Tehran reflects their yearning for having a voice in the developmental directions—both economic and sociopolitical—of the country. As is expected, their vision and politics were unacceptable to the homogenizing and hegemonic forces of Khomeinist Islamists.

I think beyond the ideological differences and political battles, and the core of the Khomeinists argument was that having an "independent"

and "free" University undermined the cohesiveness of an Islamic society striving to rid itself of Westoxication. According to Mehdi Salari, Dean of Research Tehran Polytechnic University, "the Imam of the people, in his Nowruz message of 1980 initiated the Cultural Revolution" and his student following "descended upon these centers [universities] of decay [*fesad*], conspiracy [*towte`eh*] and the watershed of satanic thoughts [*sarcheshmeh-ye andisheh-ye sheytani*], meaning the dependent university [*daneshgah-e vabasteh*]" (in Ahmadi et al. 1983: 10).

   This argument was sold in three stages in preparation for the Cultural Revolution. First, the university was increasingly viewed as chaotic and unorganized, a bastion of foreign ideology with contradictory views on the goals and directions of "the people" who used to respect the university and now viewed it as a "bastion of anti-revolutionaries" ("Daneshgah az Enqelab" 1981: 31). Second, the activities of student organizations were deemed irrelevant to university matters, purely political and associated with external political organizations. This allowed the regime justification to curtail activities of university student organizations and councils under the guise of return to public order. "On February 27, 1980, the Ministry of Interior issued an order banning 'activities of all political groups in universities' and demanding that 'cultural activities by students' must conform to the government and university regulations" (Mahdi 1999: 8). Finally, some curricula, administrative practices, and faculty were deemed to be un-Islamic, contrary to the ideals of the Revolution and the political doctrine of *Velayat-e Faqih* that has been the guiding principle of governance in postrevolutionary Iran. As such, the *Vali-ye Faqih* (The Supreme Jurist), who holds the highest office and is the *de facto* ruler of Iran, acquires and disseminates knowledge, and public policy, within a Shi'i epistemological framework that does not allow for what it deems to be alien theories of knowledge. Thus, concepts such as "free" and "independent" are applied within an *Ithna 'Ashari* (Twelver Shi'ism) knowledge base. According to this reasoning then, a university is free in an *Islamic* sense, a term that is conveniently ambiguous and expedient to political advantage. All sciences, natural and social, all curriculum and cultural orientations must reflect this Islamization, which the Khomeinists claimed to be the bedrock of the Revolution. This is not to suggest that there are qualitative differences between Islamic and Western sciences, rather a desire to add a level of political control through Islamization, again vaguely defined, to university curricula. After the passing of the referendum for an Islamic Republic

(April 1, 1979) and the ratification of the Constitution that upheld the principle of *Velayat-e Faqih* (December 3, 1979), Imam Khomeini and his supporters initiated the Cultural Revolution in advancing their hegemonic position over the Iranian university.

The Cultural Revolution

Khomeini initiated the Cultural Revolution in his *Nowruz* (Persian New Year) message on March 21, 1980. He stressed the necessity for the creation of an "Islamic Revolution in all of Iran's universities" for the purpose of "cleansing Eastern and Western lecturers" and "the conversion of the university into a healthy environment for the teaching of Islamic sciences" (Khomeini quoted in Farasatkhah 2008: 527). He continued, "My dear students, you must strive in saving yourself from Westoxication and find what has been lost (within you). The 'East' (*mashreq*) has lost its indigenous culture and you who want to be free and independent must resist [Westoxication]" (Khomeini quoted in Farasatkhah 2008: 527). Khomeini explicitly called for the Islamization of education: "Colonial education must be uprooted; the Islamic university must be instituted" (Khomeini quoted in Behdad 1995: 194).

The play on words, using floating signifiers, helped Khoemini in this endeavor: the meaning of "free" and "independent" from the Imam's perspective meant being independent from Westoxication or Western cultural and political influences. This meaning is qualitatively different from the meaning of "independent" as free from outside interference (as in independence of university and academic freedom). Thus, an Islamic concept of "independent" was superimposed on the University, interrupting and reversing the students' calls for a "free" and "independent" institution on par with Euro-American universities.

The views of key figures in the regime supported this Islamic conception of university. Khomeini, as the leader of the Revolution, initiated the criticism of Iranian universities: "This kind of university will make us dependent on the foreigners ... We want university lecturers to favour neither the West nor the East, neither Ataturk, nor Taqizadeh" (Khomeini quoted in Razavi 2009: 3). Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, then Chairman of Majles, stated that he was not opposed to student engagement in political activity; however, centers for education should have not been converted into political headquarters: "Now that we have initiated the

Cultural Revolution, the curriculum itself needs to be changed, students need to be chosen based on new conditions, and lecturers must show sufficient qualities for teaching" (Rafsanjani quoted in Farasatkhah 2008: 533). Ali Khamanei, Iran's current Supreme Leader, stated, "the interests of the United States are represented by loyal elements in Kurdistan, at the universities, and in the Bazaar," adding, "the enemies of this revolution have taken refuge in the universities and [are] against the people of Iran and are using sticks, rocks, and bullets to silence the people" (Khamenei quoted in Farasatkhah 2008: 532).

Ironically, key figures in Iran's current opposition also supported the radical reorientation of Iranian universities in the Cultural Revolution, effectively accepting *gharbzadegi*'s tenets and favoring the Islamization of education. Abdolkarim Soroush describes his efforts in the Cultural Revolution:

> Branches of knowledge, which are considered false in nature, not real knowledge, these we eliminated from the university. Those things [subjects] that are not influential to the future needs of this Revolution, and were in fact created through the ill will of certain degree-holders in Iran, who are both satisfied with themselves and are expectant of the people of this nation, we put those subjects aside, and based on our understanding of Islam, we strived to promote its beneficial knowledge in the universities. (Soroush quoted in Farasatkhah 2008: 563)

Similarly, Mir Hossein Mousavi, the 2009 presidential candidate who is now under house arrest following the Green Movement, held similar views on universities: "As a citizen of the Islamic Republic, I believe that universities are not a place for *motakhasses* [specialist] but are a place for a *maktabi* [religious student] person who at the same time is learning a profession" (Mousavi quoted in Razavi 2009: 4).

In the spring of 1980, the universities were ordered closed, and the Committee for the Cultural Revolution (later renamed Supreme Council for Cultural Revolution [SCCR]) was formed on June 12, 1980 on Imam's orders. The SCCR was tasked to focus its activities on a number of issues in dealing with the affairs of the universities: "Training professors and selection of noble individuals for lecturing in universities; selection of students; Islamization of the environment of universities and changing the educational programs of universities aimed at rendering services to the nation" (Supreme Council 2016).

The Impact of the Cultural Revolution
on the University

Following orders for the closure of universities in the spring of 1980, many university students refused to leave and had to be forcibly removed from the campus. Thirty-one days after Khomeini's New Year's call for the Cultural Revolution, members of Revolutionary Guards and Revolutionary Committees surrounded University of Tehran. The situation quickly deteriorated into protests and riots between the Islamic and students bastioned at the University. According to *Keyhan* newspaper, over 500 people were injured and five were killed (Farasatkhah 2008: 531). Following the riots, the university was ordered closed in less than a week. This scenario was simultaneously repeated in universities and higher education institutes across the country. A small number of clerics criticized the manner in which force was used to instill culture. Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari stated, "the methods used in a cultural revolution should not fall outside of the meaning of the word 'culture' using slogans and protests" (Farasatkhah 2008: 532). The ordering of the university closures and the appointment of the SCCR to implement changes at the university was done without consultation with university directors. The Board of Trustees (*Hey`at-e* Omana) at the University of Tehran resigned in protest (Farasatkhah 2008: 520). The fate of the Iranian universities now rested exclusively with the SCCR.

As mentioned, since the creation of University of Tehran, successive Iranian governments have desired or achieved a more vocal role for themselves in the affairs of the University based on their ideological perspectives. The Islamic Republic inherited this mentality and wasted little time in the Islamization of education in Iran (Peyvandi 1999: 732). The transition to a more Islamized education had to be abrupt in nature because the university students actively participated in the Revolution, demanding ideological freedom at the universities in their victory. The implementation of the Cultural Revolution and the purging of students and faculty reflect this abrupt transition. The Islamic Republic's elite feared the existence of an independent university and dictated the state ideology upon universities through the Islamization of education. But what was Islamic education and how could it be taught in subjects such as biology, mathematics, and so on?

One way to Islamize education at the university was to enforce religious studies. The state hoped to absorb the new generation born in the 1970s and after into its political and cultural system in this manner (Razavi 2009:

8). The problem was, there were "not many religious studies lecturers … available" (Razavi 2009: 6). The Cultural Revolution allowed the state to depoliticize the university and overtly impose state ideology on students, lecturers, and the curriculum (Behdad 1995: 211). Thus, the Cultural Revolution was concerned with the elimination of those who did not share the state ideology (*digarandishan*) and only superficially engaged with the Islamization of education: University of Tehran continued as a site for the promotion of state ideology and suppression of ideas of democracy and social justice, a function it had fulfilled since its inception in 1935. The Cultural Revolution was effective, however, in the closure of many centers of higher education deemed un-Islamic, the purging of thousands of students and faculty from universities, the reformulation of curriculum in accordance to the state ideological positions, and the neutralizing of political activity at universities between 1984 and 1997 (Razavi 2009: 1).

Iranian universities remained completely closed during the 1981–1982 and 1982–1983 academic years and partially closed during the 1983–1984 academic year. All universities were formally opened for the 1984–1985 academic year (Farasatkhah 2008: 535). When universities opened in September 1984, they were significantly different in content and composition. One of the changes to the composition of postsecondary education in Iran as a result of the Cultural Revolution was the complete closure of 98 postsecondary institutes whose curriculum consisted of Western Fine Arts such as the ballet or classical music. In addition, 21 centers for the training of technical instructors and polytechnic institutes were shut down and their faculty purged. Quantitatively speaking, before the Cultural Revolution, Iran had 26 universities and 218 institutes for higher education, while 21 universities and 93 institutes for higher education remained in operation after the Cultural Revolution. This is a decrease of 19 % in universities and 57 % in higher education institutes. In addition, 100 % of private colleges and centers of higher education were outlawed and closed down by orders of the SCCR (Farasatkhah 2008: 536). The University of Tehran purges at the time of the Cultural Revolution included the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences as well as the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tehran (Farasatkhah 2008: 554).

At the time of the closures, 175 thousand students were enrolled in Iranian universities; only 117 thousand were accepted when the universities reopened (Farasatkhah 2008: 536). This is a reduction of 33 % in total attendance. However, once the number of new students reaching the age of university is factored in and population growth taken into account, the

actual impact to higher education becomes greater. Even more devastating is the fact that based on the last five-year Pahlavi economic plan regarding the need for skilled labor, the class of 1984 was projected to be between 300,000 and 450,000 students, which is considerably higher than the 175,000 allowed to enroll (Farasatkhah 2008: 536).

In addition to forced retirement or expulsion of faculty deemed "non-Islamic," the SCCR made efforts at reorienting higher education. An important example of this reorientation, however, can be observed in the first regulation created regarding the goals and responsibilities of Iran's Department of Education since the 1979 Revolution. Article One of this new regulation, approved by the SCCR in 1986, reads:

> The role of education in the strengthening of beliefs and ethics of the students by using the method of teaching the history, foundations, and meaning of Islam based on the Twelver Shi'i tenets, as well as, the growth of a political vision based on the realities of *Velayat-e Faqih* and spiritual development which fosters reliance on God. As well, requirement of loyalty to Iranian Constitution and *Velayat-e Faqih* are prerequisites for employment in the Department of Education. (SCCR statement quoted in Peyvandi 1999: 734)

After Khomeini's death in 1989, the SCCR worked in conjunction with Khamanei and other political conservatives to maintain their dominance in the universities. Following the Iran–Iraq war, the SCCR approved and implemented legislation passed by the Majles requiring 40 % of new university students be children of martyrs of the wars, both with Iraq and the conflict with the short-lived Republic of Kurdistan, as well as veterans of these two conflicts and members of various religious organizations (Behdad 1995: 211).

In 1992, the hard-line cleric Ayatollah Jannati stated that representatives of the Supreme Leader must be directly involved in the affairs of the university and student associations must be under the direction of the clergy. The SCCR voted on changing regulations in selection of university councils, which effectively barred students from participation in university councils (Razavi 2009: 9). Four years later, the Fifth Majles (1996–2000) reintroduced allotment of the Basiji militias for university entrance and implemented it through the SCCR. The rationale was that the children of war veteran Basijis observed more traditional Islamic values. Their presence on university campuses added a more visible Islamic element, from attire to ideology, helping Islamize the atmosphere at the university

(Razavi 2009: 10). In short, through manipulation of curriculum, the purging of nonconformist *digharandishan*, and structural challenges and quotas, the university had become much more "dependent" (*vabasteh*) on the state than any time before the Revolution. The goal of the Cultural Revolution, as stated by its practitioners and political supporters, was the creation of a "free" and "independent" university, a goal that is now further than before from realization.

In a 2002 interview, Mohammad Maleki, the last President of University of Tehran before the Cultural Revolution, contends that in the elections of *Showra-ye Hamahangi-ye Daneshgah* (Council for the Coordination of University), "all the candidates were from the radical-Muslim Mojahedin and Marxist Fadaiyan, an unacceptable situation for the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) that had [only] come into existence four days following the Revolution…. The Khomeinists, led by IRP Secretariat Hassan Ayat, decided to shut down the university (Maleki 2002:648)." According to Maleki, "the primary motivation of the Cultural Revolution was the expression of a desire towards [political] power, not a cultural act but a political assault (Maleki 2002:651)."

Conclusions

The University of Tehran was created in close association with the Pahlavi monarchy in supplementing its modernization program. The Pahlavis envisioned an institution on par with the best European universities in terms of educational quality, with a distinctly modern–secular *Persian* quality. This vision of the university conflicted with Iran's growing middle class, many of whom were now university educated. The dissatisfaction of students with this conflicting vision manifested in emerging student organizations, beginning in the 1930s, that demanded academic freedom and the voice of social justice in Iran's authoritative development. In the decades preceding the 1979 Iranian Revolution, university student organizations represented a sustained voice of opposition to the authoritarian and oppressive Pahlavi politics. These organizations provided students with the basic know-how of democratic procedures but under conditions that denied their social justice orientation. The University was a major player in the Revolution and students actively participated in strikes, protests, and even confrontation with the regime's security forces.

Following the Revolution, which brought down the Pahlavi monarchy with the promise of a new era of social justice in Iran, the university witnessed a period (about 15 months) of increased freedom and independence, alongside increased politicization. Even in the most turbulent days following the Revolution and against a plurality of ideological factionalism, university students democratically elected governing councils in determining the future of the university and by extension having a greater say in the future of Iran's sociopolitical development. Unfortunately, this arrangement was politically unacceptable to Khomeinist elements within the new regime. Thus, on their hegemonic trajectory, the Khomeinists purged Iranian institutions of higher education of ideas, persons, and processes deemed unacceptable to the newly established epistemological umbrella informed by Shi'i principles, a ruse used in justifying a political assault on the university. The methods employed by the Khomeinists and followed through by the revolutionary state in co-opting the University, through the guise of a Cultural Revolution, represent a miscarriage of social justice. In the ensuing historic narrative, this purge was called the Cultural Revolution and the "unacceptable" was called the Westoxicated (*gharbzadeh*). The outcome, contrary to the promises of freedom and independence, was greater dependence of the university on the state than had existed during the Pahlavi monarchy.

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Ethical–Political Praxis: Social Justice and the Resistant Subject in Iran

Shokoufeh Sakhi

> Justice well ordered begins with the other.
> Emanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers,* 56
> Human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings.
> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* 176.

The act of balancing two sides of a scale has been the universal depiction of justice: justice as an equalizing act. To receive what one is due, whether punishment or reward. A process of redeeming the wronged past, or achieving an ideal state of equality in some future. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was one attempt at articulation of justice and equality to strive for in the world left to us after the two World Wars. Social justice, the subject essayed in the present book, derives from both the concept of justice and that of rights, and that derivation affects the development of the theory and practice of social justice itself.

Leaning on a conception of the human subject and its rights as natural and inalienable, the ethos of human rights institutes a universalized conception of the human subject as an in-itself rightful individual. The human subject, hence, appears as a potentially rightful human being who is simultaneously a potential victim, one whose rights may be violated. Formally

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protected and guaranteed by a network of international political and legal treaties, those excluded from their national political and cultural space find in the human rights paradigm an alternative ethos, logos, and language through which to (re)assert themselves. But these *others* can only reenter this public space as victim-subjects.

For the *others-of-the-Islamic state* in the post-1979 Iran, those who were and those who are routinely excluded from the Iranian public sphere, the human rights paradigm has offered a point of reference in their struggle for justice. By adopting the logos of human rights and appealing to the legal infrastructure of international institutions, the excluded Iranians have created a detour that accesses their native public space in spite of the state's active denials and violent responses to their struggle.

With one failed Revolution in our recent past and with the persistence of injustice within Iranian social and power relations, a palpable need (and desire) for critically engaging notions of democratic relations, social justice, and human subjectivity has emerged among Iranian thinkers. Responding to this need, my task in this chapter is to essay a critical review of some of the advantages and disadvantages of the human rights paradigm of the Iranian struggle for social justice through an interrogation of the *jonbesh-e edalatkhahi*, the justice-seeking movement, as one of its manifestations.

In the first part of the chapter, I intend to demonstrate the presence of resistant subjectivity of the excluded other of the Islamic state of Iran and discuss the significant role of the human rights paradigm in the advancement of the struggles of the subaltern sections of the Iranians. I do this, after a brief note on terminology, by first contextualizing the development of the justice-seeking movement in Iran and in the Diaspora, within and in response to the formation of the Islamic state as a totalizing state. I follow this development from the activities of the family members of executed/disappeared political prisoners during the 1980s through the event of the International People's Tribunal of Iran in 2012 at The Hague (the Iran Tribunal) (Iran Tribunal 2014).

In the second part, through an interrogation of the Iran Tribunal witnesses' acts and speeches as rendered within the human rights paradigm, I illustrate the reification of the struggling subject within his/her objective experience of victimization. Finally, benefiting here and throughout from construal of Hannah Arendt's conception of human rights as a political project and Emmanuel Levinas's emphasis on subjectivity as sociality (Levinas 1998a; 1998b), I conclude with a claim for the necessity and possibility of a praxis of social justice understood as a political project of resistant subjects oriented through an "ethics of the other."

A Note on Terminology

I make a distinction between a "total state" and "totalizing state." A total state would destroy all that is other than itself, a process I refer to as "saming." The emphasis in the differentiation here is upon the fact that while the complete closure of the total state is its *systematic impetus*, such states are never (so far) completely successful, never *total*. There is a residue, of greater or lesser extent, that *successfully resists* such saming. There are then no total states but only states with a totalizing impetus. This process of totalizing, of inclusion and exclusion, of absorption and destruction, is born, in the case of modern Iran, with the Islamic Republic.

Part One: The Survival of the Totalizing State and the Resistance of Its Excluded Other

Any hope of grasping the significance of the formation and development of the Iranian *jonbesh-e edalatkhahi*, or the "justice-seeking movement," requires consideration of the historical context of the Islamic state and its relation to its others during the 1980s, especially in the pivotal year of 1988.

1988: The Survival of a Totalizing State

Let me start with a brief review of the historical situation in 1988. In line with Hannah Arendt's rejection of the view that monstrous people are a prerequisite to monstrosity against others, the massacre of political prisoners in 1988 was neither a hateful nor a sadistic bloodthirsty move on Khomeini's part, the Committee he put in charge of the massacre, or the executioners. Rather, the monstrosity was the *response*, not of an evil but of a totalizing state *to* its others and *for* its own survival; it was a response within the confines of the new state's religious ideological logos. There are three intertwined currents to which the stability of the new regime of power was closely tied in its first decade: the unifying hegemony of Khomeini's presence, a controlled victorious continuation of the war with Iraq, and exclusion of their revolutionary other, many of whom were by then contained within prison walls.

By early 1988, the war with Iraq was going sour, Khomeini's health was declining, and, even after seven years of executions and forced conversions, there were still thousands of resistant others—dissidents and social justice activists—confined in prisons awaiting eventual release. Many were kept

captive years after serving their sentences, and their numbers were growing. The survival of resistant prisoners presented an increasing dilemma to the regime: to release these prisoners as they were would infuse the society with fresh blood, counteracting the regime's decade long efforts to drain it. With Khomeini's death in sight, the survival of the Islamic regime of *Velayat-e Faqih* (the Shi'i Guardianship of the Supreme Jurist) was interwoven with its response to its two "enemies": Iraq, the "other from without," and the opposition, the "other from within."

The Two Survivalist Responses: Capitulation Without, Massacre Within

With the new ruling power came new language. *Nezam* (system), *estehaleh* (transformation), and *paksazi* (cleansing) were and are functional concepts for two reasons. First, they illustrate the Islamic state's self-articulation; they signify the new state's relation to itself and its others. Second, they euphemize and sanction the survival needs of a totalizing state. The resistant response of the excluded was formed and developed in the context of such terminological innovations.

Capitulation to the Enemy from Without

On 18 July 1988, losing on the war front to its other from without, the Iranian state signed the UN Resolution 598. Admitting the setback, Khomeini famously announced on 20 July 1988: "I drink the hemlock and accept the resolution" (Khomeini 2008). Though this is the most remembered phrase from his two-hour live televised address, in it, he also articulated the response of a religio-ideological totalizing system to its others. He reiterated the objectives of the war as neither "geographical nor of boundaries, but of ideas and conscience" (Khomeini 2008) and attempted to convince the populace that this submission, giving up on the principle of "victory or martyrdom," was unequivocally necessary for the survival of "the *nezam* (system), the country and the Revolution" (Khomeini 2008). As he said:

> … concerning the acceptance of the Resolution, which is indeed a bitter and unpleasant matter for all, especially for me; until a few days ago I believed our previous mode of defense and positions in the war were in the interest of the system, the country, and the Revolution; however, owing to the recent events and new factors, which I will presently refrain from mentioning with

the hope that God will make them clear in the future … *I consider acceptance of the resolution as a move in the interest of the revolution and the nezam.* (Khomeini 2008; emphasis added)

Nezam, the preferred self-identifying term used by Khomeini and the Iranian ruling class when referring to the post-1979 state, signifies an immanent intentionality of the Islamic state. *Nezam* in Persian is a polysomic term denoting "the system," "order," and "discipline." It is an apt signifier of the totalizing trajectory of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rather than a totality, a closed and totalized state, the Islamic state as a *nezam* or a system survives through actively redefining itself, its other, and their relationship.

Massacre of the Enemy Within

In that long address of 20 July 1988, Khomeini most of all attempted to reinstate the *survival* of the *system* invested under his tutelage, as the *meaning* of the Revolution, as the *meaning* for the continuation of the war beyond regaining territories, and now as the *meaning* for ending it. The end of war, he warned, meant open space—space for thinking, questioning, and growing expectations—and therefore constituted a "threat of young minds to fall into the liberal, nationalist, leftist, and Mojahedin's traps" (Khomeini 2008). The survival of the system, he underscored, required a deliberate and active exclusionary process. He warned against the possibility of the entrance of the *nezam*'s others into the public space. These others, he defined, were those who did not identify with and were not samed within the state's objectives and war: "those derelict from their duty to the war, for any reasons, who withheld their lives, property, children, and others from the flame of the events" (Khomeini 2008). Here Khomeini expresses the necessities of a totalizing system, that is, a constant dynamics of inclusion–exclusion, *estehaleh* (transformation, metamorphosis, atrophy, or reduction), and *paksazi* (cleansing or purging), a process of saming and purging its continuously and newly formed others. Note that as a concept in Shi'i jurisprudence, *estehaleh* is defined as transformation of an entity's being and identity through a process of absorption into something else (see Makarem Shirazi 2010; 2016). This usage corresponds to the meaning of the concept of "saming" I use here. Khomeini stated:

I emphasize again, to all and the people in charge, to separate these people [dissidents] from the God's soldiers and the true believers; and do not allow these shortsighted, useless claimants enter the public scene.

> Whether I live or die, my testament to you is that I shall not allow the Revolution to fall into the hands of the outsiders. (Khomeini 2008)

By then, after eight years of naked violent saming–purging of the public space of any other-than-Khomeini's branch of the 1979 revolutionary population, the bulk of active and *openly* political opposition, the underground notwithstanding, was either in exile or behind prison walls. Like the *nezam*'s capitulation in the war, its saming–purging response to its other from within had begun long before the summer of 1988.

On 7 January 1988, Speaker of the Judicial Supreme Council (*Showra-ye 'Ali-ye Qaza'i*) Morteza Moqtada'i announced: "[N]o political prisoner who still maintains his/her political views, whose time in prison has effected no change in their attitude, will be released" ("*Beh yari zendaniyan*" 1988: 9). He rebuked the families of the prisoners: "[I]nstead of writing letters and statements, appealing to here and there, use your visiting time to convince your children to truly convert and gain the trust of prison officials" ("*Be yari zendaniyan*" 1988: 9).

In July, while the government was considering the ceasefire with Iraq, Khomeini issued an undated order to purge prisons of prisoners who refused to capitulate. In two letters, one dealing with leftist prisoners and the other with the radical-Muslim *Mojahedin-e Khalq* prisoners, he gave a final order to resolve the question of imprisoned political opposition. By the end of July, all political prisoners' visits were canceled indefinitely and the prisoners' television sets, radios, and newspapers were confiscated. Prisoners lost access to health clinics, yard hours, and letters—anything within the regime's control with potential for contacting the world, be it internal or external. During those few months and wrapped in complete secrecy, special committees composed of representatives from the Ministry of Intelligence (*Vezarat-e Ettela'at*), the Prosecutor's Office (*Daftar-e Dadsetani*), and the Revolutionary Court (*Dadgah-e Enqelab*) were commissioned by Khomeini to review all prisoners' files in every city (Mohajer 2001: 336–342).

Rather than a mad, violent, and spontaneous reaction, the prisoner massacre of 1988 was a carefully timed, religiously sanctioned, and meticulously implemented project—a full-fledged response for the survival of the *nezam*, the totalizing Islamic state. Based on a religious dogma (sanctioning: execution of *moharebs*, those suspected of taking arms against the Islamic state; execution of male *mortads*, Muslim apostates; and the "torturing to death" of female *mortads*) and corresponding to the order's

totalizing logic, the committee was to determine whether a prisoner's mind and heart were enemies of God and the Islamic state, or if they would truly convert and prove their loyalty-unto-death to the regime. These procedures came to a halt by mid-October, leaving behind only a couple of hundred resistant prisoners. By the end of this period, approximately 5000 political prisoners had been executed and many more thousands were broken or neutralized, both inside and outside the prisons (Montazeri 2000: 625–640; Abrahamian 1999: 209–228; IHRDC 2009). The objective was the annihilation of the regime's revolutionary other, whether actual or potential, rendering them "true converts" or annihilating them as completely as possible under the international conditions afforded by the ceasefire (Montazeri 2000: 1217). The executions of the internal other and capitulation to the external other were born as fraternal twins.

Jonbesh-e Edalatkhahi: A Response to the 1988 Massacre

It was at this historical juncture, under the power of the imposed hegemony of the totalizing Islamic state, that the Iranian justice-seeking movement was born in that summer of 1988 in response to the massacre of political prisoners.

In October 1988, those who survived the massacre were allowed to write a letter to their parents informing them of the date their visits could be resumed. Parents of the executed received a call notifying them of the day and the place they could pick up their dead children's belongings. Along with a few random pieces of clothes or a bag (sometimes not even their son's or daughter's own), these parents received a stern warning not to seek any information about the reasons for the retrial and execution of their children, nor to look for their wills or ask for the location of their burial sites. They were warned against organizing any mourning ceremonies or making any public appeals (Justice for Iran 2015: 46). Many families were so frightened or traumatized that they endured this experience privately, but there were many others who did not abide this admonition (IHRDC 2009: 49–54). During this same period, family members discovered fresh mass graves at Khavaran, a cemetery in Tehran's eastern outskirts, designated for burying executed atheist men and women (Mohajer 2008: 119). Since then, Khavaran has become reference site for the grassroots movement for justice.

Family Members and the Right to Truth and Justice

Due to the juridico-political exclusion of the "counter-revolutionaries"—those suspected of supporting the previous regime and all other members of the revolutionary population who fell outside of Khomeini's camp—parents of political prisoners during the 1980s had always been left to their own devices when it came to acting on behalf of their imprisoned children. Act they did, and still do.

Up to the 1988 massacre, prisoners' families, individually or collectively, indefatigably appealed to different national and international authorities and to other influential figures in order to ease their children's living conditions and to negotiate their sentences, their freedom, and other such issues. The general lockdown in 1988 and the ensuing massacre, however, qualitatively changed the language and the nature of their advocacy.

Like those they represented, the family members were and are one of the *nezam*'s excluded-others with no civic or public rights. The political–civil subaltern position forced upon them did not, however, represent any lack of subjectivity on their part. Rather, they engaged their agency by supporting their children through appealing to the officials, spreading the news, for example, about the prison conditions and executions among the exiled political opposition as well as the international institutions (Galindo Pohl 1989: 7; Mohajer 2001: 342–345).

The letter of 26 December 1988, written by a group of the family members and addressed to Minister of Justice Hassan Habibi (Behkish 2005), represents the birth of the justice-seeking movement. It is here that, for the first time, they formally question the legality and legitimacy of the state's judicial procedures, the verdict, and the method of its implementation that entailed the execution and disappearance of their children, even the Judiciary's adherence to its own Constitution: "We ask: if these were lawful acts why do the executions occur in secrecy? … We ask: which article of the Constitution has permitted or permits now secret trials with no chance for the prisoners to defend themselves? … We ask: which law permits mass execution?" (cited in Behkish 2005).

This letter makes a series of demands: it emphasizes the right of family members to truth and justice and calls for government accountability; it demands that the state respect the rights of the disappeared and their families; it inquires about the "the date, the length of time spent reviewing each one of the victims' files, the reasons for the retrial, and the place of their re-trial" (cited in Behkish 2005). It also demands that the

Minister of Justice reveal the exact number, names, and burial places of all of the executed. Further, the letter challenges the officials to allow an international body to act as arbitrator. Finally, invoking both the Iranian Constitution and the Universal Human Rights Declaration, the letter calls for the indictment of the perpetrators: "Since this [massacre] is an open violation of the Islamic Republic's Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we accuse those responsible for committing crime[s against humanity] and demand their prosecution in a public tribunal" (cited in Behkish 2005). A copy of the letter was sent to then Secretary-General of the United Nations Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, other national and international offices, as well as to human rights NGOs.

Since then, all the letters and statements of these families addressing different institutions and officials, ranging from Tehran's Office of the Mayor, to the Parliament (*Majles*), state news agencies, the Iranian President, and international institutions, have reasserted the right of the family members of the disappeared/executed prisoners to justice and truth about the circumstances surrounding their loved ones' retrial, execution, and place of burial, as well as the families' right to mourning and memorialization (Mohajer 2009).

The Iranian Judicial Branch has yet to give an official response to any of these demands or take responsibility for the lives and deaths of the thousands of men and women who passed through the doors of the prisons during the 1980s. Instead, the constant response of the *nezam* has consisted of nothing more than state violence (see Iran Tribunal 2016). Nonetheless, what is central here is not so much the consequences of these efforts, which, it is true, bore little or no immediate practical effects. What is of paramount importance is the very act of making such claims.

In fact, the central point of this chapter is to highlight the fact that, in the absence of any civil or legal legitimacy, the persistent activities of these family members evince their active rejection of the dismissal of their lived experience, which itself is the expansion of the claims to humanity they are representing. Regardless of the silence and violence they receive at the hands of the authorities, the family members' activities are the manifestations of their subjective–objective existence, manifestations and claims that transcend their victimization. Rather than voiceless victim-subjects, their unanswered letters, calls for justice, and continuous public and private illegal memorialization are but their agency in action: they address the power from the stance of their right to exist and be recognized as fully constituted objective and subjective beings.

Taking on the paradigm of human rights and its language, *a grassroots movement for justice, embodied in the families' lived experience, came to life.* This new movement found its spatial dimension in Khavaran, the leftists' cemetery in Tehran, a place to protect and a place that protects an excluded history and ongoing (present) experience (Behkish 2014). Out of this localized lived experience formed the Mothers of Khavaran: an organic entity without formal organization, growing from the suffering of the families, their resistance, and their desire for justice (Mohajer 2008).

Jonbesh-e edalatkhahi, the justice-seeking movement, is then the response of the Islamic Republic's revolutionary other to the *nezam*'s brutal exclusion from the public space and from the body of Iranian history. No matter how marginal, it is a process of will formation of a forced subaltern but resistant subjectivity by means other than what is possible within the (Gramscian) hegemony of the Islamic state. Excluded from the hegemonic order of the *nezam*, the movement articulates its resistance and vocalizes its subjectivity through taking up the language of a global alternative hegemony by adopting the human rights paradigm. The extraterritorial characteristic of this movement, however, is not limited to its logos within which it expresses its objective experience; the stubborn persistence of the movement is nourished by the large exodus of the Iranian Islamic state's others around the world. Its development relies on both the presence of a resistant other within the country and a resistant Iranian body within the Diaspora.

A Movement for Justice: Diaspora

In the absence of internal institutional avenues of redress, the bulk of the tasks of documentation and pursuance of truth and justice has fallen on Iranians living in exile, especially the former political prisoners. Their personal accounts of interrogation, torture, and life in prisons during the 1980s, and specifically the details of the 1988 massacre, buttressed the claims of the family members in Iran as well as intellectuals, political dissidents, and human rights activists in exile.

As with any grassroots movement, the Iranian justice-seeking movement is not homogenous or unified. Having its roots in the lived experiences of a large body of Iranians, one that transcends party lines, and political, ideological, and even religious divisions, the movement for justice has been continuously growing within and in the Diaspora. Although this encompassing character is mostly due to the *nezam*'s totalizing

trajectory and its nondiscriminatory application of torture and execution rather than the solidarity among the opposition, the movement has been growing sporadically, multidirectionally, controversially, and at times even antagonistically.

The indictment of the Islamic Republic of Iran for committing Crimes against Humanity during the 1980s has been one common objective among all the incongruent rivulets of the justice-seeking movement. Within the framework of international criminal laws and the human rights conventions, finding a party guilty of committing crime against humanity gives the highest vindication to the survivors of the crimes committed. As an International People's Tribunal, the Iran Tribunal of 2012–2013 achieved this objective in accordance with the international humanitarian conventions and laws, even though its verdict has not been and will not be officially adjudicated. Its procedures and outcomes offer an arena within which to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the human rights paradigm and the notion of justice it entails with regard to human subjectivity.

Part Two: The Resistant Subjectivity and the Praxis of Justice

Even if the political prisoners of the 1980s were representatives of a variety of the political, religious, and ethnic sections of Iranian society who were forcefully excluded from the public space, even if they were pushed into a political and legal subaltern position outside of the state-sanctioned logos and language, they were neither voiceless nor did they lack subjectivity or agency. In fact, as highlighted above, the active presence of the prisoners' abiding subjective agency in the face of the violent saming and totalizing force of the Islamic *nezam* was a central factor in the ruling power's decision to commit the 1988 massacre. In turn, however, it was the massacre that gave rise to a social justice response. *Jonbesh-e Edalatkhahi* was born from the lived experience of an excluded layer of the Iranian "citizenry." The human rights paradigm, its logos and language, assisted the political subaltern's resistant subjectivity in legitimizing their cause and reinstating their presence in the public domain through an international avenue.

As documented by a variety of human rights NGOs as well as the report of the Iran Tribunal's Truth Commission, the human rights discourse has been essential to the process of illuminating the criminal agency inherent to the Iranian *nezam* (Iran Tribunal 2013b: 14–26). However, when it

comes to the conceptualization of the human subject in the struggle for social justice, this discourse fails to represent, actually tends to bracket out, the lived experience of the active subjectivity of the human being. Instead of conceiving an active receiving–responding subjectivity, an ethical sociality, a subjectivity indispensable to the praxis of justice, the human rights paradigm as presently conceived thus reduces and reifies the subject to the victim identity: it is defined from the perspective of and according to the power exerted on the Self. Correspondingly, the sociality of the subject in the human rights discourse is either mediated only through the Self's own abstract universal rights or the violation of these rights.

In the remainder of this chapter, I intend to show this inadvertent but serious reifying effect of the victim–victimizer dichotomy at the core of human rights praxis, its effects on the human subject struggling for social justice as a subjective–objective being, and so on the struggle for social justice itself.

The Praxis of Human Rights and a People's Subjectivity

As a political prisoner between 1982 and 1990, I testified at the Iran Tribunal, The Hague, on 26 October 2012. When Sir Geoffrey Nice QC finished his cross-examination and I answered the questions from the jurists, Judge Johann Kriegler, the Presiding Judge of the six-member International Jury of the Iran Tribunal, asked me: "Does this kind of process help you?" I suspect he wondered if I personally felt relief speaking to an authoritative body, testifying to the pains and injuries we suffered in the prisons of the Islamic state. In fact, I was not relieved from any past suffering. Instead, I was ecstatic, witnessing the persistence of a people's resistance to and in the face of all the powerful forces of the *nezam's* deliberate annihilation. That process of the Iran Tribunal, including its preceding Truth Commission, the gathering of documents, the gaining of the indispensable and heartfelt (forever appreciated), and the participation of the international judges and lawyers, volunteers, and private donors, signified for me the long-enduring resistant subjectivity and manifestations of the agency of a people in spite of the systematic attempt to remove it from the Iranian public sphere and its historical memory. Creating our own institution, practicing our subjectivity, and fulfilling our responsibility to the executed and disappeared and for the generations after us: that was our subjectivity in action, a process of hope and inspiration—and it was filled with agony not relief. I responded.

The tangible outcome of this process, however, is contradictory on two counts. On the one hand, working within the human rights paradigm in accordance with the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the Iranian justice-seeking movement acquired the language to articulate and communicate the criminal-victimizing subjectivity embodied in the Islamic state (Iran Tribunal 2013a). On the other hand, the amassed documentation, personal narratives, and testimonies, which were processed to testify to the agency of the state, also had the effect of conceptualizing the citizens' subjectivity as victim-subjects, reifying them as objects of power.

Throughout the process of the tribunal, the witnesses acquired the identity of the suffering carriers of the truth about the agency of a repressive state. The truth of their own life experience was thus codified and narrowed to the truth of the state's practice of power over their psyches and bodies: a victim-subject gained recognition, while subjectivity as sociality, its resistances, and capitulations fell through the elisions of a notion of justice based on human rights.

The Act of Witnessing and the Ambivalence of Being Subject and Object

There is a difference between receiving injustice and *being* the injustice recipient. Even when the active verb "to victimize" is used to qualify unjust power relations, there still remains a difference between becoming a "victimized subject" and being a "victim-subject." If people are targeted and persecuted for who they are and for their participation in the public/political realm, "who" they are cannot be reduced to what is acted on them. We are human *subjects* who are being targeted and "victimized." Being victimized defines the state or condition of "what" one experiences. A human's subjectivity always overflows his/her state of victimization.

To be presented and related to as a victim (whether by oneself, a society, or a discourse) is to have one's subjectivity mediated by the act of victimization: one's agency is displaced by one's "whatness." A human subject's life activity includes its subjectivity, which includes its potential agency, its ability to respond to exteriority. One's subjectivity is one's ability to respond, one's respons-ability, an *ability* that is always already there—even if one lives in a state of exclusion, alienation, and objectivization. There is a difference between being voiceless and not being heard, or heard but deliberately ignored. The severance of the objective–subjective existence

of the excluded people tends to identify them with what the dominant power intends to make them: voiceless objects of power whose respons-ability is confined to a survivalist response to their own suffering.

The Iran Tribunal witness Akram Beyramvand (2012), for instance, who wanted *not* just to give the factual information about her executed cellmate but to speak of *how* her cellmate *related* to being called for execution, was not heard at the Tribunal, but directed away toward giving accounts of the atrocious treatment of the prison officials. *The witnesses' subjective praxis, the story of their agencies, their ability to respond, their respons-ability to the power they received, all spill over and exceed the capacity of the human rights discourse and praxis.* What remains of the subject under this paradigm is merely his or her victimization: once regarded in the abstract as fundamentally a bearer of universal rights, the actual individual is generally understood, presented, and related to as a victim of the violation of those rights: a reobjectivization by different means, albeit to different ends.

The testimony of Iran Tribunal witness Mehdi Memarpour, for example, demonstrates subjective praxis as sociality within the context of victimization. He tells the story of how his act of taking the path of pretending to be a *tavvab*—a prisoner who has converted religiously and politically to Islam and the Islamic state—had started him down the slippery slope of capitulations and cooperation. His story was one of victimization, of the naked violence of forced *estehaleh*, the process of saming a prisoner into an executioner. Yet at the same time, his story, as well as his act of telling the story, were signifiers of his subjectivity as an ethical sociality. He recalls: "They [the prison guards] asked if I repented. I said yes. [They asked] if I would participate in the execution of someone who got a death sentence. I said yes … I thought to myself they would not possibly give us a weapon, for sure they were bluffing …" (Memarpour 2012). He describes for the jurists how he experienced being driven along with almost one hundred other *tavvabs* to the firing field and watching as hundreds of other prisoners were delivered and lined up in front of them for execution. He continues:

> [The guards] told us to come forward [to take part in the shooting of fellow prisoners]. Many fell on the ground, crying and said they couldn't. The rest of us went forward, when we reached the guard standing ahead they told us to put our hand on the guard's hand and our finger on his finger on the trigger. Then shots were fired … I did something that wasn't me; I was a plaything … That night I prayed and cried … After that I raised a wall

around myself, a wall that is still there … What happened to me was rape, was a psychological rape … I assisted a murder … and I have to carry this to the end of my life. (Memarpour 2012)

One may ask: how else might we relate to ourselves when subjected to such destructive violence except as victim? In fact, the Tribunal's Judgment confirms him as a victim by referring to him as "pressured into collaborating" and quoting him describing "this pressure as 'psychological rape'" that made him into "a puppet" rather than himself; that it was not him "who did this" (Iran Tribunal 2013a: 23). By the end of the paragraph, Memarpour as a human subject has been removed and replaced by a man as an object of power. What remains of his subjectivity, the voice of a social–ethical subject whose respons-ability as well as receptivity is reduced to the experience and language of his victimization. This linguistic metamorphosis of the voice of a subjectivity-in-tension into the one-dimensional language of a victim/victimizer is even more prevalent when, a year later, Memarpour attempts to convey the criminality of the totalizing state of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nation Human Rights Council. There he introduces himself as such: "My name is Mehdi Memarpour, one of the victims of this horrendous decade [1980s]. As a political prisoner in detention I was forced to commit a murder. I was forcefully taken to the firing squad, a prison guard ordered me to put my finger on his, and then he pulled the trigger" (Memarpour 2013)

He makes reference to the massacre of the political prisoners in the summer of 1988 and continues:

They were all victims of a system which did not and still does not accept any belief other than its own. That is why, I, as the voice of all victims, urge that these atrocities be recognized by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and reparations be provided to those affected by them. (Memarpour 2013)

Again we may ask how Memarpour's testimony could be an example of a subjectivity beyond a victim-subject here.

In his original self-narration, Memarpour gave an account of *how* he ended up participating in executions. He gave an account of *how* he became "an assistant" to the murder of a human being, and *how* that destroyed him, left him feeling psychologically raped. But more than that, he also gave an account of *how* he *related* to what he was doing, *how* he *related* to the ones being executed, *how* he was responding to his own actions

while he was taking part in their execution. Of the many thousands of prisoners, almost a hundred *tavvabs* were taken to participate in the firing squad. Of those, some acted as Memarpour did and some refused at the last minute. Some, he speculated, committed suicide later, and some were samed within the *nezam* of the Islamic state. And Memarpour is the only one who has ever stepped forward and spoken publicly. He received the pressure—he was victimized—and he responded to that pressure—he was a respons-able subject; he responded with a "yes" to the question as to whether he took part in the execution to keep up with his scheme to survive. He was self-conscious of his active survivalist participating presence, of his nonindifferent presence in the death of the other, and decades later, he responded-for-the-other when he gained the courage, stepped forward, and testified. This lived experience as a *tavvab* and as a witness elucidates the sociality of Memarpour's subjectivity, an event that always already involves the self and the others and therefore is never outside of the ethical space. The human rights victim–victimizer dichotomy prevalent in the struggle for social justice in the context of the Iranian repressive state lacks the space to recognize, or perhaps even the ability to conceive, this subjective complexity of being engaged in the struggle for social justice.

Conclusion

Like other similar struggles in the world, the Iranian struggle for social justice is in need of a renewed historical reflexivity, a renewed critical look at the past and present imaginings and actions, a reconceptualization of our subjectivity as ethical sociality, and a reconsideration of the notions of justice and equality as at once both political and ethical praxis.

One of our tasks then is to envision ways of confronting the Iranian state's systematic, systemic, and widespread practice of injustice without inflicting further injustice on the very people's subjectivity we aim to protect, without reifying them within a victimized state of being. As much as the human rights paradigm assists the Iranian opposition and activists in communicating the politics of totalizing and excluding ingrained in the Islamic state, its conception of rights and the human subject, and therefore its notion of justice and the pursuit of social justice, must be subverted and superseded. Here Arendt's notion of rights and humanity, as well as Levinas's ethics of the other and concept of subjectivity (Levinas 1998a; 1998b), can be indicative.

Arendt distills human rights to "the right to have rights," which for her is "the right of every individual to belong to humanity," a right that "should be guaranteed by humanity itself" (Arendt 1975: 298). Rather than being a natural endowment and a legal contract, the right to have rights may then be recognized as a social construct created, practiced, transformed, and protected within social relations. In other words, both human rights and human being become a *political project*, that is, created by processes of the active participation of the citizens in the public space, the very act that guarantees the right to have rights.

It is not possible, however, to question the justness of a social relation without questioning its ethics, its human-to-human relations, nor to suggest an alternative without an ethical dimension. Far from given, humanity is always actively created within our mutual subjective–objective life experience by our nonindifferent (in)action as both singularity and sociality. If, with Arendt, we see humanity as "the paradoxical plurality of unique beings" (1958: 176) achieved through "constant establishment of new relationships within a web of relations" (1958: 240), then our struggle for social justice is also always-already an ethical project.

Maintaining these two aspects of the project of social justice, at once, requires our creation and constant recreation of an active human subject who relates to itself through its response to the others, conscious and responsible for its respons-ability. Thus, rather than arising from a legally and institutionally guaranteed primacy of the individual's state of being in-and-for-itself, the manifestations of the rights of social justice would be delivered through active living relationality between "the I" and "the other" as incommensurable singularities. In this way, justice, like humanity and human rights, becomes an ethical–political project, a praxis of constantly receiving and responding to the others without saming, and so a pursuit of social justice as a nontotalizing praxis.

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Intergenerational Memory in *Children of the Jacaranda Tree*

Nima Naghibi

Sahar Delijani's fictional *Children of the Jacaranda Tree* (2013) is a powerful example of testimonial literature. The story, while fictional, is based on Delijani's parents' experiences as political prisoners in Iran during the 1980s and shifts between two historical time periods: the 1980s and the post-2009 Presidential election protests. The novel focuses on a particularly traumatic moment in Iranian history: the mass execution of political prisoners in 1988, an horrific event that took place largely in secret, and has only recently become public knowledge.

Told from the perspective of various political prisoners in the notorious Evin prison, the story shifts to the point of view of their now-adult children, some of whom live in the diaspora. Delijani's narrative calls on future generations to remember and retell the events of the past in order

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to advance a claim for social justice and reparations. The importance of intergenerational stories, on passing stories from one generation to the next so that people remember the sacrifice of previous generations for the ideals of democracy and equality, is the focus of this paper.

Diasporic Iranian writing in English has flourished since the late 1990s.[1] The majority of this literature has been auto/biographical,[2] the writers focusing on the pain of exilic separation and the challenge of forging hybrid identities in a foreign land. The prison narrative, a growing subgenre in the field of auto/biographical writing, has become an increasingly popular form of expression for former political prisoners who, upon their release and from their new homes in the diaspora, publish harrowing accounts of their experiences behind bars. One of the casualties of the mass imprisonment, torture, and killing of political prisoners and social justice activists in Iran during the 1980s, the period that scholars have come to refer to as the "period of terror," was the relationship of children to their parents. In many instances, children struggled with feelings of guilt as they recoiled from the gaunt specters that emerged suddenly from behind prison walls to claim them as their own and removed the children from a family model to which they had become accustomed: grandparents and/or aunts serving the role of caregivers.[3]

Over three-and-a-half decades after the Iranian Revolution, the moment appears ripe for a new development in diasporic Iranian narratives: testimonials by and about children of political prisoners whose narratives stress the ethics of witnessing.[4] These texts can be understood in terms of what Ann Cubilié calls "a performative act of memory" (2005: 78). For Cubilié, the testimonial narrative recounted by "the witness/survivor" is narrated for the benefit of both the survivor and the witness: "the placing of oneself inside historical narrative and the rebuilding of one's voice and identity as witness—does not construct a unified narrative of a historical event but instead functions as the truth of witnessing experiences whose truths can never be known" (Cubilié 2005: 78). The retelling and sharing of a traumatic memory thus makes possible the rearticulation of the survivor's voice and identity. For the witness, despite not having *been there*, the reconstruction of that moment through the survivor's narrative allows for the possibility of hearing her experiences. Hearing the suffering of another creates space for empathic engagement and the opportunity—for those who were not present—to bear witness to others' experiences of suffering and horror; the ability to *hear* and to *feel* another's pain can be vital in preventing the recurrence of similar atrocities.

Children of the Jacaranda Tree, published in 2013, is an example of testimonial literature that can be understood as the type of "performative act of memory," Cubilié describes. Delijani's novel is a moving account and exploration of the emotional effects that imprisonment and torture have on the children of political prisoners, as well as on their extended families. The story, although fictional, is based on Delijani's parents' experiences as political prisoners in Iran during the 1980s and shifts between two historical time periods: the 1980s and the 2009 post-Presidential election protests, popularly known as the Green Movement. The narrative focalizes through various political prisoners in the notorious Evin prison in the 1980s and then shifts to the point of view of their children, now young adults, some of whom continue to live in Iran and some of whom live in the diaspora. This challenging story, drawn from the events of Delijani's own life, illustrates the extent to which this generation bears the emotional scars of their parents' suffering and assumes the responsibility of bearing witness to a dark period in postrevolutionary Iranian history.

Delijani's novel underscores the importance of stories, and of storytelling, in struggles for social justice: we learn about one another through the stories that we tell, and it is through narrative that we come to humanize—and sometimes demonize—the other. This chapter takes as its focus the connection between narrative and memory, and the importance of remembrance through the circulation and the exchange of narratives. Through the stories of various characters from the 1980s to the present time, Delijani stresses the importance of intergenerational memory and the pursuit of social justice. *Children of the Jacaranda Tree* gives full articulation to a terrifying and bloody period in Iranian history: the clandestine mass execution of political prisoners in 1988.[5] The extent of horror and suffering at this time in Iranian history has only recently reached general public awareness and understanding. Delijani's sensitive portrayal of this dark period places responsibility on subsequent generations *to remember* in order to begin the process of national healing. A secondary concern or theme in this novel is a poignant articulation of diasporic–exilic guilt, the role of the diasporic subject as witness, and her relationship to national memory.

The novel begins in the early 1980s in Evin Prison with the story of Azar, a young political activist, in labor with her first child. She is transported, blindfolded, in an uncomfortable prison van from one hospital to the next until she is finally permitted entry to give birth. Even while in labor at the hospital, Azar is relentlessly interrogated about her political activities until just moments before she gives birth to her daughter, Neda:

> Where were the meetings? the man asked. How many of them attended each meeting? As she gripped the chair against the fresh, all-encompassing stabs of pain, Azar tried to remember the right answers. All the answers she had given from one interrogation to the next. Not a date, not a name, not a piece of information or lack of it should differ … She tried to answer but the contractions seemed to be swallowing her, not giving her a chance to speak. She lurched forward, grabbing the table in front of her. (Delijani 2013: 11–12)

The vividly detailed account of Azar's suffering, her body wracked with labor pains, her mind under assault by her interrogator, draws our attention to the intense corporeality of torture. Bearing witness to extreme suffering, unrelenting psychological torture coupled with the physical pain of labor, invites the reader as witness to open herself up to the pain of Azar's experience, compelling her *to feel*, empathically, the horrors of this moment. This harrowing episode in the novel is drawn from the experience of Delijani's own mother, who gave birth to Delijani under similar circumstances, an example which illustrates some of the ways in which this fictional story draws on the auto/biographical.

Azar's torture continues as prison officials prevent her from holding or even seeing her newborn. When she is eventually granted permission to see her infant daughter, she waits impatiently in the hospital corridor and watches as her prison warden, whom the prisoners are obliged to call "Sister," walks toward her with her newborn bundled in a prison blanket. The image of the coarse Evin prison blanket wrapped around the delicate new skin of a- hour-old baby is an unsettling one:

> It was a rough prison blanket, and her child was naked. Azar winced at the sight of her child unprotected against the coarseness that clamped its teeth into her fragile, new-born skin. She stood with her arms outstretched but could not speak. She knew if she opened her mouth, nothing would come out but a shrill, twisted wail. (Delijani 2013: 29)

The symbolism of the harsh Evin blanket wrapped around her naked and defenseless infant echoes throughout the novel as the stories that unfold illustrate how traumatic prison memories of one generation surround and entangle the next. Like the coarse prison blanket enveloping Azar's baby daughter, Neda, the memories of an earlier generation's imprisonment, torture, and, in some instances, death shroud the lives of the younger generation as they shoulder the burden of accountability and remembrance.

The specter of Evin, and the mass executions of 1988 as an oppressive and traumatic memory, encompassing the lives of political prisoners and subsequent generations resonates powerfully throughout this story.

Children of the Jacaranda Tree thus begins with the birth of Neda and an account of her first days in a prison cell with her mother and her mother's cellmates. The lives of the women and of their children mentioned in this first chapter remain intertwined even after their release from prison. The novel emphasizes storytelling and intergenerational memory as the narrative moves back and forth between accounts of the parents' experiences in prison in the 1980s and those of their now-adult children, some of whom remain in Iran and some of whom live in the diaspora. At home or abroad, however, they all live with the memories of a traumatized nation. Sara (whose mother, Parisa, was Azar's cellmate) lives in an apartment with a clear view of Evin, a fact which her friend, Donya, visiting from the United States, finds deeply disturbing: "Through the mist rising, Donya can see the grubby wall of the Evin prison, running adjacent to the dust-ridden slopes of the mountain" (Delijani 2013: 211). Donya's mother, Firoozeh, once shared a cell with Parisa and Azar. What the reader knows but Sara and her brother, Omid, do not is that Firoozeh was despised by the other prisoners because of her position as a *tavvab*, an informant-recanter.[6] In fact, it was Firoozeh's maliciousness and her cooperation with prison officials that prompted the premature separation of the still-nursing Neda from her mother Azar:

> When Donya tells her mother over the phone of the closeness between the prison and the city, Firoozeh remained mostly silent. Donya knew she was giving undesired information; her mother did not wish to know. Since their immigration to America almost fifteen years ago, Firoozeh had never returned to Iran, and she had made it clear that she had no intention of ever doing so. There was a tint of hatred in Firoozeh's refusal to return, which at times made Donya wonder about what could have happened inside the prison that had thus traumatized her. (Delijani 2013: 212)

Firoozeh's desire to block out the past and her determination to forget her role in perpetuating a climate of terror and suffering in Evin betrays an inability to acknowledge her own complicity in an oppressive system. Her unwillingness to come to terms with her conflicted role as both victim and perpetrator poses an impediment to her own ability to heal. In jail, Firoozeh had declared: "Once released, she would take Donya away with her and leave Iran. *Leave and never look back*" (Delijani 2013: 33).

The novel takes pains to emphasize that the refusal to look back on one's past and to reflect on one's own role in historical events sanctions a continuing cycle of violence. In order for the process of healing to begin, all participants must come to terms with their own varying degrees of complicity within systems of oppression. Delijani's novel proposes that national healing and reconciliation can occur through the circulation of narratives: the telling and the sharing of stories make way for admissions of guilt and responsibility, creating space for empathy—and as in the case of Neda and Reza at the end of this particular story—reconciliation.

The novel thus draws attention to the complexities of memory and trauma, pain and healing, guilt and accountability. Early in the book, we are introduced to Leila, whose sisters, Parisa and Simin, are both in prison for their political activities and whose children, Forough, Sara, and Omid, are being raised by Leila and her parents. In this early introduction in the novel to Leila and her young charges, she takes the children to a professional photographer in order to send a portrait of the children to their mothers in Evin; as he sets up his equipment, the photographer tells her: "As you see, Leila Khanoom, I am not very busy these days. It seems like no one wants to take pictures in wartime. Who knows? Maybe they prefer not to keep records of themselves. To forget. Or maybe they are afraid of remembering later" (Delijani 2013: 65).

This tension between the courage to remember and reflect upon one's past versus the more expedient position to forget—or to suppress—one's (role in) history is a continuous theme in this narrative, particularly through the representations of Firoozeh and Donya. Firoozeh flees Iran immediately upon her release from prison, and pointedly avoids reflecting upon her time behind bars; her daughter, Donya, similarly avoids revisiting unpleasant and difficult memories. Although Donya and Omid (Leila's nephew) were once romantically involved, Donya balks at a longer-term commitment:

> It was the prospect of living in this country where life overwhelms you, submerges you completely with its unflinching, unpredictable, ruthless reality. Donya was not ready for that. She did not have Omid's fortitude to live so intimately with nightmares of youth and prison and blood. And huddling shadows that carried so much pride and desolation and hurt. Donya could not handle that. She just was not cut out for it. (Delijani 2013: 226)

Donya's refusal to commit to a long-term relationship with Omid is connected to her reluctance to confront the harsh realities of her mother's past. Conscious of her mother's aversion to recollecting and reflecting

upon her time in prison, Donya shies away from learning the harsh truths about the imprisonment and torture that the previous generation suffered. Knowing that living in Iran would mean living with the reality of the past always existing alongside the present, Donya chooses, like her mother, to live abroad. Outside of Iran, her life can begin anew, without the "huddling shadows" gnawing at the edges of her conscience.

The novel stresses the importance of intergenerational memory, forgiveness and reconciliation, healing and progress, but it remains harsh in its treatment and judgment of Firoozeh and Donya. Striking a fatalistic tone, the narrative suggests that the daughter of an informant-recanter is herself destined to become weak-willed and untrustworthy. She will not find the fortitude to withstand suffering or to fight against oppression. Like her mother, she will be unable and unwilling to bear the weight of history and the painful memories of the past. Here, as well in other instances, the novel flounders aesthetically, adopting the unnuanced style of a political tract as the narrative unequivocally condemns Firoozeh and Donya for their perceived weaknesses. While these characters are condemned for the choices they make in life, the larger point made in the novel through its harsh judgment of these two characters is that the cycle of oppression and terror can be—and indeed must be—broken through intervention and remembrance. The act of remembering, Delijani's novel emphasizes, involves a political and social commitment to the future: by reflecting upon past injustices, we hold ourselves accountable to a future that makes room for everyone, a future committed to a more just and equitable world.

The fatalistic and condemnatory stance the novel takes in relation to Firoozeh and Donya works against the overall narrative arc that moves toward a position of compassion and empathy, reconciliation and healing. Alongside this condemnatory narrative of Firoozeh is the story of another family with a conflicted relationship to the past. Here, and throughout this novel, the 1988 massacre emerges as both a wound and a spectral presence in the national memory of postrevolutionary Iran. Delijani's novel places the traumatic memory of the 1988 massacres at the heart of the story with the execution of Amir. Having spent her life under the illusion that her father died of cancer, Amir's daughter Sheida discovers the truth about the circumstances of her father's death over two decades after the fact.

Just before Sheida stumbles upon the discovery that her father was among those executed in Iran's prisons in 1988, she, like many other diasporic Iranians, finds herself glued to the web during the summer of 2009, hungrily devouring the eyewitness reports rapidly coming out of Iran, reports about the mass protests on the streets of Tehran in defiant

opposition to the outcome of the Presidential election. Simultaneously exhilarated by the videos of protest and frustrated by her distance from the events on the ground, Sheida spends the summer months scouring the web for updates on the demonstrations:

> Women and men, young and old, feeble and strong, chanting slogans against the wrong done to them. Slogans for whatever memory of justice they can fathom. Behind her computer, Sheida whispers their words, their slogans, their cries of resistance … She can almost see herself standing on a rooftop, her fist clenched in the air. (Delijani 2013: 170–171)

As she reads accounts of their political activism, Sheida feels the pull of nostalgia and memory, wishing herself part of this movement for change, a movement that recalls another time in Iranian history—the 1979 Revolution—when young people spilled out on the streets clamoring for political change.

For Sheida, as for many other diasporic Iranians during that time, the events of the present carry whispers of the past. As she scours over the online videos and written reports emerging out of Iran, she feels the tug of memory and recognizes that "[t]his is the second time in recent weeks that she had seen an article about the postrevolution imprisonments and executions. She does not know if it is a coincidence or that with so many men and women twenty years later in prisons in Tehran and other cities, the past is once again resurfacing, almost as a premonition" (Delijani 2013: 171). As she reads online news stories about the 2009 protests, she takes note of the number of references to and articles about the 1979 revolutionary period that appear alongside the more current news reports. As she immerses herself in these stories, Sheida finds an article about the mass executions of 1988 and is stunned to discover her father's name on the list of those executed.

Flying back to Iran from her home in Italy, Sheida appears on her mother's doorstep, declaring: "You have denied me my past. You have denied me my father" (Delijani 2013: 192). Here, the novel once again underscores the point about the remembering and the retelling of stories as integral to the process of redressing social and political wrongs. The narrative calls our attention to our obligations as witnesses to injustices and human rights abuses; we have a responsibility to recall, to remember, and to retell stories as a way of honoring the memory of those who have been silenced, and to prevent the recurrence of similar atrocities. As the story unfolds, the narrative makes clear that attempts to keep the past at

bay are futile as the past always resurfaces and makes room for itself—however uncomfortably—alongside the present.

The various stories that unfold in *Children of the Jacaranda Tree* illustrate Katharine Hodgkin and Susanna Radstone's claim that "memory … both underpins and undermines the national narrative … The question of how people remember their own stories, then, is intimately entwined with how they remember the national story (Delijani 2013: 170). Following Hodgkin and Radstone's argument, for Maryam, Sheida's mother, to conceal her husband's execution from her daughter, or for Firoozeh, Donya's mother, to deny her own victimization as well as her complicity in Iran's punitive prison system would be to deny not only their own individual and personal traumas but also the broader narrative of national trauma.

Delijani traces a connection between national and personal trauma through the narrative's focus on different characters in the novel. During a conversation with his cellmate Behrouz, Sheida's father, Amir, notices an old scar on Behrouz's ankle. Behrouz tells him that the scar is from a bicycle accident from his childhood but that he played with the wound to ensure it would scar so that he could have it engraved on his body as a memory: "From underneath the blindfold, Amir saw Behrouz's dirty fingers creeping down to his memory. Wound. Pain. Memory" (Delijani 2013: 101). As theorists of trauma have claimed, trauma can be conceptualized as both a physical or psychological wound, a painful memory.[7] Cathy Caruth has observed that in Freud's writings, "the term *trauma* is understood as a wound, inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (1996: 3; emphasis in original). In *Children of the Jacaranda Tree*, trauma as a wound is both physical and psychological as Amir notes that "soon he would be so sick with memories that even taking the smallest step would be an impossible task. Memories were like snake poison, encroaching on the body, paralyzing one limb at a time" (Delijani 2013: 101). Throughout her novel, Delijani intertwines the concepts of intergenerational memory, trauma, wound, exilic guilt, and reconciliation. The retelling of stories of trauma and suffering forces the reader-witness to take a stance, prodding the reader into an empathic position; in the words of Ann Kaplan, "telling stories about trauma … may permit a kind of empathic 'sharing' that moves us forward" (2005: 37). Narrating stories of suffering through the point of view of the sufferer creates space for what Kaplan calls ethical witnessing or "an ethical response that will perhaps transform the way someone views the world, or thinks about justice" (Kaplan 2005: 123).

Alongside the imperative, articulated in this novel, for the reader to bear witness to suffering and injustice is the complicated position of the

exilic subject. How does the exile, existing at a safe remove from the site where such stories of suffering unfold, bear witness to atrocity and pain in a responsible, and effective, way? How does she engage with these narratives that recount and relate social injustices and cruelties without reproducing tensions between the diasporic home and the native home, thereby reinforcing existing stereotypes about a country such as Iran that is already unfavorably represented in popular Western narratives? How might a diasporic Iranian reader assume the position of a socially conscious and engaged witness without appropriating through "vicarious trauma" (see La Capra 2001; Kaplan 2005) the historically specific trauma of another?

Delijani treats the conflicted relationship of the exilic subject to her home country, her childhood memories, and the tension between past and present with care and sensitivity throughout her narrative. On the one hand, the exile's relationship to Iran is represented as fixed at the moment of departure from the home country; this is illustrated in Dante's description of Forough's letters home to her grandmother, Maman Zinat. Dante, another child of political prisoners raised by Forough's grandmother, recalls reading Forough's letters to Maman Zinat and noting the unchanged nature of Forough's childish Farsi script: "A handwriting standing witness to the halt of time in that hidden corner of the mind where memories lingered" (Delijani 2013: 131). Through Dante's description of Forough's unsophisticated Farsi script, her handwriting marking the young age at which she left Iran, the diasporic subject's relationship to her home country is represented as frozen in time. This is why the prospect of return "home" for diasporics is often tinged with nostalgia not only for their native home but also for the self they have left behind.

Although this novel represents the diasporic subject's relationship to "home" as fixed at a particular moment in time, she is seen as far from irrelevant to the political future of the country. The exilic relationship to political unrest at home is portrayed with poignancy through the characters of Sheida and Neda. Neda, now living in Turin, Italy, meets Reza, a new immigrant and recent casualty of the 2009 protests, and longs to connect his "on-the-ground" experiences with her own cyber experience of the protests:

> She feels a shiver of envy at the thought of him having been there, having partaken in that moment when history turned. He has run through those streets, thrown stones, shouted slogans, been arrested, released, and arrested again until his last escape … He has done what her own parents had done thirty years earlier. (Delijani 2013: 258; emphasis in original)

In this instance, once again, the novel makes a connection between the past—the 1979 revolutionary period—and the present time of the novel—the 2009 postelection protests. For Neda, Reza is an echo of her own past, of her parents, of their bravery and their activism, of their youth. At this point, the novel underscores the ways in which Neda's and Reza's life narratives intersect but also diverge dramatically. Neda listens to Reza describe his shock at the brutality of the regime and his disillusionment with the state's violent reaction to the 2009 protestors; as she listens to him speak, she feels herself getting angry at his willful blindness to the country's bloody history. Reza's distress and disappointment with the violent response of the government toward its citizens is met with Neda's resentment. In her view, the regime's unhesitating and unflinching turn to bloodshed is simply a continuation of their past practice.

Reza, however, arrives in Italy emotionally scarred by the aftermath of the 2009 protests. In particular, he is scarred by the memory of the severe beating his sister endured which resulted in her miscarriage: "It was like they had been able to not only hurt us, our generation, but also the one that was coming after. And that was just too much to bear" (Delijani 2013: 246). Sharing with Neda his horror and disbelief that the regime could turn against its young with such savagery, Reza's story brings to the forefront the repetition of state violence and the ways in which the past enfolds into the present as well as into the future. While Neda and Reza work to find common emotional ground, Neda's willingness and ability to hear his stories is put to the test when Reza confesses that his father had been a revolutionary guard: "Neda feels slightly faint. She realizes she has been holding her breath unconsciously. Her hands under the table are cold. The violence of the regime has shocked Reza because he does not know" (Delijani 2013: 264). Faced with the reality of his close ties to the regime, Neda struggles with her conflicting feelings of revulsion and attraction to Reza. In this instance, the novel, as a plausible story, breaks down in its too tidy coincidences in order to make a larger political point: when Neda asks Reza for his father's name, he tells her: Meysam. The reader will know that Meysam is the name of the young Revolutionary Guard who escorted her mother to the hospital where she gives birth to Neda, although neither Neda nor Reza are aware of this fact.

Although their relationship until now has consisted of the telling and the sharing of stories, Neda comes to realize that Reza, with his political background and past sympathies with the Islamic Republic, does not want to hear her stories. He is a reluctant witness because Neda's stories further confirm what the violence of the summer of 2009 has made him begin to

suspect, that the regime was not as committed to social justice or to the rights of "the downtrodden" as it had initially claimed to be:

> Reza had not wanted to hear her mother's story. His smile had been the smile of a man who did not wish to know. She had forced her story on him. He was its reluctant receiver … He did not want to look so far back. *He was afraid. He did not want to carry the blame. He was fighting against it.* (Delijani 2013: 268; emphasis in original)

Reza could not bear to imagine that the regime to which he and his father had pledged loyalty had been, since its inception, meting out cruel and harsh punishments to its critics. He needed to believe that the regime's brutal response to the post-2009 Presidential election results was an aberration, a divergence from its revolutionary roots, and not the manifestation of its original philosophy and beliefs.

Despite its occasional heavy-handed symbolism and easy coincidences, the novel's humanist claim that the process of healing and reconciliation relies on the recounting and the sharing of narratives with a willing audience is a compelling one. In the aftermath of the 2009 protests, Neda assumes the role of storyteller and the guardian of collective memory; she has heard her parents' stories and is mindful to remember what they endured:

> Once when Neda shared her concern with her father about the prisoners that were languishing in the regime's prisons, their names, the pictures of their young faces going around Facebook, Ismael said, *at least now their faces are known, their names are on everyone's lips. We all died in silence.* (Delijani 2013: 272; emphasis in original)

Thus, although Neda once promised her mother that she would never disclose her parents' imprisonment to anyone, she comes to realize that the stories of her parents and of others must indeed be told and heard. Recounting stories of the country's violent history allows Neda to bear witness to the suffering and the wrongs committed in the past, but it also signals a commitment to a better future as the retelling and the sharing of stories of past brutalities help prevent the repetition of the past:

> No more secrets, no more choking back. Now everyone has to know. *To know, to know, to know!* … The spilled blood on the streets had made people remember things they long thought had been forgotten. *Reza has to know. Above all Reza.* For they cannot go anywhere if he does not. (Delijani 2013: 268, 270; emphasis in original)

Believing that the act of witnessing impels the witness to recognize injustice, and to work toward social and political change, Neda forces a reluctant Reza to listen to and to hear her parents' story. This story then, of the suffering of generations of Iran's political activists since the revolution to the present time, ends on a note of hope and reconciliation as the son of a revolutionary guard and the exiled daughter of political prisoners begin falling in love through the telling, the hearing, and the exchange of their respective stories. This commitment to hearing each other's narratives with generosity and empathy is a crucial step in the process of individual and national healing (Kaplan 2005: 122).

What Delijani's novel emphasizes more than anything is the power of narrative and storytelling in the nation's trajectory toward healing. *Children of the Jacaranda Tree* stresses the importance of remembering and the passing and sharing of stories from one generation to the next to ensure that the sacrifices of previous generations for the ideals of democracy and equality are remembered. The children of the political prisoners in this novel are represented as the branches and flowers of the jacaranda tree that symbolize the flowering of their parents' democratic ideals. The jacaranda tree of the book's title is thus a powerful symbol of memory, of the desire for justice and equality, and of the remembrance of the prisoners who have died in Iran's prisons. It is, perhaps somewhat incongruously, this image of a tree not native to Iran that calls on us to participate, through the telling and the circulating of stories, in the remembrance of our past and our endeavors toward a just future[8].

Notes

1. There is now a growing body of scholarship on diasporic Iranian narratives. See, for example, Grassian (2013), Fotouhi (2015), Elahi and Karim (2011), Karim and Rahimieh (2008), and Naghibi (2016).
2. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2010) use the term "auto/biography" to refer to "the interrelatedness of autobiographical narrative and biography" (256).
3. In other cases, the children of political prisoners served time with their mothers behind bars; these children suffered emotional traumas described in the testimonial narratives in Agah et al. (2007). See also Shahla Talebi (2014) for a discussion of the presence of children in political prisons and the state of childhood in such conditions. In this article, Talebi describes the unique model of kinship formed in prison between mothers (as well as other women inmates who served as surrogate mothers) and their imprisoned children.

4. See, for example, Chowra Makaremi (2011). Makaremi transcribes her grandfather's journal in which he documents the imprisonment and execution of two of his daughters (Makaremi's mother and aunt). Between the testimony of her grandfather, Aziz, and a selection of family letters, Makaremi inserts her own autobiographical voice, intertwining her grandfather's testimonial narrative with her own childhood memories, and her decision as a scholar to bear witness to the suffering, and eventual execution, of her mother and her aunt. Another example of a narrative of a childhood shadowed by parents' imprisonment is Golkhou Parhizgar's documentary film, *Round-Trip*. Her auto/biographical film begins with a reference to her parents' imprisonment and her birth in Evin in the early 1980s; she is careful, however, to avoid details of her family's experience. See my own discussion of this film in Chap. 3 of *Women Write Iran* (2016). Given the belated articulation and recurrence of the traumatic experience, I speculate that we will be seeing an increase in narratives by a generation of children who either spent time behind bars with their parents or who were raised by relatives while their parents remained imprisoned—and in some cases killed—during the 1980s.

5. For further details about the mass execution of political prisoners in 1980s Iran, see Robertson (2011), Abrahamian (1999), and Afshari (2011). For information about the Iran Tribunal campaign, visit: www.irantribunal.com. This was a campaign organized by the families of executed prisoners, surviving former political prisoners, lawyers, and children's rights, women's rights, and human rights activists, with the aim of holding the Iranian government accountable for the mass execution of prisoners in Iran during what they describe as "the bloody decade." In addition to legal and scholarly documents and research, the website includes testimonials by former political prisoners.

6. See Ervand Abrahamian's *Tortured Confessions* for a full exploration of the *tavvab* phenomenon in the post-revolutionary Iranian prison system. As he describes it, the informant-recanter, or *tavvab*, was a category created by the prison system to maintain a system of fear and internal control:

Prisoners were closely watched by repenters ever eager to win privileges and their freedom. Not surprisingly, prisoners detested these *kapos* and *antens* (antennas) on the lookout for incriminating information… The wardens set up a Repenters' Society, a newspaper called *Payam-e Tawabin* (*Repenters' Message*), and special wards named Bandeh Jehad (Crusaders' Wards). They offered them incentives—more generous rations, lighter sentences, even amnesty, and access to the prison workshops, where women could earn pocket money as garment workers and men could earn pocket money as metal workers. (1999: 168)

7. See Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* for more on trauma as a wound. In her work on trauma, Leigh Gilmore writes: "Trauma, from the Greek meaning

'wound' refers to the self-altering, even self-shattering experience of violence, injury, and harm" (1996: 6)

8. There is potential here for further analysis about the role of the diasporic-exilic subject in the country's future in light of the fact that the Jacaranda Tree, which is not native to Iran, symbolizes hope in this novel.

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Social Media as a Site of Transformative Politics: Iranian Women's Online Contestations

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To draw out the connection between women's mobilization efforts on social networking sites (SNS) and Iranian social justice movements is a challenging, if not extremely difficult, task. SNS are diffuse and lateral online networks of individuals, perceived to be mainly geared toward entertainment. In contrast, the hallmark of Iranian political organizing has historically been shaped by offline, centralized, and hierarchical forms of activism. It is through the latter that the radical impulses of generations of Iranian political activists have traditionally been organized, channeled, and expressed.

This chapter addresses some of the challenges, and some of the positive outcomes, of women's use of SNS in their struggles for social justice and gender equality in Iran. It is not my intention here to establish a direct causal link between Iranian women's use of SNS and their ability to bring about change on the ground; my aim, rather, is to show the transgressive

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possibilities, radical potentials, and spaces of dissent that such online plat-forms open up for ordinary Iranian women and activists alike. Women's online platforms must be read and understood as spaces of cultural, social, and political contestation, and as one of the arenas in which Iranian agents of radical political change are emerging. Women use these sites to express social forms of assertive female subjectivity and to actively participate in ongoing assessments, evaluations, and rearticulations of concepts such as politics, culture, gender identity, resistance, and activism. I will discuss this through a case study of one such SNS, "My Stealthy Freedom" (*Azadi-ye Yavashaki-ye Zanan dar Iran*), a Facebook campaign through which thou-sands of Iranian women, and men, post their life stories and try to make sense of and articulate their daily experiences of sexism and misogyny.

Context and Debate

Beginning in the early 2000s, researchers and scholars started to examine the political mobilizing force of online networking (Ayers 2003; Langman 2005; Martinez-Torres 2001; McCaughey and Ayers 2003; Ting 2008; Vegh 2003). The circulation of various narratives, information, and ideas helps online activist communities do much more than just establish or nurture users' personal bonds with one another. In fact, online network-ing allows political actors to articulate a collective identity around a "com-mon direction"—that is, a platform for mobilization (Diani 2000; Kumar 2012; Raghavan 2009). Furthermore, political activists are increasingly using digital tools to create massive, grassroots online campaigns for dif-ferent social justice causes and for pushing for political change. These online exchanges and online campaigns can develop and sustain what I call an "ethos of mobilization": they provide activists with the means to mobilize for social and political change in their home countries, in ways that can have significant consequences for offline (or "real") politics.

In the last few decades, feminist media research has begun to study the positive impact that SNS can have on expressions of political dis-sent and on feminist political activism. Lotan et al. (2011) underscore the significance of social media platforms for establishing networks of solidarity among marginalized voices, including women; Castells views Internet-based communication networks as enabling sites for people's "mass self-communication," through which messages can be broadcast to transnational networks and global audiences (2011: 782). Increasingly,

feminist scholars challenge existing conceptual and methodological tools in studying online social networking; conjunctural and intersectional lenses are offered as interpretive tools for examining how gender, sexuality, race, ability, class, and other identity markers influence and inform one's experience of a social media space (Schradie 2012).

According to a large number of studies, SNS—and in particular Twitter—played a significant role during and after the 2009 Iranian Green Movement (Alexanian 2011; Golkar 2011; Sohrabi-Haghighat and Mansouri 2010). Still others studies have downplayed the role of social media during the Iranian uprising, arguing that social justice movements cannot be reduced to social media (Morozov 2009; Safshekan 2014; Wojcieszak and Smith 2014). Yet the majority of scholars agree that, due in part to the repressive nature of the Iranian regime, Iranian activists have created vast online networks to connect, communicate, mobilize, and rally around different social, cultural, and political causes, and to develop and maintain transnational solidarity networks with other organizations. These networks of transnational engagement continue to expand and link online activism with offline protests (Bucar and Fazaeli 2008; Doostdar 2004; Khosravi and Graham 2002; Van den Bos 2006).

In terms of Iranian women's struggles for social justice, there is already a substantive body of scholarship on Iranian women's offline struggles against gender oppression and for gender equality (Moghissi 1996, 2000, 2009; Mojab 2001b; Naghibi 2007; Shahidian 2002; Tohidi 1996, 2010a). However, few studies have focused on women's activism online Akhavan 2013; Mojab 2001a; Naghibi 2011). Research on the online presence of Iranian women has mainly focused on the personal blogging of individual activists. This scholarship demonstrates that Iranian women, as well as ethnic and sexual minorities, use personal and political blogging to explore and problematize gender identity, gender roles, and gender conventions in Iranian political discourse and cultural practices (Alavi 2005; Alinejad 2011; Amir-Ebrahimi 2008; Doostdar 2004; Nouraie-Simone 2005; Rahimi 2003; Shakhsari 2011, 2012; Sreberny and Khiabany 2010). While studies of Iranian women bloggers have proliferated over the last few decades, the majority of these have focused on the ways in which the web enables personal self-expression, rather than offering a platform for collective struggles for a common cause (Amir-Ebrahimi 2008; Ghorashi and Boersma 2009; Sreberny 2007).

Iranian Women's Activism on Social Networking Sites

An emerging body of scholarship, however, points to the fact that SNS have become one of the most important communication and mobilization tools for Iranians, and in particular for Iranian women activists. A number of studies suggest that Iranian women creatively use SNS to break down the barriers of censorship, disseminate information about the everyday lives of Iranian women, challenge mainstream understandings of gender relations, broaden conceptions of social justice to include women's and sexual minorities' rights, develop virtual "public" spaces in which women can communicate and connect with one another across a range of social networks, create online campaigns for women's rights in Iran, and announce and coordinate protests (Gheytanchi and Moghadam 2014; Moghadam and Sadiqi 2006; Tohidi 2010b; Yahyanejad and Gheytanchi 2012).

Given the vast scope of Iranian women's online activism, how have Iranian feminist scholars begun to understand this body of work? Exactly what do SNS mean for Iranian women's activism? How do Iranian women transform digital sites into feminist spaces? While there is now a substantial body of scholarship on digital technology as a tool for political change in general, and in Iran in particular, there are still significant theoretical and methodological gaps in the existing literature on the specific contributions that Iranian feminist activists make through their online work. First, although SNS have become very effective subaltern sites of social and political activism in Iran, more research is needed on Iranian women's online presence and on their leadership in using SNS as vital tools of political dissent. For example, research on Iranian political websites focuses on how the use of new technology facilitates activism, but often sidesteps the specific work that feminists and women activists bring to these new sites of struggle. Finally, the popularity of Big Data collection (Kelly and Etling 2008) has left a serious research gap in terms of micro-level qualitative and critical feminist research on social networking platforms in general, and on Iranian women's use of SNS—as sites of social and political dissent—in particular. Studies of online Iranian political activism that use Big Data collection focus mainly on the larger context of online Iranian communities, and the instrumental role these communities have had in the reform movement in Iran (Kelly and Etling 2008; Rogers et al. 2012). Questions around women's experiences and women's work for gender justice have not been integral to the majority of these studies.

In particular, Iranian women's use of Facebook as a tool for raising awareness about gender inequality, and as a space for social and political mobilization, has so far been one of the least studied. In fact, among social networking sites, Facebook gives women the ability to express themselves relatively freely; it is one of the most widely used virtual interactive platforms for ordinary Iranian women and activists alike. Since Facebook is banned and its access is blocked in Iran, people use Virtual Proxy Networks (VPNs) to access the website, and therefore we do not know the exact number of Iranians who use this social network in the country. However, according to a 2012 survey, three out of five Internet users in Iran were on Facebook—around 58 % (Social Media in Iran 2012), while a 2016 survey suggests that the percentage of Facebook users in Iran is around 35 % of all online users (Bozorgzadeh 2016). We have a clearer picture of the numbers of Facebook users, and the nature of Facebook usage, in the wider MENA region. For example, according to the *Arab Social Media Report* (Arab Social Media Influencers Summit 2015: 8), by May 2014, 67 % of people between the ages of 15 and 29 were using Facebook. And between November 2010 and November 2011, the period corresponding to the beginning of the Arab uprisings, the number of Facebook users in the Arab world "almost doubled" (Dubai School of Government 2011: 12). The same report demonstrates that women in MENA countries use social media, and Facebook in particular, to create transnational political campaigns to fight for the rights of women and other social justice causes. The report also cites the "Women2Drive" campaign, led by women in Saudi Arabia, and Egyptian women's "HarassMap" initiative, as two examples of successful online campaigns (2011: 2–3). In light of this regional information on women's activism in the Middle East and North Africa, and because Iran has by far the highest total number of internet users in the region—around 47 % in November 2015 (*Internet World Stats* 2015)—it is safe to assume that ordinary Iranian women's use of Facebook, including its use as a tool for social and political activism, is widespread and extensive.

Iranian women activists utilize Facebook to create online communities, or what some scholars call "networked public spheres" (Langman 2005), in which women and men deliberate, debate, and converse about contentious social and political issues. Interactive Facebook pages have become enabling spaces in which ordinary Iranian women become active contributors, creators, commentators, sorters, and archivers of digital content. In this way, Facebook pages become digital public squares for the carrying out of feminist political work, and the organizing of popular campaigns.

My Stealthy Freedom (MFS) Facebook Campaign

My Stealthy Freedom (MSF), one notable example of an Iranian women's online campaign, has gained massive and unprecedented popularity and international media coverage. MSF is run and organized by Masih Alinejad, a passionate activist and grassroots journalist. The MSF Facebook campaign began in May 2014 as a means to challenge the compulsory wearing of the hijab in Iran. On her initial message posted on Facebook, Alinejad invited and encouraged Iranian women, especially inside the country, to post images of themselves outside, in public spaces, without the headscarf. She writes:

> This page does not belong to any political group and the initiative reflects the concerns of Iranian women, who face legal and social restrictions. All of the photos and captions posted have been sent by women from all over Iran and this is a site dedicated to Iranian women inside the country who want to share their "stealthily" taken photos without the veil. (My Stealthy Freedom n.d.)

MSF immediately gained international visibility and support from people around the world—grassroots movements, women's activists, and western corporate media. Currently, the MSF Facebook has more than 968,000 "likes" on its page. Although social networks are often called low-risk social activism (partly as a result of the anonymous nature of the web), this is not the case with MSF. Iranian women (and a large number of men) post their life stories, and their unveiled pictures and videos from inside Iran, under their real names and, most of the time, with their faces revealed.

MSF has since become one of the main online spaces known for generating discourse on various social, cultural, and political issues in Iran, and, in particular, for activism against compulsory veiling. Participants post their pictures and videos and share artistic creations (in particular, poems, and paintings); others share consciousness-raising texts, and many more write their personal testimonies, often giving evidence of the systematic harassment that ordinary Iranians experience at the hands of the regime's security apparatus.

The MSF Facebook page is an extremely active and lively space; each month around 35–50 new pieces of content are posted on the page, and these posts are then shared by hundreds of people. Every post receives

thousands (sometimes tens of thousands) of "likes," and generates long strings of comments and much conversation. Partly due to the sheer number of participants, MSF has gained unprecedented international hypervisibility; it is now considered to be one of the main voices of the online Iranian women's movement. However, in the context of the long history of colonial hegemony in the Middle East, and the tradition of orientalist representations of MENA women in Western media, hypervisibility can be a double-edged sword. It is precisely this hypervisibility on which I wish to focus on here, in discussing some of the challenges facing women's online activism, and some of the risks involved in such campaigns and initiatives.

To begin with, we must consider what it means when the condition of women in one particular nation is singled out and becomes hypervisible—this practice always entails the production of certain subjects rather than the mere discovery of "them." Who exactly becomes visible? And at whose expense? The pitfalls of hypervisibility have been well-studied and well-theorized (Amar 2011): the hypervisible subject is at risk of becoming a fetishized figure, devoid of history and context, occupying public discourse without the ability, autonomy, or agency to speak on its own terms. As such, hypervisibility, especially in the context of unequal power relations, often means becoming visible as a problem in need of a solution (or a savior—and, in many cases, in need of both). In this context, there is always the inherent risk that the MSF campaign will be reduced to one woman, and one cause—as Alinejad herself has become the poster woman for the campaign in Western media. It is equally important to note that, since the start of the MSF campaign, Alinejad has been subjected to numerous attacks by the Iranian regime, as well as by online mobs of vigilantes. She has endured organized and ongoing harassment, hate campaigns, and misogynist cyberattacks.

Therefore, while women's online activism can be emancipatory, it is also vulnerable to being co-opted by neoliberal and neocolonial political interests and agendas (Gajjala 2001; Gajjala et al. 2010; Reilly 2007). Calls for Third World women's emancipation (that fail to situate gender and sexuality in the context of the history of colonial hegemony in the region) have long been a primary method through which neocolonial projects justify expansionist missions (Brophy 2010; Friedman 2005; Gorkemli 2012; Hesford and Schell 2008; Jacques 2008; Kuntsman 2009; Queen 2008; Shakhsari 2012; 2011; Walsh-Haines 2012; Witteborn 2011)—and through which neoliberal capitalist economies expand their markets through freeing women's labor power (Gajjala 2011).

Another equally important challenge is how women's liberation is defined, addressed, and presented by the MSF organizer, Alinejad. By presenting emancipation in and through a narrative of the liberalization of the body and personalized risks (i.e., through the campaign's exclusive focus on the level of individual actions), online campaigns such as MSF actively participate in the production of modern disciplinary subjectivity. In other words, by exclusively focusing on a woman's right to choose her own mode of dress, and on the individual act of unveiling, women's emancipation is perceived as something to be achieved through the processes of identitarian discourse within the liberal framework of individual rights. In this kind of political activity, the popular association between Western individual liberties and women's struggle for social justice is assumed and taken for granted, rather than opened up for feminist critical inquiry and debate. Therefore, at several levels, the MSF campaign naturalizes and sustains the binaries of East/West and Islam/secularism—thereby reproducing the time-worn figure of the oppressed veiled Muslim woman (understood in contrast to the non-Muslim, secular, unveiled, and therefore "free" woman).

As Western media continue to represent Alinejad as the champion of Iranian women's attempts to join the "free world," it is very easy to read the campaign, Alinejad's mission, and her posts on the Facebook page, as pigeonholing religion as a set of illiberal, retrograde practices that suppress and victimize Iranian woman (who, in turn, urgently need to be saved by Western liberalized ideas, if not by Western military intervention). In other words, MSF and its agenda can easily appear to be aligned with the colonial interests of the global North, and can be correspondingly dismissed as one more gendered production of colonial modernity, divorced from Iranian women's genuine, grassroots struggles for social justice.

But MSF operates at more than one level. The other aspect of the MSF campaign is the ordinary women's contributions: the posts and comments, conversations, stories, testimonies, and verbal battles that have become, for participants, enabling sites of self-expression, self-knowing, and engagement with others—who may vehemently oppose and differ from one another. It is evident in many comments that the campaign's Facebook page helps young Iranian women to be more visible and to make their voices and their concerns heard; it helps to bring about new forms of women's leadership, agency, and empowerment. Further, the page allows women to negotiate, publicly and in a dialogical manner, their multiple and often contradictory identities; spread information that

is often sidelined and ignored in mainstream media; confront repressive social and gender practices; challenge sexism and misogyny; and, finally, imagine and articulate alternative forms of protest. It is here, in user-generated content that one can see expressions of collective and assertive female agency that are often overlooked in critiques of women's online activism (and, in particular, critiques of MSF and its organizer, Alinejad).

Women's posts, comments, and conversations often challenge the Iranian regime's moral governance, institutions, and disciplinary surveillance; many posts disrupt the unitary notion of femininity that has been the hegemonic representation of Iranian women in postrevolutionary Iran. The postrevolutionary Islamic government succeeded in shutting down the first and only anti-veiling demonstration on March 8, International Women's Day, in 1979. The regime branded women demonstrators as degenerate individuals who wanted to bring back disreputable expressions of Western femininity. Women's provocative selfies and videos, as well as their posts and comments on the MSF page, often aim to reconceptualize a wide range of marginalized genders as a political mobilizing force. By blurring the lines between private and public, between tabooed representations of femininity and the regime's "Islamic" codes of behavior, these women are giving "disreputable" gender identities a political impetus, often revealing unexpected forms of agency and resistance. The images of women's bodies and their uncovered hair, taken in public spaces delineated by coercive social policies and gender norms, speak of alternative Iranian female subjectivities—these emerge not in private and behind closed doors, but in lived, public spaces. By making claims upon public spaces, and by doing so, often, side by side with other bodies (those of boyfriends, brothers, mothers, sisters, and friends), women's self-representations take the form of collective resistance, challenging mainstream understandings of what it means to be political, and why it is important for women's bodies to inform discussions around what constitutes public and political spaces.

Similarly, women's interventions, testimonies, and stories contribute to the creation of public subjectivities that transcend and circumvent the identitarian subject of Western imagery. For example, although Alinejad self-identifies and represents herself as highly modernized and liberalized, women often mix local Iranian symbols, imageries, and rituals with their pictorial and video representations. In their personal testimonies, women often speak about Iranian and Western gender relations not merely as binary opposites; they freely juxtapose elements from each in order to articulate their own understandings of gender. Far from reproducing a

fixed and choreographed subject position, these expressions often blur the line between the dichotomies of liberal/Islamic, Western/Eastern, and backward/progressive—and offer more ambiguous, hybrid subject positions, which do not privilege one cultural discourse or universe over the other. In other words, although hegemonic codes of modernity are recognized, some creative adaptations and interventions are made here as well.

In their posts and comments, Iranian women are moving away from one-dimensional articulations of the "sociopolitical," and are instead adopting a conjunctural approach wherein different forms of inequality are read as realities that emerge and evolve with one another. Participants fight and debate over issues ranging from patriarchy, sexuality, beauty, misogyny, morality, Islamo- and Arab-phobia, freedom of movement, everyday cultural practices, public/private distinctions, environmental issues, women's health, sexual and gender identities, East/West dichotomy, Iranian women's role models, geopolitics, nuclear negotiations, and, finally, political activism and resistance. Significantly, these topics are debated in relation to one another and their obvious, and not so obvious, connections are explored. In other words, the Facebook page has become a site where different forms of social inequality and injustice are viewed and discussed as intertwined and interlinked. Therefore, this space has become a transient site for civil society, offering women participants the chance to identify, highlight, and examine intersecting patterns of inequalities, as they form virtual conversations around these issues.

For example, on March 2, 2015, Alinejad posted a documentary made by the Iranian regime against the MSF campaign, in which the regime fabricated several accusations against Alinejad, including a false report about her being raped in the streets of London, England because she was not covering her hair (My Stealthy Freedom 2015). In response, commentators did not limit themselves in expressing their condemnation of the regime's actions. Discussions included the use of rape as an instrument of state terror, the rape myth, marital rape, comparisons between rape laws in Iran and other countries (in which some contributors currently live), and even the link between rape and international relations. These layperson's conjunctural forms of analysis indicate a shift among Iranian women from one-dimensional engagement with issues to more multifaceted forms of analysis. Participants not only developed various strategies to fight violence against women, but were also able to connect these strategies to other key social factors such as women's roles in different institutional settings. By the end of this long thread (totaling more than 300 comments),

the false report about Alinejad's rape was located within the larger practices of systematic oppression and gender inequality in Iran. This led to a discussion in which the political and cultural expressions of rape culture and violence against women were charted, and solutions were explored. In this way, the thread became both a space for education, and a site in which the conditions for transformative politics and political change were discussed.

Conclusion

Despite the Iranian regime's excessive filtering of the Internet, and despite its practice of censoring and arresting online activists and bloggers and issuing harsh prison sentences for these individuals, Iranian women's online activism continues to target social, political, cultural, and economic inequalities, as well as environmental crises. These activities have brought the political mobilizing force of cyberspace, as well as the role of women in these movements, sharply into focus. These activities have further succeeded in mobilizing ordinary women around online campaigns for women's rights in Iran, as well as enabling interaction and negotiations with other women in the region. Far from being unreflective interventions, ordinary women's engagements with online campaigns offer crucial insights into understanding the gradual, often invisible, but potentially titanic shifts in the political landscape of contemporary Iranian society— ongoing movements toward more just and equitable social relations.

It is true that social media cannot and will not replace traditional forms of protest such as rallies and demonstrations. However, in Iran, with its oppressive regime, a brutally repressed civil society, and a mass media which systematically censors any meaningful discussion around women's rights, social media is becoming increasingly useful for various kinds of awareness-raising, social protest, and mass mobilization. As such, Iranian women's online activism makes several important interventions into the ways in which social justice movements should be perceived, organized, and executed. In other words, women's use of SNS for political mobilization contributes immensely to the structure and content of struggle for social justice in Iran.

In terms of the structure of social movements and political organizing, women's online activism disrupts the hegemony of top-down, elitist, and often male-dominated activist politics and mass mobilizations in

Iran. It is true that access to online social networks is still limited to digitally literate Iranian women and those who have the means to access the Internet. It is also granted that women's online networks continue to be predominantly run and organized by a select few. However, virtual social spaces, such as Facebook, offer women activists a far more diffuse, lateral, and interactive organizational framework, allowing them, perhaps for the first time, to forge alliances and coalitions across different movements, national boundaries, and geographical distances. In contrast to traditional social movements that have often been revolved around homogenous and closely knit groups of activists, and bound to particular social locations, the adoption of SNS has enabled Iranian women activists to create heterogeneous and increasingly democratic spaces that easily stretch beyond Iran's national borders. Iranian women activists are now able to engage and mobilize political activists in a variety of national and transnational social movements, and to participate in social justice causes that transcend their national boundaries. In short, online networking allows Iranian feminists and activists to organize, mobilize, produce knowledge, and develop and share resources, both locally and globally.

With their informal network structure, SNS promote a framework of openness and collaboration. As such, they inspire ordinary women to participate in different social justice causes, and enable them to be engaged in their own personal empowerment. This includes feminist knowledge production as well as individual and collective growth as social and political agents. Contrary to traditional activist politics, in which positions are often expressed by spokesmen, online platforms and mobilizing campaigns allow women to directly participate in feminist awareness building, and be actively engaged in the collective production of knowledge around gender justice and political change. This active engagement, in turn, equips ordinary women with feminist tools to combat the gender discrimination that is so constitutive of, and ingrained in, the legal, social, cultural, and political practices of the Iranian regime. Finally, SNS enable women's lively engagement in social and political debates, in real time, and with other women, who bring with them a wealth of feminist knowledge about gender equality, feminist struggles, and activist politics.

The utilization of SNS by Iranian women has also impacted the content, or the "subject," of political activism. Women's posts, comments, and discussions are the embodiment of the feminist slogan "the personal, the private, and the intimate are political"; these interventions challenge

that which has traditionally been considered *not* political, and excluded from the quest for social justice in Iran. Emma Goldman, herself a feminist anarchist activist, once famously declared that, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." Now considered one of the classical feminist quotations, this statement's relevance in the context of contemporary Iranian women's online activism cannot be overemphasized. Goldman's proclamation at once points to the limitations of vanguard political activism and makes the freedom of women's bodies a central subject of revolution and change. Online campaigns such as MSF are enabling sites in which Iranian women can publicly talk about their everyday acts of defiance, even if this amounts to a simple image of unveiled hair, "inappropriate" laughter in a public place, or a picture of a palm with the gender equality sign written on it. Iranian women's active participation on online platforms empowers them to connect the intimate stories of their private lives, their excluded bodies, and their forbidden desires to the larger context of Iran's struggle for a more inclusive and gender-egalitarian future.

Therefore, in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the mobilizing power of Iranian women, we need to look beyond the traditional forms of political activism. Iranian women have reoriented their mobilizing power to alternative arenas; they have chosen other political targets, and they have developed different modes of political engagement. This type of political activism tends to be more ad hoc, less centralized, less formal, and less dependent on fixed political structures; it reflects the diversity of women's lives and works toward grassroots democracy rather than unity at all costs. Iranian women are erasing the patriarchal demarcation lines between politics, everyday cultural practices, identity processes, and social and private bodies. Through posting their personal testimonies, Iranian women, who are denied a voice, have found that informal online networks, with their large geographical reach, offer the possibility of transmitting messages, connecting with others, and reshaping lives. Within this framework, political activism is not only about challenging the legitimacy of political rule, or changing the state. It also, and perhaps more fundamentally, targets everyday oppressive gender practices and sets out to change the disciplinary measures that target those who are kept at the margins of Iranian society. This kind of activism calls into question the entire legal, social, cultural, gendered, and familial apparatus on which the patriarchal Iranian regime proclaims its truth and founds its legitimacy.

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Performative Agency: A Realization of an Objective Clash of "Social Justice" Discourses or a Requiem for a Subjective Silence

Sara Naderi

Since the 1979 Revolution, Iranian feminists have consistently criticized government policies as discriminatory against women. The country's law-makers and leaders, conversely, have referred to their Islamic concepts of justice and the dignity of women in rationalizing state policies regarding women, concepts that are completely different from Western ideas of gender equality and equal rights advocated largely through the feminist discourse. It seems that this binary—Western versus Islamic narratives of women's rights and agency—has permeated, and been upheld by, most of the academic, political, and public debates pertaining to Iranian women's situation to the extent that one can hardly find concepts of agency and social justice that are not bound by this binary.

Employing "western feminist perspective" and western conception of "rights," a significant array of Iranian feminist scholars view government policies to have "closed gate to women." As such, in order to resist the

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discriminatory laws and become an agent of change, women must either "jump over the fences" or "crash through them" (Moghissi 2008: 553). In this discourse, almost all state policies relating to women are considered as tools of the patriarchal tradition to oppress women (Afkhami 1994: 13). From this standpoint, the women's agency reveals itself at the moment when Iranian women either challenge the discriminatory laws legally or through grassroots mobilization, or resist the imposed rules or norms (of the Islamic laws and traditions) through civil disobedience. The former can be observed in the Iranian women's One-Million Signature Campaign for the Repeal of Discriminatory Laws (2006–2009) (Ahmadi Khorasani 2010), while the latter can be seen through perceive gradual changes to veiling and lifestyle among young Iranian women as a symbol of their rebellion against state ideology (Moaveni 2005). Therefore, in this Western feminist discourse, which seems to enjoy popularity among Iranian feminist scholars and activists, the *agency of Iranian women is defined solely in terms of their resistances and struggles against the discriminatory laws and imposed norms of the Islamic Republic*. The noble intentions of advocates of these views aside, the normative expectation of Iranian feminists has had a visible epistemological effect on studying women's subjectivity to the extent that Iranian women's subjectivity and agency are reduced to those moments and mode of actions that Western feminist recognizes as resistance.

I acknowledge these resistances as clear and important signs of agency, especially among urban, educated, middle- and upper-class women. However, I cannot but wonder if these celebrated manifestations of Iranian women's resistances—insofar as the aforementioned practices are *inferred* by feminist theories as signs of agency—are in fact the effect of the theoretical expectations of Western-trained Iranian feminists, which in this chapter I call "popular feminism." In other words, I ask if women's practices of resistance are conceptualized, theorized, and given scholarly space because they fit Iranian feminism's normative gaze that is borrowed from Western feminism and its definitions of agency. I claim that the gaze of popular feminism is so influenced by western feminist training that it leads them to make selective observations of Iranian situation. Consequently, needless to dig into specific lived experiences of Iranian women, popular feminist discourse only observes such social and public manifestations of women's lived experiences as they can be objectified in either forms of resistance against or obedience to Islamic discourse. Therefore, what

remain sharply absent here are women's lived experiences in their entirety, which are unyielding to feminist binary of domination/resistance, as well as Iranian women's own unique interpretations of their action that do not accord with feminist epistemologies. The reason behind my line of inquiry stems from my field research on the lived, everyday experiences of women in Tehran, a research that, as we will see, shows that women's agency covers social and cultural territories vaster and more complicated than grasped by popular feminism's celebrated agency of women. I will argue that if we simply let the actors on the ground define their agency according to their experiences and worldviews, we will discover diverse and heterogeneous modes of agency of Iranian women that are hidden from popular feminism's normative perspectives.

In this respect, alternative epistemological approaches are offered by few scholars in their studies of the women's conditions in Iran. Patricia Higgins (1985) explores the reasons behind supporting ideological Islam by the majority of Iranian women during the 1979 Revolution. Her study can shed light on why, aside from a short-lived and limited women's protest movement in March–April 1979, Iranian women (especially in small towns and in urban areas) by and large were silent or supported the discriminatory laws like mandatory veiling and changes to the Family Law (1967) when these measures were introduced after the Revolution. Higgins attempts to discover the reason for this phenomenon from Iranian women's own interpretations of their situation. A similar concern could be seen in the ethnographic study of Erica Friedle (1994) of mature, traditional women in southwestern of Iran. Likewise, Arzoo Osanloo (2009) offers a participant observer's account of women's construction of the concept of "women's rights," a shared understanding of rights that is very different from the cut-and-dry Western concept of "rights." The differences of these studies aside, they share a conscious attempt—regardless of their success—to move beyond understanding Iranian women's worldviews and practices through normative expectations of popular feminism that only acknowledges Iranian women when their practices fit predefined, feminist concepts of equality, freedom, and gender.

Based on my field research on Iranian women, I venture to offer an alternative understanding of women's agency in this chapter. I seek to probe the influences of the two antagonistic discourses on women's self-consciousness in an attempt at offering a view of the Iranian women's

agency that—while caught in the discursive binaries such as East/West, tradition/modernity, and Islamic ideology/Western feminism—goes beyond binaries and carves out of everyday life an authentic and heterogeneous agency. It is the mutually permeating elements identifiable with popular feminism as well as the Shi'i values of the state—hybridized by women through the pragmatics of everyday life—that makes Iranian women's agency authentic, complicated, and unique. Hence, while I agree with Osanloo that we should refute the binary logic of Islamic oppression/Western liberation or "Islamic Resistance/western Imperialism" when probing Iranian "women's question" (2009: 205), I nonetheless insist that the seesaw effect of the abovementioned antagonistic discourses in postrevolutionary Iran permeates the women's self-consciousness and everyday life experiences, although these influences cannot be read as the sum or deduction of two numeric values. To be clear, the fluctuating synthesis of these two competing discourses in every moment of women's everyday life generates a unique and authentic agency independent from the aforesaid antagonistic discourses. In what follows, I will show how internalizing antagonistic discourses of gender (in-)justice among Tehrani women's minds and the construction of female identity through the process of socialization paves the way for women's *performative agency* in public and private domains.

In doing so, after brief description of the methodology of my field research, I will offer an explanation of disjointed and heterogenic Tehrani women's socialization process culminating in different types of identities which have one thing in common: the inconsistent cohabitation of two contradictory *ideal types* of identity, namely the "paternal model" and the "maternal model" which lead to the "crisis of subjectivity" in women's identity. I will then elaborate the impact of the two rival discourses of social justice (Islamic and western feminist) on the "crisis of subjectivity" and agency of women of Tehran.

Sources of Women's Power

In following pages, I will present partial results from my fieldwork, conducted in 2011 in Tehran, on the dialectics of domination and subordination in everyday lives of women (Naderi 2013; Shahabi and Naderi 2012). The study relied on qualitative methods and in particular the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin (1990). Data were collected through

in-depth interviews and participant observation. The research sample comprised Tehrani women between 20 and 60 years old. The rationale in choosing the sample size was "theoretical saturation," with sampling continuing as long as no new theme emerged. On this basis, 30 people were interviewed. The interview scheme mainly included such themes as consumption, beauty, family life (relationship with the spouse and relatives), workplace, house chores, and the meaning of conduct in each of these areas for individuals.

According to the results of this qualitative field research, contradictory lived experiences of women, from childhood to older ages, shape different ideal models of subjectivity and identity. Digging into the contents of deep interviews and women's own narratives of these models enabled me to categorize the chaotic and contradictory definitions of subjectivity in women's narratives into two "ideal types." By "ideal type" I refer to the Max Weber: in the process of constructing the ideal type, the sociologist should be able to "abstract himself from reality" (Weber 1978: 23) and constrict a "pure type" which has a clear and coherent unity of meaning (Weber 1978: 23). This degree of coherence and unity of meaning leads the ideal type to be less likely to be found in the real world (Weber 1978: 23). Ideal types should be constructed *sharply and clearly*, and the more they have such characteristics—or "the more unrealistic they are" (Weber 1978: 24)—the better they accomplish their task. Thus, my proposed models below are *constructed ideal types*, which contain logical consistencies not found in reality. However, what we can see clearly in the everyday lives of women is the contradictory and inconsistent definitions of the self and subjectivity arising from different models of subjectivity internalized by women.

My two proposed "ideal types" of subjectivity are called "paternal model" and "maternal model." This naming arises from the modern division of labor within Iranian family in which the father is symbolized as the "breadwinner" and the mother as the "housewife." Consequently, the identity and subjectivity of the mother is mainly defined in relation to family and domestic life while the father's identity and subjectivity is largely defined in relation to public and social life (Naderi 2013: 104). *These models are abstracted from the experiences of interviewed women.*

The Paternal Model

Because of the lack of physical differentiation between girls and boys at early ages (under 10 years old) and their equal status in society, the girl is treated more or less equally to the boy. In Iranian public space, this "more or less equality" shows itself through the fact that co-ed kindergarten is allowed for young children and mandatory veiling applies to females at the age of nine. This does not deny differential treatment of girls and boys in Iranian families and culture. Nor does it deny that the *hailing* (*à la* Althusser) of boys and girls by making references to their sexuality starts from early childhood through having gender-specific toys, colors, and apparel. I rather suggest that the gendered "hailing" of children in their young age is incomparable with their adolescence when their secondary sexual characteristics emerge. The semi-free gender space in childhood provides Iranian girls with the opportunity to experience a *relatively* non-gendered freedom that they cannot normally experience in an older age. These similarities make the girl feel the concept of "human," in Sandra Lee Bartky, the same concept whose most outstanding characteristic is "culture making" (Bartky 1990). I call this the "human subjectivity" in the paternal model here. The priority of "culture making" over other characteristics of human beings in Bartky's definition of "human" contains an important implication: the priority of individual's role in society and her cognitive progress over other aspects of her life. This concept values the mind over the body, individual over community, and individual progress over any other value.

Formal education, in early elementary school, provides all girls and boys with equal conditions. Even the little girl's mandatory veiling in education is used to hide her main distinction from boys—her long hair. Formal elementally school outfit for girls (especially in 1980s and 1990s) and the imposed ban on cosmetics for high school girls have been arisen from ideological attempts to reduce the sexual differences between girls and boys in the educational system, rationalized in terms or reducing distractions so the students would concentrate on learning. Gender segregation in schools is meant to limit contact with, and thus attraction to, the opposite sex. While gender separation in high schools and the university has in fact led to the opposite results of what the state had intended, it had worked well at the elementary school level by erasing small, visible sexual differences between girls and boys. What formal education aims to attain is to

increase individual mental abilities. Body and physical differences are formally taken to be nonfactors in formal education. Ministry of Education imposes uniforms to minimize the physical–sexual differences.

But this state policy has produced an interesting outcome in terms of the girls' identificatory socialization. From very early years of education, the girls are asked, "What career would you like to pursue?" This question is continually asked throughout the school years. It consistently evokes the one idea—that the most important issue for a girl outside of home is her career and social status. Such stress on career evokes the image of the father, the breadwinner. Even if the mother has a paid career, the *children are nonetheless socialized to associate mother primarily with the household*. Stated differently, the mother's primary identity/role is associated with the "inside," while the father's primary identity/role relates to the "outside" and his profession. Therefore, we observe, the little girl is socialized, in the process of education, to pursue a career in the future: this is how the girl, growing into a young adult, internalizes the values identified with her father and thus identifies with, and develops a subjectivity within, the *paternal model*. This identificatory process clearly disrupts gender-essentialist arguments.

The ultimate goal and identity of education is therefore to prepare the individual for future careers. As soon as a profession is discussed with the young girl, the mother's profession and her household work are rendered secondary. The mother is rendered the "Other," the one to be distanced from the girl's developing subjectivity through the long, daily process of schooling. The girl is taught *not* to be like her. Girls are urged to study hard or else they would become "nobody," in this case, the "housewife." In many cases, this term becomes a more fitting replacement for its original connotation—that is, "if you do not study, you will end up with childrearing!" It is interesting to note that the term "nobody" (*hichkas*)—referring to lack of social status acquired through education—more than any other word, reveals the masculine basis of education.

In the paternal model, the individual self-development stands as the highest value. Therefore, whatever thwarts the pupils' development in this direction, especially in their social life, is regarded to be an obstacle. The logical outcome of such drive for self-achievement is the diminishing value of the mother's role in that maternal sacrifices for raising children is looked upon as an impediment to career-oriented self-fulfillment. In this social–developmental model, the father symbolizes the mind and

the mother, the body. The paternal model regards improving cognitive abilities as the main objective of individual life. As Dorothy Smith (1987) argues, we can witness this priority of cognitive abilities over other abilities in high-ranking business and scientific professions which are mostly occupied by men but ironically take advantage of women's labor in lower administrative positions (secretary, typist, etc.). The main requirement for perfect fulfillment of the mostly scientific vocations is the doer's abstraction from the environment and the body. In the paternal model, occupying these high-ranking professions becomes the main goal in life. Hence, the more she nears this ideal, or the stronger the mind becomes, the more she is abstracted from her body which implies she should pay less attention to her body and appearance.

The Maternal Model

Although emulating the mother is in the girl's mind from the outset, this emulation stands out even more when the daughter is growing up and her physical-sexual appearance becomes more conspicuous. Because of her body, the daughter identifies with the mother, and by the advent of puberty, she fully realizes her physical differences from boys and keeps her distance from them. After puberty, the girl is gradually pushed into a different world, and depending on the extent of identification with the father, some girls perceive this push as being condemned to exile from the "human" life, according to paternal model, while others have a more moderate perception of it (Naderi 2013). It should be noted that, at this moment, the paternal model has already devalued the mother's image for the girl. Through identification with the mother, the girl associates her mother with the household, the "inside," and her continuous labor to maintain the household. Here, the notion of the "individual" present in the paternal model negates prioritizing the family—that is, the mother's arch task. Furthermore, in contrast with the paternal–purposive logic, the maternal model teaches the girl that the way out of life's vicissitudes and obstacles for a woman is not as simple as what she is taught at school because she does not occupy the same status as men. Instead, she has certain "natural" attributes that men lack, and by mobilizing these attributes she can achieve her goals.

These attributes include "feminine tricks" (*makr-e zananeh*): using or abusing (according to paternal logic) the "feminine attraction" as a source

of power, or as Catherine Hakim (2011) calls it, utilizing her "erotic capital." Therefore, in this maternal model, the feminine body occupies a higher status than the mind, or at least holds the same status with it. In legitimizing the use of the "erotic capital" as source of power for women, one of my research participants, a sports champion, stated: "To me, femininity (beauty, etc.) comprises a series of instruments (*abzar*) controlled by women. It would be quite stupid not to use the tools and weapons you are armed with. Don't men use theirs?" According to the maternal logic, therefore, women possess completely different subjectivity than men, and they should exercise different agency. Such difference does not denote weakness, only different sources of power.

Hence, the maternal model emphasizes the priority of the household (circular time, routine chores, family, feminine tricks) from which the feminine identity stems, while the paternal model prioritizes the social role (linear progress, absolute individuation, absolute ethical codes). These two models are clearly in sharp contradiction. Another point to be considered is the mutual humiliation of each model by its opposite, the reason being their differential linguistic and reasoning tools. The two models do not possess similar signification system and cannot therefore coexist without denying one another within the girl's identificatory process. According to my research findings, attachment to pure unspoken, incomprehensible drive is what distinguishes maternal language from paternal language, the latter fully identified with symbolic discourse. In other words, when explaining themselves women speak fluently with logical and linguistic coherence. The sentences follow a logical pattern, with no or few pauses in explaining the final goal in mind. In contrast, in speaking from maternal model, sentences are awkwardly unfinished and do not possess a linear logic. In other words, the maternal model's logic, attached to the pure feminine drives like maternal emotions, is largely feeble in employing symbolic language and presenting goals in logical and linear propositions devoid of sentimental charges. The domination of paternal model, which arises from men's lived experience within public space and linguistic system, makes signification system's logic more similar to the masculine drive, and thus, there remains little room for feminine drive in shaping the linguistic logic. Even when women want to speak of the logic behind their action according to the maternal model, they cannot, because in doing so they have to use the linguistic structure that has already been built according to logic of the paternal model. Thus, in using the domi-

nant symbolic discourse, the maternal language is a mute language, lacking any power to logically justify itself, and therefore performing mainly through the negation and subversion of the dominant symbolic discourse.

To make my argument clear, let us reread and reinterpret this discrepancy between linguistic tools of paternal and maternal models through Julia Kristeva. She argues that when paying attention to language and its implications, we have to focus on two functions: language as the articulate and systematic expression of meaning, and language as the feeling motivated or more clearly, as the venting of the subject's drives and energy (Kristeva 1980: 133).

To explain two different discourses in language, Kristeva employs "symbolic" and "semiotic" categories respectively. According to Kristeva, while symbolic discourse tends to "reduce as much as possible the semiotic component" (1980: 134), semiotic discourse as a negative force in language "elided, attacked, or corrupted the symbolic function" (1980: 134). However, the semiotic cannot speak independently because it is a mere negation of symbolic discourse, and according to Kristeva, such "a multiple and sometimes even uncomprehensible signified is nevertheless communicated" (1980: 134). The rhythmic nonsymbolic characteristic of poetry explains the negation in semiotic discourse in language. Interestingly, through psychoanalysis, Kristeva attributes the semiotic discourse to the "desire to mother" and the symbolic discourse as the "cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother" by the father's law (1980: 136). While my research was not informed by psychoanalysis, Kristeva's distinction was clearly observable through the differential logics and languages employed by the participants in explaining their bodily–emotional and mental–logical experiences.

Alongside the growth and development of symbolic language as the language of modern science, the semiotic language is more than ever marginalized in the public domain, individuals' interactions and intersubjectivities as a means of justification, except in few cases such as poetic language. In my research, I encountered the semiotic, maternal discourse not only in the interviews, through words and tangible utterances of individuals, but also through their facial expressions, paralinguistic signs, meaningful pauses, significant silences, inability to justify, and sometimes expressing logical dissatisfactions and confrontation against deeds that are based on the maternal model. In other words, maternal logic was achieved not just through what was said but also through what could not be said directly

despite attempts by interviewees and interviewer. Maternal logic could just be felt through nonlinguistic means and symbolic silence.

In order to attain the means of justification against the paternal model's reasoning, the maternal model turns to norms and nature. It is founded upon a common belief in culture about the sexual–physiological differences that lead to the construction of two different modes of consciousness in men and women (the same way the semiotic language owes its being to the individual's nature and unconscious). The most important axis of these conventional cultural common beliefs is the family. Family-centeredness in a woman's life is justified in two ways: (a) based on her supposedly "distinct nature" as opposed to men, and (b) based on accepting customarily the "paternal model" as a mere masculine model and define the feminine subjectivity as complementary to masculine subjectivity in order to preserve the family. In other words, to preserve the family, men should follow the paternal model, while achieving the same goal requires women to follow the opposite, maternal model.

From the paternal model's perspective, if a woman is supposed to be looked upon as a thinking being, as a being that has a share in civilization and human progress, she must overcome her feminine characteristics and accept the paternal model's concept of progress and self-achievement. This logic dominates education, science, and philosophy. This logic is the basis of the Cartesian logical reasoning that introduces humans as thinking beings abstracted from the body. Therefore, the paternal model is equipped with the greatest means of communication, namely the dominant language of science and philosophy. The paternal model speaks fluently, lectures well, and questions all the previous customs by means of critical reasoning. Even when the individual defends an act stemming from the maternal model by means of symbolic language, the domination of paternal model in symbolic language leads her to stutter in her speaking and even invalidates her logic.

So let us now focus on the consequences of these two models.

CRISIS OF SUBJECTIVITY

The abovementioned could boil down to the fact that *two alien modes of identification*—incomprehensible to each other as they each possesses diverging means of communication (semiotic and symbolic languages)—*are set together in the Iranian woman's consciousness and keep clashing.*

This clash stands out in the individual's private and social life. These two identificatory models mutilate and undermine one another in women's conduct and actions. When an individual is about to act based on the maternal model, the value and significance of her action are questioned by the paternal model which already dominates her mind. Likewise, when she is about to act based on the paternal model, the value and importance of her action are negated by the maternal model. *This continued process of negation leads women to always feel they are not in the right place. They often feel lost, are never satisfied with themselves, and do not attribute any inner meaning and mental integrity to themselves.* The meaning–structure of women's actions is perpetually and agonizingly permeated by the conflicting models. To a stay-at-home woman, house chores appear demanding, useless, and repetitive duties, precisely because she has already internalized, through years of schooling, values of the paternal model that negate and belittle domestic life. Conversely, when the woman engages in professional career, the maternal model constantly beckons her to regard her career as useless burden, driving her to seek meaning in domestic life. At any given moment, Iranian women seek the meaningful life in predefined categorical activities opposite to their current life activity. Therefore, she never "seizes the day." I call this the "crisis of subjectivity." In a given situation, the higher the conflict between the paternal and maternal models, the more they remove the meaning of every moment in women's life. This leads to an inner conflict that diminishes the woman's individual self-confidence. Reduced self-confidence and self-esteem decreases women's ability to make firm decisions regarding the enactment of their feminine agency. *The crisis of subjectivity renders Iranian women's agency increasingly dependent on the immediate situation.*

The Impact of Antagonistic Rival Narratives of Social Justice on the Crisis of Subjectivity

As discussed above, the gender justice narrative of popular feminism in postrevolutionary Iran has emerged in opposition to the ideological–Islamic notion of gender justice. However, we must ask, what is the impact of each competing narrative of gender justice (feminist and Islamic) in the crisis of subjectivity in Iranian women's lived experiences? At first glance, it seems that the Islamic narrative of gender justice can be fully identified with, and included in, the maternal model, because in this discourse we

witness more emphasis on women's familial and domestic roles than on individual subjectivity. Thus, the values attributed to women and their subjectivity stand in significant distance from those of men. In contrast, popular feminist narrative of gender justice and gender equality pertains to the paternal model, because it stresses the equal status of men and women in public and private spheres, emphasizing individual achievement, since the feminist discourse is informed by the concept of universal equal rights. But, this is not the entire story.

On the one hand, the Islamic discourse of gender justice is not as consistent as it seems. In fact it is paradoxical. In educational system, the state attempts at destressing gender differences and future attraction to the opposite sex by stressing learning as a means of achieving social status through future career choices. Thus, in the early years of elementary schools and through formal education, the paternal model is internalized by little girls. Furthermore, the primary advantage of (imposed) veiling is to conceal gender differences and provide women with safe spaces, which lead to potentially equal opportunity in career. This is one of the formal logic and philosophy of veiling promoted by the hegemonic Islamic discourse, although in practice veiling does not bring these advantages for women. This narrative of veiling shares many aspects in common with the narrative of body in paternal model. Veiling is supposed to contribute to outweighing women's sexuality by their individual achievements: the Islamic discourse ignores and covers the bodily characteristics of women in order to count women as human subjects in the public sphere. Erasing the particularities of the female body in favor of defining the pure notion of "human subjectivity" is precisely what the paternal model prescribes. While in the modern narrative of paternal model we just ignore these differences, in the Islamic narrative we conceal these differences. They both follow the same logic by using different means.

On the other hand, popular feminism has been mainly defined in contradiction with the Islamic narrative, rejecting the proposition of the Islamic discourse. Thus, popular Iranian feminism cannot fully adhere to one discourse of Western feminism (radical, socialist, or liberal feminisms). Iranian popular feminism shifts ideologically depending on the specific antagonist relations against the Islamic discourse. Iranian feminism therefore emerges primarily as *reactive* to the Islamic gender discourse: (a) regarding family matters and the role of women in family, popular feminism advocates the paternal model due to its theoretical allegiance with

socialist feminism; (b) regarding feminine body politics, popular feminism emerges as a melange of postmodern and French feminisms that recognize the feminine body as a means of resistance against patriarchal, Islamic discourse. Therefore, Iranian feminism supports unveiling as means of resistance against the dominant Islamic discourse and the state's mandatory veiling (see Moaveni 2005). Indeed, this highlighting of the feminine body and its power cannot be categorized in the paternal model's definition of body.

Hence, not only are Iranian women burdened with *split subjectivity* as a consequences of being exposed to diverging identity models (paternal and maternal) through socialization and schooling, they also simultaneously carry two identity models within their self-consciousness as represented by two antagonistic discourses (feminism and ideological Islamic) in public and political spheres. This is a "conflict inside the other conflict." In popular feminist discourse, subjectivity is defined according to the standards of paternal model, while women's body and body politics are defined according to the standards and criteria of maternal model. None of the rival discourses (Islamic and feminism) can perfectly attach themselves to a consistence and hemogenous model and represent a consistence and hemogenous model— whether maternal or paternal. Therefore, none of these external discourses includes logical consistency in the women consciousness. Consequently, each discourse losses its logical coherence and consistency in women's self-consciousness and becomes vulnerable to different and contradictory narratives depending on a women's specific spatiotemporal situation. There would be no longer the one discourse that fully governs over the subject; rather, it is the female subject that borrows different components from rival discourses according to the exigencies of the concrete situation she faces. Such integration of two antagonistic logical models (paternal and maternal) within two antagonistic political discourses (Islamic and feminist) causes diminishment of the borderline between these rival discourses of gender justice in the everyday lives of women.

The situation becomes more complicated when we remember that the female individual is also trapped in the "crisis of subjectivity" which prevents her from such agency to absorb and reshape the outside, fluctuating discourses in her mind and build a new, coherent identity. Hand in hand with the lack of logical consistency in both dominant discourses, the crisis of subjectivity robs women's actions of any rigid and strong subjective and discursive meaning. In the absence of solid subjectivity and coherent discourse(s), what remains is merely the judgment of "others" or "audi-
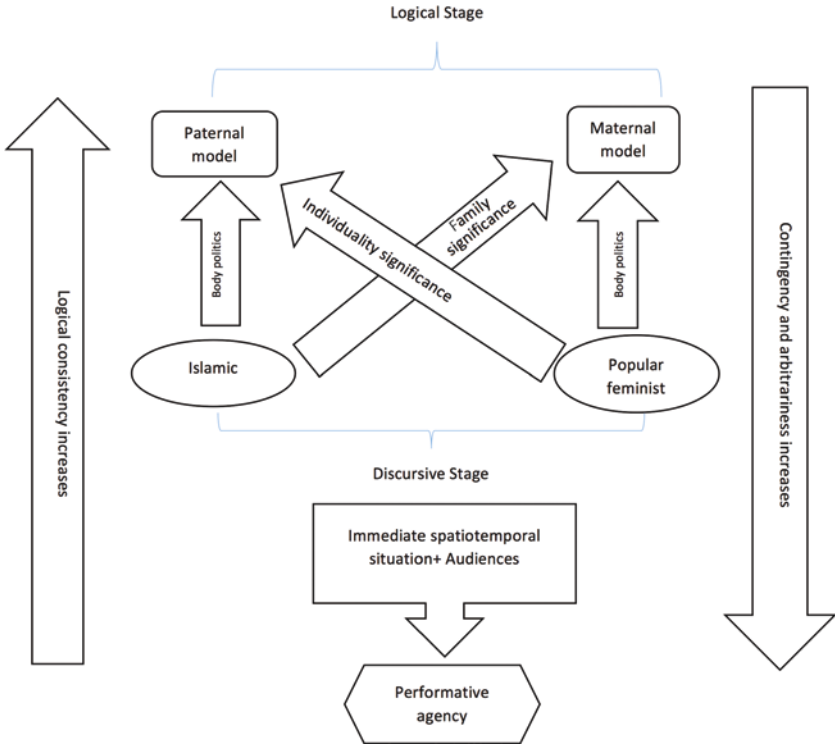
Fig. 12.1   Performative agency

ence." *The collective judgment of an audience with specific spatiotemporal situations determines the meaning of agency and oppression in that situation.* This leads women's agency to a *fluid and contingent agency* that acquires its legitimacy from its present audience within a specific spatiotemporal situation. I call this *the performative agency* (Fig. 12.1).

The Performative Agency

The crisis of subjectivity in Iranian women's consciousness and everyday experiences causes both maternal and paternal model in a given situation to be void of significance for the individual. Consequently, the woman loses her motivation, and eventually her inner power, to make a strong

decision and enact agency. However, since humans can only live in a meaningful world, under the condition of crisis of subjectivity she will seek out the meaning of her actions in the outside. This is when the individual in quest for meaning of her actions would rely on the immediately present discourses in her environment and the judgments she receives from her audience, and she consequently acts in a way according to the discursive requirements for meaningful action. However, as discussed, popular feminist and Islamic discourses, both dominant in the public sphere, lack the logical consistency that fully attaches each to either paternal or maternal model. Therefore, as we can see that the dependency of actor's meaning on the outside (audience) does not mean her dependency upon any particular discourse (either feminist or Islamic discourse), because there is no actual logically coherent discourse in public space. Rather, *the meaning of a woman's action is largely dependent upon her present addressees.* This sort of agency confirms itself through acknowledgements and credits it receives from the agent's audience. Therefore, the individual's feeling of agency or lack of agency in every situation strictly depends on the audience of her theater of agency and the position of actor in the hierarchical power structures defined by dominant narrative of the majority of audiences and their preferred discourse (feminist or Islamic). The difference of "domination of one specific discourse on women's definition of agency" with the "domination of audience's narrative of one specific discourse" is that while the former consists of logical coherence and less dependents on the moment of performance and its audience, the latter is more fluid, flexible, and dependent on audience's interpretation of discourse in every spatiotemporal situation. Therefore, going from one spatiotemporal situation to another, the same women can perform completely contradictory actions and in both of them feel to be exercising agency. I call this "performative agency." This agency defines itself by the admiration and credit it receives from specific audience. Therefore, changing the audience—that is changing the interpretation of dominant discourses by the persons witnessing a woman's action—changes an actor's definition of agency and power. *When there is no external coherent discourse and no consistent definition of subjectivity upheld by an actor, every action has the potential to be simultaneously recognized as powerful exercise of resistance and agency as well as a sign of subjugation and lack of agency.* For example, not wearing cosmetics can simultaneously be recognized as "political resistance" against capitalist hegemony and as a sign of "oppression" and "subjugation" under Islamic hegemony.

As a result, the actor becomes dependent on her "interpolation" by the dominant discourse. However, in contrast to Althusser (2001), the interaction of two antagonistic dominant discourses in Iranian public space deprives both of them of logical consistency and rigidity, and consequently makes them vulnerable and open to different contradictory interpretations. Dependency on audience makes women's actions *extremely political.* By "political" I denote pursuing power or occupying higher ranks in competition with others: to achieve credit and admiration from her audience, the actor needs to be observable and for that she must occupy the highest position among her peers. Thus, the only important criterion here is occupying the highest position. This is what I mean by "extremely political." But each hierarchy mainly depends on the specific spatiotemporal moment of performance and the present audience. Indeed, this public sphere is extremely political, but this extremely political situation simultaneously depoliticizes itself by blocking emerging any kind of political agency and actions, because performative logic always already deprives action from any kind of rigid and logically coherent agency, which is the minimum requirement for political action. As such, when every act becomes political, no act would be political. When everything can be read as discrimination or oppression there would be no dominant and consistent meaning for discrimination and oppression. In the absence of any logically consistent discourse in public sphere, performative logic transforms every contradictory action into a symbol of agency and therefore reduces *the concept of agency to a void signifier.* What remains of women's subjectivity, then, is mere performance within the theater of agency.

Conclusion

Having come to this point, I venture to say that performative agency—arising as a result of crisis of subjectivity due to its contradictory exposure to two logically inconsistent, dominant discourses (popular feminist and Islamic)—ironically manifests both women's agency and their political silence simultaneously. Here, we end up having the classical case of the oriental (Iranian) woman caught between an Islamic state's and the liberal/feminist notions of rights: the woman in question is thus silenced by the competing discourses that try to represent her (see Spivak 1988). What I want to add to Spivak's important statement regarding the silence of subaltern women under the gaze of two antagonistic discourses is that Spivak

still assumes there is a voice to be recovered. In other words, in Spivak's argument, the very claim about the subaltern woman's silence under the gaze of two discourses of representation implies assuming a "stable subject" that had something to say but has been silenced. However, I would argue that the stable subject to be recovered from out of the rival discourses is rather a *fiction* in the case of Iranian women. *The deepest and direst consequence of this war of representations between two rival discourses is the subversion and undermining of the "subject" itself.* What stands here is the nihilistic moment of performative agency which destroys every coherent meaning of agency in the actors' mind. What remains is continued competition for achieving credit in the eyes of the audience within the theater of power: regardless of who the audience are and what end is pursued in this theater of agency, standing at the top of each hierarchical discourse becomes the main objective of women's agency.

Back to our starting point, almost all of the existing discourses of social justice deployed for explaining Iranian women's demands for gender justice suffer from one shared, important weakness: they impose their own definition of agency on Iranian women and try to interpret women's actions according to their own normative conception of agency, while, results of my fieldwork shows that *Iranian women's performativity agency is based on the contingency of the situation; consequently, such agency stands at the farthest point from any normative and logically consistent notion of agency*. Thus, I conclude that *to understand Iranian women's struggles for gender justice, a new epistemological framework is needed*—one that sees Iranian women as who they are and not as embodiments of ideologically sanctioned notions of social or gender justice. This new epistemological framework should take into account all dominant discursive definitions of social justices and gender justice *not as normative notions* of agency but *as a factor*—and indeed an important factor—in the complicated process of forming agency in Iranian women's consciousness.

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The Voice of the Workers: Iran's Labour Movement and Reflections on the Project-Seasonal Workers' Union of Abadan, 1979–1980

Mohammad Safavi

This chapter offers the first researched account of workers' mobilization and unionization in the city of Abadan, Iran, under the Project-Seasonal Workers Union of Abadan (PSWUA) in 1979–1980. Following a brief history of the workers' movements in the twentieth century Iran that will contextualize PSWUA activism, this chapter draws on the author's recollections as a union activist, the scattered memoirs of other activists, and other published reports on the subject to offer a comprehensive account of this historic experience. The chapter shows how in the absence of institutions to protect the workers' rights, the Union assumed vast institutional functions beyond its mandates, capacities, and resources. I will argue that precisely because of its growing presence in Abadan, the PSWUA became

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the target of repression. Sadly, this trend has been consistent with the history of labour movement in Iran.

Organized Labour Movement in Iran: A Hasty Glance

The struggles of organized labour movement for socio-economic justice in Iran emerged in the early twentieth century. Labour activist tradition was introduced by Iranian migrant workers and political activists in Caucasus and Russia as they returned to Iran during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911. "From 1891 to 1911, close to 200,000 Iranian workers migrated to Caucasus and Central Asia in Tsarist Russia in search of job" (Parsa Benab 2004: 36). The majority of migrant Iranian workers were temporary workers (*kargaran-e fasli*).

Migrant Iranian workers were mainly employed in the Baku oil fields, as well as in tobacco, construction, and mining industries. Female workers comprised a subpopulation of Iranian workers in the north: according to Touraj Atabaki, at the beginning of the twentieth century, 8.3 per cent of Iranian oil workers in Baku were women (2007: 43). In 1904, in the city of Baku, some Iranian migrant workers, political activists, and university students organized an affiliate of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, named Hemmat (Persian for "effort"), which promoted socialism, workers' rights, women's rights, and free public education, in addition to opposing Tsarist tyranny in Russia. Hemmat members were workers from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. In the late nineteenth century, Iranian migrant workers in Caucasus were involved in various job actions and workers' strikes that were organized by the Russian Social Democrats. Consequently, these workers gained tremendous, first-hand experiences in trade union activism and organizational aspects. These experiences proved invaluable as they were later used by labour activists: from the 1906–1911 Constitutional Revolution up to the 1979 Revolution that toppled the Shah, we witness four intermittent periods and four interrupted organized labour movements, each corresponding with periods of major political crises and the weakening of the central authoritarian regime. Let us attend to these periods as they will be useful for understanding my analysis of the PSWUA.

(a) 1906–1911: From Pre-constitutionalism to the Decline of the Constitutional Revolution

Iran's first organized workers' strike took place in Anzali in the northern province of Gilan in protest against the fishing industry controlled by the Armenian–Russian merchant Lianozov, who, in 1873, had acquired exclusive rights to "the entire fishing industry of the southern Caspian sea" (Afary 1996: 156). The concession led to brewing anger among local fishermen. "In November 1906, three-thousand workers occupied the city [of Anzali's] Telegraph Office and demanded the termination of Lianozov contract and an end to abuse of local authorities" (Afary 1996: 156). In 1907, the first newly formed Printers' Union organized a four-day job action "in support of freedom of the press" (Parsa Benab 2004: 35). In the following years, more workers from different small or larger industries realized the importance of organizing and staged labour rallies in different cities for improving their working and living conditions in coordination with the national struggle of Constitutional Revolution:

> Iran's small working class also embraced the constitutional revolution enthusiastically, engaging in a vast number of strike activities from 1906 to 1910 and organizing Iran's first trade unions. Fishermen in Russian-owned Caspian fisheries, dockers and boatmen at Anzali, Tehran's printers and telegraphers, and Tabriz tannery workers conducted vigorous strikes. The first two groups were exposed to social-democratic ideas emanating from Russian Caucasus, while the printers shared the radical intellectuals' milieu at the newspapers. (Foran 1993: 179–180)

(b) 1921–1926: From Rise of Reza Shah to His Full-fledge Dictatorship

The first significant effort towards organizing labour movement during this period was the establishment of the Central Council of Federation of Trade Unions (CCFTU; *Showra-ye Markezi-ye Ettehadiehha-ye Kargeri-ye Iran*). "It was not until 1921 that the first significant labour movement appeared in Iran. In that year, the recently formed Communist and Socialist parties brought together nine existing unions in Tehran to create the Central Council of Federated Trade Unions. The nine, each with representation on the C.C.F.T.U, were the Unions of printers, pharmacists, shoemakers, bath attendants, bakery assistants, construction labourers, municipal employees, tailors, and Textile workers in Tehran's only modern

mill" (Abrahamian 1981: 212). By mid-1920s, the CCFTU membership grew to over 8000, and it organized Iran's first May Day (International Workers' Day) rally in Tehran in 1921 (Abrahamian 2010). In 1921, as workers in the major cities learned about the benefits of having a union, they joined the unions in great numbers. "In the winter of 1921 in the city of Tehran with 250,000 population there were about 10,000 union members. In the city of Tabriz about 3,000, in Rasht approximately 3,000, and in Anzali and its suburbs 3,000 Iranian and Russian workers were members of unions" (Parsa Benab 2004: 182). An important job action was the December 1921 teachers' strike in Tehran that lasted for 22 days. They demanded better working conditions and disbursement of six months of unpaid salaries and benefits (Mahmoudi 2002: 78).

The growth of the labour movement was cut short by Reza Shah's ascent to power in April 1926 as the founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty. Intent upon autocratic modernization, he dissolved the CCFTU, banned trade unions, outlawed communist and socialist parties, and arrested 200 labour activists. Five labour organizers, including the Secretary General of Print-Shop Workers' Union, died under questionable circumstances in prison (Abrahamian 1981: 213). Despite the ban on labour activism, the first and largest petroleum workers' job action took place in 1929 against the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) in Abadan Oil Refinery. According to labour leader Yusof Eftekhari, one of the main organizers of the 1929 oil workers strike in Abadan: "[O]n May 2, 1929, 14,000 workers partook in a strike demanding higher wages, eight-hour work day, paid vacation, company housing, freedom of labour leaders, clean drinking water, transportation, a holiday pay per year equal to a month's wages, health and safety, workers' compensation, seven-hour summer work-day, old-age pension, free health care for workers and their families, ending verbal and physical abuse at workplace, and an independent trade union" (Eftekhari 1991: 137–138).

Although labour activism was banned and the experience of workers unions cut short by Reza Shah's draconian laws, in the long run Reza Shah unwittingly contributed to the re-emergence of labour movement as he modernized the economy, thus creating an industrial working class: from 1925 to 1941, the number of factories increased from twenty or so to over 300 with 28 factories employing more than 500 workers (Foran 1993: 235). As such, "Iran's (non-craft) working class grew considerably in the 1930s, reaching … from 170,000 to 260,000 people in all" (Foran 1993: 237). This gave a boost to the employment of women but under

unimaginable conditions. "At the working-class end of the social structure, as many as 80,000 women worked in industry and unknown numbers of others in shops and offices. They were paid extremely poorly, worse than male labor, and worked long hours in bad conditions, especially in carpets and textiles [industries]" (Foran 1993: 240). The growing working class played significant roles in the continuing struggles for social and economic justice in the decades to come.

(c) 1941–1953: From Reza Shah's abdication to August 1953 Coup

During this period, except for the years of 1946–1949 when labour activism was banned and martial law was imposed, nationwide labour activism regained momentum in the major industrial centres (in particular in the Province of Khuzestan, home to the AIOC) and the highest peak of the labour activism was at the time of the oil nationalization struggle led by Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq between 1951 and 1953. The Tudeh Party affiliated Central Council of Workers Unions of Iran (CCWUI; *Showra-ye Markazi-ye Ettehadieh-ye Kargaran-e Iran*) was founded in 1942. The most notable event in this period is the foundation of the Central Council of United Trade Unions (CCUTU; *Showra-ye Mottahedeh-ye Markazi-ye Ettehadieh-ye Kargaran Zahmatkeshan-e Iran*) in 1944, as two former national unions merged.

In 1946, the Shah and Premier Qavam imposed the martial law and carried out mass arrests of labour and political activists. One reason for this repressive measure was the rise of nationalist movements in the Autonomous Province of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Mahabad (Kurdistan) in 1945–1946 (see Foran 1993: 272). The second reason was the rise of strong and vigorous labour movements in the oil industry, in the Province of Khuzestan, for better working conditions. In May–July 1946, "one of the largest (if not the largest) industrial strikes in Middle Eastern history" was staged by the oil workers. "On the May Day 1946, 80,000 workers paraded at Abadan" (Foran 1993: 280). Women activists and family members also took part in this parade, and the participants denounced the wrong treatment of workers and the abuse of Iranian national interest by AIOC. Abrahamian notes that on May Day 1946, a female orator speaking to a May Day rally demanded "a comprehensive labor law with equal pay for equal work, but had also called for the total nationalization of the oil industry" (2008: 113). Two months later, in July 1946, the AIOC imposed a wage cut and the provincial authorities

declared martial law. In response, 100,000 workers staged four-day general strike (Foran 1993: 280).

This chapter cannot attend to the important details regarding the workers' gains during this period. Suffice it to state that organized labour movements, especially that of industrial oil workers, made the most significant gains in their now century-long struggle for improving their working and living conditions. In 1953, however, the CIA-engineered coup against the democratically elected Premier Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq reinstated Mohammad Reza Shah's heavy-handed autocratic rule and turned union movement's dreams for social justice into a nightmare as it marked the beginning of yet another era of repression of organized labour movement.

(d) 1977–1980: the Revolutionary Years

In the late 1970s, the Iranian regime, feeding off a rentier state, encountered a major economic crisis, resulting from global drop in the price of oil, along with rising inflation rates. These processes contributed to the people's growing discontent with the current state of affairs in the country. State repression was relaxed, indicating a significant shift in domestic policy that was imposed on the Shah by the US President Jimmy Carter who pursued a policy of human rights for the US allies (Abrahamian 1982: 500; Foran 1993: 378). By 1977, these simultaneous socio-economic and political processes eroded the Shah's absolute power, which in turn allowed the political opposition and labour activists—from both the leftist and Islamist strands—to begin to (re-)organize workers in major industrial cities. Before explaining the characteristics of labour organizations during the revolutionary period of 1977–1980, it is important to recall the conditions of labour activism between 1953 and 1977, as the limited and controlled "shop floor" labour activism in this period of repression is connected with the new nationwide emergence of labour movement in 1977 as prelude to the 1979 Revolution.

As expected, the 1953 coup led to widespread arrests of labour activists. Later, following the release of some of labour activists, cautious attempts at reorganizing workers from different guilds began to take shape, but under one important condition: that labour activists would stay away from political activities and focus on economic or "guild demands" (*motalebat-e senfi*). By the early 1960s, unions of tailors and dressmaker, shoemakers, bakers, and metal workers (*navardkaran va khamkaran*) managed

to re-establish their activities under the watchful gaze of SAVAK, the Iranian security, and under very restricted frameworks. Also during this time, a small underground, "red labour activism," a tradition that went back to the late 1940s and led mainly but not exclusively by Armenian communist workers, took place (Vahabzadeh 2011). On the other hand, in the 1965–1975 decade, under the Shah's White Revolution characterized by rapid industrialization and capital accumulation, demand for labour grew enormously. "By 1978, the Iranian working class was no longer an insignificant proportion of the population. Their number had increased nearly fivefold between 1963 and 1978. While industrial workers totalled approximately 880,000, that number increased to 1,272,000 if one included wage earners employed by urban services and small manufacturing plants, workshop employees, shop assistants, and wage earners in banks, offices, and other agencies" (Ladjvardi 1985: 234). Meanwhile, there was an influx of women employed in different industries increasing the working-class women's share of employment to 14.8 percent in 1976 (Moghissi and Rahnema 2001: 203). This decade of accelerated development resulted in the unprecedented experience that in certain industrial plants the workers could use the state-controlled unions for collective bargaining (Bayat 1989: 199–200). Interestingly, Asef Bayat points out, "I found out that in five out of 12 factories investigated, the 'workers' representatives' had been officially employed by SAVAK" (1989: 204). We can clearly see that the regime's plans for organizing workers in "yellow syndicates" went hand-in-hand with its grandiose developmental projects as well as its strategic-security plans to control and assimilate "red" or grassroots labour activism. But the outcome, according to Foran, was far from perfect for the regime.

> Strikes, which had declined from seventy-nine in 1953 to seven in 1954 and three from 1955 to 1957, resumed in the 1960s and 1970s despite their illegality. There were twenty from 1957 to 1961, some of which ended in bloodshed. Other strike waves occurred in 1971 and 1974–1976, involving textile, bus and pipeline workers, coal miners, chemical, auto, and utility workers. Most were over economic issues, some ending with concessions, many with arrests and police violence. These actions set the stage for the political strikes in 1978–1979. (Foran 1993: 332–333)

In this fourth period of nationwide labour activism, which gradually leaned towards the revolutionary wave of 1978–1979, labour activists in some

of the state-controlled unions of different factories and industrial sectors began organizing strike committees. In the first half of 1978, strike activities, mostly of economic natures, gained momentum nationwide. "By the third week of October [1978], a rapid succession of strikes crippled almost all the bazaars, universities, high schools, oil installations, banks, … [and] large factories" (Abrahamian 1982: 518). During Revolutionary years of 1978–1979, new labour organizations emerged in the form of workers or employee councils (*showras*) in many industries. The most powerful council was that of the oil workers. A member of Council of Workers and Employees (*Showra-ye Kargaran va Karmandan*) consisting of 110 factories across the country, Saeed Rahnema recalls, "The establishment of united front organizations, such as the Workers and Employees Councils (*Showra-ye Kargaran va Karmandan*), during and immediately after the 1979 revolution provided a unique experience in self-management and democratic participation and had an enormous political and ideological impact on workers and the left organizations. The councils, one of the most fascinating outcomes of the revolutionary movement, were thought at the time to be an instrument for consolidation of political democracy in Iran" (Moghissi and Rahnema 2001: 200).

The Revolution led to the multiplication of union activism nationwide, and for the first time in Iranian history, unemployed workers in several major cities organized their own union. In 1980, soon after the Iran–Iraq War broke out, the regime unleashed its first wave of suppressing opposition political parties and organized labour. The genuine workers' councils and unions that had emerged throughout the revolutionary years of 1978–1979 were forcefully replaced by pro-government Islamic Labour Council and Islamic Associations (*Showra-ye Eslami-ye Kar* and *Anjumanha-ye Eslami*), which were "similar to *Arbeitsfront* in Nazi Germany and the *Sampo* in Japan during wartime fascist rule" (Moghissi and Rahnema 2001: 207).

This is where my story of the PSWUA emerges as dovetailing an interesting and dynamic tradition of labour activism in Iran. In what follows, I will offer, as an activist and member of the PSWUA, a historical and participant-observer's narrative of the PSWUA (see Safavi 2000; Abkashak 2001; Afshari 2002: 61). I will reflect on the formation of the PSWUA, its key elements, and its success in organizing some 14,000 project-seasonal workers during the revolutionary years of 1978 and 1979 in the southern petro-port-city of Abadan.

The Project-Seasonal Workers' Union of Abadan, 1979–1980

The PSWUA can be traced back to 1912 when the AIOC opened one of the largest oil refineries in the port city of Abadan in south-western Iran. According to Abrahamian, at the time the AIOC employed more than 63,000 domestic and foreign workers, of which 14,000 were contract and seasonal workers. Also noteworthy is to know that, at this time, there were 30,000 AIOC employees in the city of Abadan with a population of 115,000 (Abrahamian 2013: 12). The term *kargaran-e movaqat va fasli* or "project-seasonal workers," therefore, refers to a class of temporary workers hired for a specific project at specific rates of pay without being entitled to benefits or any other employment packages offered by the employer. From the first workers' strike in the AIOC oil refinery of December 1920, organized by Indian and Palestinian workers, until the 1979 Revolution, the project-seasonal workers, alongside the oil refinery workers, have been a part of the labour movement to improve their working conditions. During the 1960s and 1970s, a number of foreign companies were commissioned to engage in oil projects in Iran. Hundreds of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers were hired by these companies. As expected, the expansion of oil extraction and refinery inadvertently caused the oilers' movement to grow.

In 1975, I was hired by Iran–Japan Petrochemical Company at one of their construction sites in a remote area near Port Mahshahr in Khuzestan Province. The company paid wages that were only slightly above the minimum wage of the day and provided poor-quality food and unsanitary shelters, and only for a portion of its employees. The working conditions were horrendous and unsafe, and there were no fringe benefits. Last but not least, the employees were banned from having any kind of trade union.

Over this period up to the 1979 Revolution, project-worker activists managed to organize a number of job actions. The most significant of these was the three-day strike of December 1977 at the oil refinery of Isfahan, which was at the time under construction by an American company. The strike attracted the attention of SAVAK, and consequently a number of labour organizers were arrested. On 19 August 1978, following the torching of Cinema Rex in Abadan (in which about 400 people were burned to death), the project-worker activists organized the first mass rally against the Shah's regime in Abadan. This registered the first and largest demonstration held in Abadan after the 1953 CIA-backed coup d'état.

Towards the Union (*sandika*)

Organizing the project-seasonal workers began a few months prior to the February 1979 Revolution. Major economic crisis along with gradual erosion of the Shah's power led to labour organizing in most cities in Iran including Abadan. With the intensification of anti-Shah demonstrations, foreign companies left Iran, causing massive layoff of project-seasonal workers. The workers' leaders came from different experiences and political backgrounds. Some of them had been previously arrested and served time in prison for their political and labour activism.

The first steps for the formation of a project-seasonal workers' union took place through several meetings: in a casual gathering in a local teahouse, and in front of the local office of the Ministry of Labour, where a group of desperate unemployed workers were gathering to demand employment in early 1978. These informal meetings were followed by a large assembly of labour activists and workers in the Petroleum Collage of Abadan (*Daneshkadeh-ye Naft-e Abadan*) where they formed an ad hoc committee or *showra-ye mo'assess* (Constitutive Council). Members of the Constitutive Council were Mustafa Abkashak, Akbar Zebardast, Yadollah Yaghubi, Fakher Shajari, Khosrow Mollazahdeh, Issa Mardani, and Sayyed Mohammad.

Within few weeks after the Revolution, the first priority of the Constitutive Council was to obtain a permanent headquarters. Workers' delegates met with officials in the Abadan Governor's Office (*Farmandari*). Following intense negotiations with the officials and an incident involving a serious, violent confrontation with a group of pro-regime, anti-worker vigilantes and thugs known as *Hezbollah* in front of the Governor's Office, finally the state-owned property of the former Abadan Oil Refinery Workers' Union was given to the newly formed *Sandika-ye Kargaran-e Prozhe'i Fasli-ye Abadan* or Project-Seasonal Workers' Union of Abadan. The former union (Abadan Oil Refinery Workers' Union; *Ettehadieh-ye Senfi-Eqtesadi*) was formed in the late 1960 when the oil workers were allowed by the authorities to have a union in order to voice the economic demands of workers. According to Article 29 of Labour Legislation under the Shah, the unions and labour confederations not allowed pursuing political demands or engaging in political affairs.

Soon, about 14,000 project-seasonal workers with various skills (pipefitter, millwright, boilermaker, welder, electrician, timekeeper, crane operator, maintenance man, plumber, scaffolding worker, carpenter, mechanic,

and ironworker) signed up for union membership. Right after that, on 7 April 1979, approximately 400 members and labour activists started a sit-in protest (*tahasson*) in the union building, demanding the recognition of the Union by the authorities as the sole bargaining agent on behalf of the seasonal workers in Abadan. Socialist organizations, teachers, students, various communities, and the spiritual religious leader of Arab-Iranians Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Taher al-Shobeyr Khaqani supported the workers' demands ("*Edameh-ye tahasson-e kargarn-e fasli-ye Abadan*" 1979: 4; "*Hall-e rishe'i-ye mas'aleh-ye kargaran*" 1979: 6). In the meantime, *showra-ye mo'assess* produced a set of bylaws based on the Iranian oil workers' union experiences during the 1940s as well as the labour laws of post-independence Algeria and post-revolutionary Nicaragua. Every single bylaw was put to vote and approved by workers in the General Assembly held within almost three months after the February 1979 uprising and the Revolution's victory. Seven well-known labour activists were elected as the new Steering Committee (SC). The elected leaders were: Abkashak, Zebardast, Yaghubi, Mollazadeh, Bijan Khuzestani, Mohammad Ali Abrandi, and Shatti. The first agenda was to send a delegation of workers to Tehran in March 1979 to meet with Mr. Dariush Forouhar, Minister of Labour (between February and November of 1979) of the Provisional Government. The delegation tabled two demands: to secure unemployment benefits for unemployed members and to officially register the Union with the Ministry of Labour. Negotiations with authorities were fruitful. In May 1979, a fund was allocated by the Ministry of Labour for distribution among the unemployed. Mr. Forouhar recognized the role of the Union and the *sandika* was officially registered with the Ministry of Labour, and consequently, the PSWUA was recognized as the bargaining agent in Abadan Labour Office ("*Ta'id-e sandika-ye kargari-ye prozhei-ye Abadan*" 1979: 6).

The PSWUA emerged under the undeniable influence of leftist and trade unionist workers who played key roles in both the formation and direction of the Union, although some younger members of the PSWUA were sympathizers of Islamic political tendencies like the militant People's Mojahedin, the Shi'i "liberation theology" intellectual Ali Shari'ati, or even Ayatollah Khomeini. Despite these ideological differences, the PSWUA operated independently from any particular political organization.

Organizationally, the PSWUA's SC was democratically elected through the General Assembly. Once installed, the SC set up publishing and press release, communications and public relations, financial, training, and

job-finding subcommittees. The PSWUA's principal demands throughout its short life can be summarized as follows: (a) gaining unemployment insurance for project-seasonal workers; (b) job creation; (c) 40-hour work week, plus two days off work per week; and (d) hiring workers through Union and recognition of other workers organizations. In addition, after 1979, many foreign companies left Iran, leaving behind incomplete industrial projects within the oil industry. To complete these projects and create employment for its members, the PSWUA asked authorities to hand over these unfinished projects.

There are two important features of the PSWUA that need to be highlighted for the purpose of historical–comparative analysis. The first feature pertains to women's participation in the Union. In 1929, the first and largest industrial job action in Iran was organized by the oil workers of Abadan. Almost 14,000 oilers, unemployed workers, women, and family members of the oil workers participated in the three-day strike (see Eftekhari 1991: 137–138). In the post-Reza Shah period until the 1953 coup, when the labour movement was in its highest peak, women activists and family members were involved in organizing the labour movement in Abadan. Unlike these historic events, *all* the members of the PSWUA, including the SC, were men in 1979. The union did not play an active role in creating space for women labour activists and female seasonal workers. The PSWUA did not make any attempt to find out how many women who worked as typists, secretaries, and administrators lost their job after foreign companies had left the country during the revolutionary movement.

The second feature of the PSWUA relates to the minority issues. A large number of PSWUA members were Iranian Arab workers who were victims of discrimination by both the state and the oil company, and the majority of them were assigned unskilled jobs with the lowest wage and no benefits. The union did recognize the distinct identity of its Arab members, and in verbal communications, Arabic was also used alongside Persian. Speeches, slogans, and poetry readings were delivered in both Persian and Arabic. On important occasions like May Day of 1979, PSWUA members staged a play titled "Workers in the Governor's Office" based on the workers confrontation with *Hezbollah* at the Governor's Office ("*Ta'id-e sandika-ye kargari-ye prozhei-ye Abadan*" 1979: 6). Workers read revolutionary or motivational poems in Arabic and Persian. Such poetry included the works of revolutionary poets like communist Abolqasem Lahouti and folk dance (*yazleh*) performed by Arab members. In addition, progressive Arab leaders and the prominent spiritual leader of Arab-Iranians, Ayatollah

Khaqani, fully supported the PSWUA. Ayatollah Khaqani was against the post-revolutionary trials and executions and the principle of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of Supreme Jurist). He was imprisoned in 1979 and died under questionable circumstances in 1986 while under house arrest in city of Qom. In a press release in April 1979, the PSWUA expressed the appreciation of its 14,000-strong membership for Ayatollah Khaqani's support of the workers ("*Kargaran-e prozhei-ye Abadan*" 1979: 6).

The Union's Accomplishments

Between February 1979 and September 1980, the PSWUA achieved several of its goals and objectives. The PSWUA established a steady line of communication with the Ministry of Labour in Tehran and the Ministry's Abadan Office. Union delegates met a few times with the officials of Khuzestan Governor's Office, asking the Province to recognize the Union as the sole bargaining agent for project-seasonal workers of Abadan and to approve unemployment insurance for the unemployed. The PSWUA secured temporary unemployment insurance for members and successfully handled some of the grievances of its members who were unjustly fired, and securing reasonable compensation for them. The PSWUA set up training courses in a variety of trades and skills for unskilled workers, and through negotiations with the Oil Company and contractors in the region, the PSWUA found employment for many unemployed members. Last, the PSWUA organized a successful and large May Day Parade in Abadan in 1979, in which approximately 20,000 men, women, and young people rallied. At the end of the demonstration, pro-regime thugs violently attacked the workers, causing 18 workers injured ("*Ta'id-e sandika-ye kargari-ye prozhei-ye Abadan*" 1979: 6).

On several occasions and to publicize the demands of their constituency, members of the PSWUA SC were interviewed by publications such as *Ayandegan*, *Peygham-e Emrooz*, and journals of political parties. The PSWUA also engaged in a number of solidarity efforts. It sent several delegations to Tehran, Tabriz, and Ahvaz in solidarity with labour movements in these cities and supporting oil workers' struggle. It organized a mass rally in support of the families of victims of Cinema Rex, who had maintained a sit-in protest in the local government's Revenue Office in Abadan between Spring 1979 and Summer 1980. These families were seeking justice and truth about the torching of Cinema Rex (on 19 August 1978). In addition, a group of PSWUA members were involved in building a

monument for the victims. The Union also supported cultural activities and democratic rights of oppressed nationalities. On Wednesday, 30 May 1979, when the Cultural Centre of the Arab People (*Kanun-e Farhangi-ye Khalq-e Arab*) in the port city of Khoramshahr was under deadly attack by the military, Revolutionary Guards, and the *Hezbollah* thugs, the PSWUA strongly supported the democratic rights of the Arab people and the families of victims. Moreover, during the heavy flood of 24 February 1980 in the Khuzestan Province and the outskirts of Abadan, the PSWUA mobilized significant support for the victims of the flood.

As evidenced by the quick summary above, in its short, one-and-half years of activity under fragile political conditions and during the hard, post-revolutionary economic times, the PSWUA made important achievements consistent with the history of labour movement in Iran. More importantly, *the PSWUA created an elaborate secular civil structure that was linked and relevant to the democratic struggles as well as social justice demands of the most disadvantaged working peoples of Abadan.* The PSWUA left a profound democratic and progressive impact on community. So much so that the PSWUA could not have been tolerated by the regime as the latter was strengthening its grip on power.

In September 1980, the short life of the PSWUA came to an end in a tragic way. The government used both the hostage crisis (following US Embassy takeover in Tehran in November 1979) and the Iran–Iraq War as a pretext to suppress the labour movement. Within days following the war's break out (22 September 1980), the PSWUA headquarters was demolished by bulldozers on the authorities' orders, and the regime carried out mass arrests of union activists. Many labour leaders and activists were imprisoned for several years. PSWUA leader and spokesperson Mohammad Ali Abrandi died under suspicious circumstances in Tehran's Evin Prison in summer of 1987. Several other Union members were also executed. Ebrahim Gharibzadeh (welder) was executed in Adel Abad Prison in Shiraz in 1982, as was Ali Chahar-Mahali in 1983, Karim Sa'ei, Gholam-Hossein Salim, and Hamid Shatzadeh (dates unknown). The unionists who had escaped the arrests had no option but to leave Iran. PSWUA SC member and well-known labour leader Mustafa Abkashak died in 1989 in a car accident while living in exile in Los Angeles.

The suppression of the PSWUA signifies a sheer act of purging labour movement activism without legal justification: the Union was legal and engaged in labour rights negotiations and civil society activism within the frame of law. What made the PSWUA stand out was its growing success in

mobilizing the workers and the unemployed for economic justice as well as engaging in democratic building of civil society. The PSWUA brought together social justice and democratic-participatory civil society activism together.

DIMINISHING WORKERS' RIGHTS

Thirty-five years after the PSWUA experience, the socio-economic conditions of project-seasonal workers south-western Iran have diminished significantly. The project-seasonal workers, now concentrated in and work long hours under horrendous and unsafe conditions in Port Assaluyeh, in the South Pars Project in the Persian Gulf where the world's largest known gas field is extracted, as well as in Port Mahshahr. In October 2012, project workers in Port Mahshahr created a temporary workers' council (*Showra-ye Movaqat-e Kargeran-e Manteqeh-ye Vizheh-ye Eqtesadi-ye Mahshahr Petrocimical*) and organized a few successful job actions and a few days of strikes to improve their working conditions, demanding disbursement of their unpaid wages and ask the officials to expel anti-worker contractors of petrochemical companies in Port Mahshahr (see Maljoo 2012).

In the last three decades, economic liberalization, privatization, and neoliberal policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, beginning with the Presidency of Hashemi-Rafsanjani and continued during the presidencies of Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have culminated in current policies of President Hassan Rouhani. These policies have economically and politically hurt the workers. The workers' right to organize independent trade unions and freedom of association is expressly denied (see Maljoo in this volume). In his book, *National Security and Economic System of Iran*, President Rouhani names labour unions as one of the greatest challenges the employers face and argues that workers have to be more compliant when dealing with the "job-creators" (Rouhani 2010: 336).

Today, Iranian workers are under siege by neoliberal policies, and project-seasonal workers suffer the worst of conditions. Discriminatory gender policies in workplaces serve to intensify the exploitation of female workers to the extent that women workers in some work places are paid as low as one-third of minimum wage. Like the previous administrations, the present government is inclined to undermine independent labour unions, reduce the wages of workers, and dismantle the existing labour laws.

Conclusions

The PSWUA provides a case study in the century-long challenges, successes, and tragedies of Iran's workers' unionist movement. The four periods of labour activism outlined in this chapter show how sadly consistent the PSWUA experience has been in the context of interruptions imposed on labour movement through repression, foreign interventions, coup, and war. In the context of labour movement, the PSWUA experience once again proved that it is absolutely crucial for the labour movement to be independent of both political parties and the government. Past practice clearly shows that when workers' unions were created or controlled by political parties or governments, they became fragile, as conflictual political decisions adversely affected them.

The experience of the PSWUA also shows that the labour movement flourishes in periods where society's democratic tendencies act themselves out in the forms of political freedoms, freedom of association and expression, and freedom of press. Since labour movement is structurally organizationally frail, and its efforts are always disrupted, there cannot be independent trade unions without democracy in Iran, just as it is equally important to recognize that there cannot be democracy and social justice without independent trade unions. This mutual co-dependence, I argue, is an integral part of the democratic process. In this regard, the PSWUA's efforts resulted in the expansion of civil society in Abadan, and the PSWUA experience teaches us the importance of the labour movement's connection with Iranian social movements and international labour. Specifically, the lateral and mutual support of the labour movement with the movements of women, environmentalists, minorities, youth, anti-war, and sexual orientations—possibly in the form of broad-based coalitions—is mutually beneficial for democracy, freedom, equality, and social justice. These are some of the most crucial factors for the success of a democratic and independent future labour unionist movement and for the national–democratic movement in Iran. The PSWUA experience and activism stands out as a microcosm of a dynamic social justice oriented civil society in Iran.

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An Unfinished Odyssey: The Iranian Student Movement's Struggles for Social Justice

Roozbeh Safshekan

In 1933, the Iranian government decided that in order to modernize the country, a modern institution of higher education would be necessary. The government called for the creation of a brand new university complete with a modern curriculum, buildings, and qualified professors. In 1934, the University of Tehran (UT) opened its doors to its first class. Not 15 months had passed when the students of the Faculty of Engineering went on strike to demand educational facilities and professors in higher quality and quantities. The strike succeeded and the university administration relayed the students' demands to the government and funding was set aside to meet these demands (Rayatnazari and Safshekan 2002: 40). While this early episode of student unrest ended without incident, the student activism in Iran would have a bloodier history than those first students could have imagined.

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This chapter attempts to show the cycles of rise and fall of social justice activism in the history of the Iranian Student Movement (SM). To maintain its focus within the spatial limitations, this chapter will solely focus on SM within Iran and leaves out the SM abroad, in particular, the Confederation of Iranian Students–National Union (CISNU), the subject of a thorough study (Matin-asgari 2002). The first part presents a brief history of the Iranian SM before the 1979 Revolution, highlighting the centrality of social justice in the discourse and practice of the SM. This was mainly the result of the Pahlavi regime's "repressive development" model characterized by top-down economic development projects at the expense of social justice and political freedoms (Vahabzadeh 2010: 4). Under this developmental model, almost all potentially oppositional spaces were closed except for universities, which were necessary for training a skilled force required for the realization of the very same model. The majority of university students came from middle- and lower-class backgrounds and had experienced how severely the Shah's policies undermined justice and freedom. The relatively open environment of universities allowed students to get acquainted with and organized around alternative paths to the government's repressive development model, thus turning them into a social force that refused to be solely functionaries of the ruling elite and instead struggled for social justice and political freedoms.

The second part examines how social justice agenda gradually became marginalized in the postrevolution SM as a result of three main factors: first, an unprecedented purge of the Iranian higher education system during the Cultural Revolution that drained universities of nearly all students and organizations that had championed social justice. Second, the Iran–Iraq War, during which the war effort became the only channel for student activism and the Islamists came to possess a near-complete monopoly over student activism and student life on campus. Third, the triumph of neoliberalism over the Iranian higher education system, which decreased socioeconomic diversity in universities to the benefit of affluent students, leading to an SM whose members have less direct life experience with socioeconomic inequalities and arguably less sympathy for social justice activism. The chapter then discusses the rise and fall of a new wave of student struggles for social justice which manifested in a radical leftist SM in the 2000s. By reflecting critically on the history of the Iranian SM, the chapter concludes with proposing a set of recommendations that might help a future social justice–driven SM advancing its agenda more effectively than its predecessors.

The Centrality of Social Justice in Student Activism before the 1979 Revolution

As explained in the introduction, the foundation of the UT marked the beginning of modern higher education in Iran. The UT's first seven years were under the dictatorship of Reza Shah who tolerated no political opposition. As a result, there was no SM to speak of during this period, and the only protests at UT were aimed at improving study and living conditions. While the Reza Shah's iron-fisted rule did not leave any room for student activism on campus, students were deeply involved with social justice activism outside the university. A case in point is the Group of Fifty-Three (*Goruh-e Panjah-o-seh Nafar*), a prominent group of Marxist intellectuals who were detained by the government's security forces in May 1937 based on the accusation of "forming a secret *ishtiraki* [communist] organization, publishing a May Day Manifesto, organizing strikes in the Technical College and in a textile factory in Isfahan, and translating such 'atheistic tracts' as Marx's *Das Kapital* and the *Communist Manifesto*" (Abrahamian 1982: 156). Among the 48 members of the group who were tried in November 1938, 13 were university students, and most of them received sentences varying from two up to ten years in prison.

The Tudeh Party and the Beginning of the Student Movement

In 1941, Reza Shah's rule came to an end, and among the first results of the greater political freedom in the new era was the creation of the Tudeh Party of Iran (*Hezb-e Tudeh Iran*) by surviving members of the Group of Fifty-Three who had recently released from the prison. Within its Youth Organization (*Sazeman-e Javanan*), the Tudeh created a student union to promote social justice activism on university campuses. By 1946, this student union had been so successful in organizing students that the British ambassador in Tehran claimed in a report to his superiors that the majority of the UT's 4000 students were "strongly influenced by the Tudeh" (Abrahamian 1982: 332). The Tudeh's influence in the UT was not limited to students; the Party also encompassed prominent faculty members such as Reza Radmanesh and Hossein Jodat who were prominent Tudeh figures. According to Mehdi Bazargan, the dean of the UT Faculty of Engineering from 1945 to 1951:

> In those days, the university administration's worst headache was the Tudeh Party. This organization had successfully intensified its student activities after 1947 so that by the 1951 we were besieged from all sides-by students, professors, clerical workers, and even campus cleaners. The communist students had taken over the university clubs, held their meeting in classrooms, incited employees to strike for higher wages, and, worse of all, continually interfered with curriculum. The communist influence was so pervasive that the university administration had no say on its own campus. (Bazargan quoted in Abrahamian 1982: 332)

As a result of the dominance of the Tudeh party on campuses, during the late 1940s, any government attempt to roll back political freedoms and social justice in universities was confronted by a strong student backlash. For example, in 1948, when the UT Faculty of Engineering administration ordered students to stay out of political activism and start paying tuition, students responded with large demonstrations. They went as far as attacking the administration and besieging university officials in their offices until they reversed their decisions (Rayatnazari and Safshekan 2002).

The turning point came on 4 February 1949 when there was an attempted assassination of Mohammad Reza Shah in front of the UT Faculty of Law and Political Science. Although the gunman thought to have Islamic leanings, the assassination attempt was used as a pretext to attack and shut down the Tudeh. The Party would go underground and remain there until the beginning of the oil nationalization movement. The disappearance of the Tudeh from the national stage was a blow against its powerful student union and consequently to the SM in general.

The Oil Nationalization Movement and the Post-16 Azar Student Movement

The trigger for the next step of social justice-oriented student activism came with Mohammad Mosaddeq's rise to power as Premier in 1951. His oil nationalization movement energized the SM, with university students predominantly supporting the national liberation agenda of Mosaddeq's National Front and the social justice agenda of the Tudeh. Their support was best illustrated in the consistent pattern of participation in demonstrations and distributing publications en masse in support of Mosaddeq and the Tudeh, among other actions. Not surprisingly, Mosaddeq's undoing as a result of the 1953 coup d'état provoked fiery outrage among students.

The explosive collision of student outrage against the coup erupted in the tragic event of 7 December 1953, better known as 16 Azar.

Events in December 1953 paved the way for this tragedy. The Iranian government strengthened ties with the two principal backers of the coup, inviting US Vice President Richard Nixon to Iran in the first official foreign delegation since the coup d'état. This, along with the announcement of the reestablishment of ties with Great Britain which had been the main target of the oil nationalization movement, created the potential for disturbances, particularly at the UT. On 7 December the area around the UT campus was in a virtual state of martial law from fear of a student uprising. At 11 AM, the military forces, under the pretext that they had been taunted by a student, entered the Faculty of Engineering, forcing professors to shut down classes and gathering all students in the main entrance hall. As the students streamed into the hall, an antigovernment slogan pierced the noise: "The coup government must keep its hands off the university!" Without warning the soldiers opened fire (Rayatnazari and Safshekan 2002).

One student, Mostafa Bozorgnia, died immediately from a bullet straight to the heart, while two others, Mehdi Shar'iat-Razavi and Ahmad Ghandchi, died on the way to the hospital. Several students were arrested and taken to military prison where they were tortured before massive student strikes at the UT forced their release. Just days later Nixon would receive an honorary doctorate from the UT Faculty of Law and Political Science, just meters away from where the students had died. This is the image of 16 Azar that has been imbued onto the collective memory of Iranian students for nearly the last six decades. In fact, *16 Azar* has become the official Students' Day after the Revolution in 1979.

The dark events of 16 Azar reflected the gray tone of politics in Iranian society for the rest of the 1950s. In universities, as in the polity as a whole, all opposition groups nearly ceased to exist as a result of the high level of repression. Against this backdrop, the first major event to mark the reemergence of the SM came in 1960 when the build-up to the Twentieth *Majlis* (Parliament) elections, which was viewed by the public as a sham, led to vocal student opposition and protests which culminated in their arrest. Rallying to support their arrested schoolmates on 26 January 1961, nearly 4000 students locked themselves in the UT, refusing to leave, a move which was met by popular acclaim by the public in Tehran and other major cities across the country. Three days later the university closed the school's doors. This only inflamed the situation, with students of universities of Mashhad and Tabriz joining the strike. Eventually the government

accepted the student's demands, releasing imprisoned students and reopening universities after nearly a month of closure (Nateq 2010: 108).

From this point forward, the SM would take on a national dimension and the next 16 Azar commemoration in 1961 became a truly national event, marked in Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Ahvaz, and Abadan. At the same time, the SM began linking itself to other social movements. In the same year the worsening economic situation led to the rebirth and growth of the labor movement in Iran which was soon linked with the SM, with students taking up the vocabulary of the labor movement and its demands (Nateq 2010: 110).

One month later, the excessive delay by the government in holding the Twenty-First *Majlis* elections led to a fresh round of student protests. University students who saw the delay as a blow against political freedoms held large demonstrations and eventually went on strike on 21 January 1962. The government's response was swift and merciless. Paratroopers and commandos were sent into the UT, leading to dozens of injuries, arrests, and the closure of the university. The sheer brutality of the response forced even the typically conservative university administration to side with students and react in protest, and in no time strikes in solidarity with UT students were being staged in several universities across the country. The UT would remain closed until early April of 1962, when the government made concessions to students. It felt like after two months of struggle students had finally won (Nateq 2010: 111–113). After this incident, universities stayed relatively quiet, mainly as a result of the gradual destruction of all political opposition forces in the country following the harsh crackdown of 5 June 1963 (15 Khordad 1342) public demonstrations.

The Guerrilla Movement and Radicalization of Students

The peace that followed this repression would prove to be short-lived, the calm before the storm. Mehdi Bazargan, a founding member of the Freedom Movement of Iran (*Nehzat-e Azadi-e Iran*), an Islamic offshoot of the National Front, foreshadowed the coming radical shift in student activism during his trial in 1964 when he declared: "We are the last to have engaged in political struggle through constitutional means. We expect the judge to convey this point to his superiors" (quoted in Nejati 1994: 373).

In the mid-1960s, former youth activists of the Tudeh and *Nehzat-e Azadi* began forming, separately, underground guerrilla circles as a result of their frustration with the failed reformism and legal political activism of their elders. Two such circles advocating Marxist views of social justice

included one led by Bijan Jazani and Hassan Ziazarifi and another led by Massoud Ahmadzadeh, Amir-Parviz Puyan, and Abbas Meftahi. Yet another was the Islamist-leftist circle founded by Mohammad Hanifnejad, Ali-Asqar Badi'zadegan, and Saeed Mohsen who envisioned a combination of Marxism and revolutionary Shi'i Islam as the ideal vehicle in the struggle for social justice.

On 8 February 1971, a group of 13 guerrillas coming from a 1960s SM background carried out an armed attack on a Gendarmerie outpost in the town of Siahkal in Gilan Province. This marked the beginning of the guerrilla war in Iran and the first operation of the Organization of the Iranian People's Fadai Guerrillas (OIPFG) which emerged through the unification of the survivors of Jazani-Ziazarifi and Ahmadzadeh-Pouyan-Meftahi circles. Very soon another guerrilla organization sprang into action: Organization of the Iranian People's Mojahedin (OIPM) was a direct outgrowth of the Hanifnejad-Badizadegan-Mohsen circle.

Following the first wave of guerrilla operations, universities were electrified and students looked for any excuse to support the guerrilla movement. Students began protesting in large numbers against the Pahlavi regime and in favor of the guerrilla movement. A number of students were arrested, but this further inflamed the situation with protests spreading across the country and leading to the arrest of over one hundred students in April 1971 (Vahabzadeh 2010: 29). This, along with the peaking of guerrilla activity that year, forced the government to shut down universities for the spring term of 1971 until the end of the Shah's 2500 Years Celebration of the Persian Empire.

The next five years would see bloody battles between the guerrillas and the National Intelligence and Security Agency of Iran (SAVAK), which the latter eventually won out because of its overwhelming resources and the guerrillas' considerable shortcomings. In what amounted to a war of attrition, by 1976 the guerrillas were mere shells of their former selves. The entire senior leadership of the guerrilla organizations had been wiped out through execution, in street-battles or under torture while imprisoned. Of the 341 guerrillas who lost their lives during the guerrilla war, 139 (40 %) were university students (Abrahamian 1982: 481). Another factor in the demise of the guerrilla movement was that while groups like OIPFG and OIPM managed to garner large student support, they failed to build a strong social base particularly among the working class and the poor on whose behalf they purported to speak.

Although by the mid-1970s Shah was successful in taming the guerrilla movement, the latter's long-term effect on the SM could not be undone. The guerrilla movement completely transformed the atmosphere of Iranian universities. The collective memory of students was filled with the images of their friends and fellow students who had been killed in battle, were imprisoned and under torture, or on the run. This made any kind of reconciliation between the Shah's regime and SM all but impossible and fueled the rage that fed the flames of revolution. The second major impact of the guerrilla movement was to make the social justice agenda hegemonic on university campuses, with no ideological rivals capable of challenging its legitimacy. While the Tudeh and Mosaddeq's national liberation movement first pushed this agenda to the national stage, it was the guerrilla movement that brought it to a climax. This too would have a profound impact on the 1979 Revolution and only fade with the onset of the Cultural Revolution.

Social Justice Activism in the Postrevolutionary Student Movement

In the immediate aftermath of the 1979 Revolution, there was a period of unprecedented freedom in Iran. Students who played a crucial role in the Revolution were eager to return to universities and use this new freedom to implement the ideals of the Revolution. In this new environment, Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers quickly realized that universities were predominantly in the hands of opposition students and faculty, challenging the implementation of their Islamic vision of society. This situation could not be allowed to persist.

The Cultural Revolution

In his Nowruz (Persian New year) 1980 address, Ayatollah Khomeini declared that the revolution must reach universities in order to "purge the professors associated with the West and the East and make the university descent place for teaching superior Islamic sciences" (Khomeini 1980). Following his address, on 15 April 1980, Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, while giving a lecture at the University of Tabriz was heckled by a student, an act taken as a pretext to crackdown on universities. On 19 April 1980, President Abolhassan Banisadr issued an ultimatum to the various political groups demanding they cease their activities on

campuses within three days. Before the ultimatum had expired, the opposition student groups were attacked by paramilitary forces, resulting in at least 37 deaths and hundreds injured and arrested (Mashayekhi 2001: 292). In the next step, Ayatollah Khomeini issued an order designating the members of the Headquarters of the Cultural Revolution (HCR; *Setad-e Enqelab-e Farhangi*) on 13 June 1980, officially announcing the Cultural Revolution which led to the closure of universities for three years. The Cultural Revolution had two main objectives and two instruments to implement them: (1) Islamizing the social sciences and humanities curriculum by the HCR in close collaboration with the Center for Cooperation of Seminaries and Universities (*Daftar-e Hamkari-ye Howzeh va Daneshgah*). (2) Expelling students, faculty, and staff affiliated with the opposition groups by the Purging Committees (*Komitehha-ye Paksazi*).

Over the course of the Cultural Revolution there was an unprecedented purge in the Iranian higher education. From the 1979–1980 school year when universities were closed and the purges began until the 1983–1984 school year when they reopened, only 117,148 students out of a total of 174,217 were allowed to return (Maleki 2000). Thus, some 57,069 students were expelled and an unknown number never allowed to enter university from high school. According to Abdul-Karim Soroush (1999), former HCR member, at least 700 out of a total of 12,000 university professors and lecturers were also dismissed by the Purging Committees. Besides the profound damage to academia, the Cultural Revolution drained universities of nearly all politically active students and organizations who had championed the struggle for social justice.

The Iran–Iraq War

Already reeling from the effects of the Cultural Revolution, Saddam's invasion of Iran in 1980 was another massive blow to the SM. During the eight-year campaign that followed, the war effort became the only channel for student political activism, and the universities increasingly came to resemble barracks. University buildings day by day were taking on the names of the many student "martyrs" killed on the frontlines. One example of such students was Seyed Hossein Alamolhoda, a History student at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. On 6 January 1981 (16 Dey 1359), 22-year-old Alamolhoda was a commander of Howeizeh Revolutionary Guards and Muslim Student Followers of Imam's Line (*Daneshjuyan-e Mosalman-e Peyro-e Khat-e Imam*), taking part in Operation Nasr

(Howeizeh) in preparation for operation Liberation of Khorramshahr. In the absence of necessary operational coordination among Iranian units and with little more than assault rifles against Iraqi mechanized infantry and tanks units, Alamolhoda and his corp were killed en masse (Yazdanfam 2004). Commemorating Alamolhoda and 3500 university student who lost their lives during the eight-year Iran–Iraq War, 16 Dey is now the official Martyr Students Day (see: Jafari 2014).

As with social activism in general, student activism in particular also radically transformed in comparison to before the Revolution. All extra-curricular activities were banned, save sports which were allowed under supervision. The student organizations associated with the government such as *Anjomanha-ye Eslami-ye Danshjuyan* (Islamic Students' Associations, or ISA) and *Jihad-e Danshegahi* (Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research, or ACECR) came to possess a near complete monopoly on political activities and life on campus, mobilizing students to join the ranks of soldiers at the war front. The National Student Day or 16 Azar, historically a highly politically charged day for universities, was not celebrated anymore except by official statements from the ISA. During the war period, according to Mehrdad Mashayekhi (2001: 292), the ISA was "the sole representative of the state in campuses. Its major functions were limited to propaganda, political control, and ideological challenge of any oppositional voice." By the end of the war the last tinge of color had disappeared from universities and the SM had become "a watchdog of the state whose main task was to mobilize support for, and suppress the opposition to, the state" (Mahdi 1999: 10).

The Rise of Neoliberalism

The final blow to the social justice–inspired SM came immediately after the war when the welfare-state policies of the 1980s were cast aside. Seeking a new direction for postwar Iran, President Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani adopted neoliberal policies, discarding the social justice drive that was at the heart of the Revolution. Based on Rafsanjani's neoliberal orthodoxy, Iran's economic development plans mainly focused on privatization, deregulation, fiscal discipline, and tariff reduction. Under these ill-conceived policies, the country experienced an unprecedented rise in socioeconomic inequality, with immediate implications for universities and the SM.

Since the Rafsanjani administration, universities have come to represent the more affluent sectors in Iran. Greater competition for a limited number of spots at elite universities has meant families have to spend more money on private courses and tutors so their children make the cut in competitive national university entrance exams. The Rafsanjani administration also began to introduce market mechanisms into universities. For instance, students who were not accepted to university through the competitive national exams could now enter private universities by paying a sizable tuition. In 1989, when Rafsanjani assumed Presidency, the number of university students registered at private higher education institutions was 349,848, only 28.6 % of the total university student population. In 1997, when he left office, this number had increased to 1,284,570, more than 52 % of the total university student population (Ale-Agha et al. 2008).

The introduction of market mechanism to the Iranian higher education system was not merely limited to establishing the private higher education institutions. The public universities also began to admit students willing to pay high tuitions, a trend which has since accelerated on annual basis. According to the official statistics, of the 712,367 students admitted to public universities in 2013–2014 academic year, 593,698 (83.4 %) enrolled to tuition fee programs (Mehr News 2013). This means that only 16.6 % of the students were admitted to free programs at the public universities that had been totally free just a decade ago. The rising costs of entrance and the introduction of market mechanisms to universities decreased socioeconomic diversity in Iranian higher education to the benefit of affluent students. This resulted in a SM which had less direct life experience with socioeconomic inequalities and arguably less sympathy for social justice activism.

One of the major shifts in Iranian elite politics under Ayatollah Khamenei's leadership and Rafsanjani's presidency since 1989 was the decline of the Islamic Left and rise of the Islamic Right. In exile from power, the Islamic Left reexamined the social circumstances and forsook its old politics emphasizing social justice, state-centric economy, and anti-imperialism, in order to once more regain power. The reconstituted Islamic Left took on a much more liberal orientation and introduced an agenda of reform, earning the factional title of the Reformists. In the 1997 presidential election, Reformist Mohammad Khatami won a landslide victory on promises of social and political liberalization. University students played a crucial role in Khatami's victory as voters, campaign activists, and a reference group shaping public opinion in favor of Khatami (Mashayekhi 2001: 297).

Recognizing this crucial role, the Reformists became very active on campuses to shape a new SM to help advance their agenda. With the eradication of the social justice-driven SM by the Cultural Revolution, Iran–Iraq War, and rise of neoliberalism, Khatami's grand narrative of Reformism trickled down to the *new SM which began championing democracy and human rights over social justice*.

The turning point in the relationship between Reformism and the SM came on 6 July 1999 over the closure of the reformist newspaper *Salam* by the Judiciary. UT students quickly mobilized to peacefully protest against the closure. The response by security forces was fast and furious. On 9 July 1999 (18 Tir 1378), security forces attacked the University Hill dormitory, resulting in at least one death and dozens injured and arrested. Responding to this ruthless attack, students rose up in universities and then took to the streets, with tens of thousands of ordinary people joining them. Besides the hundreds of injuries from fighting on the streets, hundreds of students were arrested. Despite the depth of 18 Tir tragedy, Khatami showed little support for the SM, damaging the trust between students and Reformists. Whereas Reformists spoke of human rights, freedom, and democracy, it became clear during the course of 18 Tir events that their factional interests superseded their stated goals. As a result of the failure to deliver on the Reform agenda, the reformist popular base in universities began to shrink, opening space for a new leftist discourse.

The Rise of the New Left

By the early 2000s, President Hashemi-Rafsanjani's neoliberal economic policies which increased socioeconomic inequality, President Khatami's relative opening of the social and political space, and reformist failures to deliver on their promises allowed for the rise of a new social justice–focused SM in Iranian universities. In this climate, students interested in social justice could use the more open space on campus to form public and legal student publications and affiliated study circles. This open space gave these student publications and study circles access to a large body of social justice–themed literature, including translations of English and some Persian works on Marxism, social democracy, and the history of the Iranian Left. Part and parcel of this was the increasingly widespread availability of the Internet, where this literature proliferated on websites, weblogs, and message boards. In some cases, university students had the

opportunity to speak with former Iranian leftists from the pre-1979 period living in the diaspora who related their experiences.

This New Left had distinguishing features which allowed to gain support across university campuses. First, while the New Left accepted the ideals of social and political liberalization, *they made social justice the core pillar of their platform*, something which had been relatively unheard of since the Cultural Revolution in 1980. Second, the New Left rejected any foreign intervention, including military strikes or economic sanctions, to resolve Iran's domestic problems. Emblematic of the New Left SM were student publications like *University and People* (*Daneshgah va Mardom*), created by UT's Faculty of Engineering students in 2001 with a greater cultural–philosophical outlook, and *Gavan* (*Astragalus*), a joint creation of the UT's Faculty of Law and Political Science and Amir Kabir University in 2002 with a greater political and economic outlook. These publications converged on a number of common themes, including social justice, championing of the welfare state, and a critique of neoliberalism in Iran and abroad. Such publications saw themselves as building on the Iranian leftist tradition, albeit with important updates to address the main issues of the country in that period. Despite some radical tendencies, this politically translated into supporting Iranian reformism with the aim of realizing social justice in Iran.

Further political setbacks in elections for the reformists in the early-to-mid 2000s gave impetus for the formation of a more radical tendency within the New Left SM. The core publication of this Radical Left was *Khak* (*Soil*), a joint venture of the UT's Faculty of Economics and the University of Art in 2003. Compared to *University and People* and *Gavan*, *Khak* was much more harshly critical of reformism and sought a more radical alternative. Despite not having any formal ties with opposition political groups abroad, *Khak* gradually showed itself to be under the influence of Mansour Hekmat, a radical Iranian Marxist thinker active from the 1979 Revolution until his death in exile in 2002. Hekmat's distinguishing characteristic was an almost singular focus on the struggle between labor, or the workers, and capital, or the bourgeoisie, and a near complete rejection of Iran's leftist tradition. Hekmat (1980) relentlessly attacked the "populist socialism" of the traditional left because of its overemphasis on the struggle between "the people" (*Khalgh*), an alliance of nationalist forces including the national bourgeoisie, versus imperialism, including the comprador bourgeoisie and imperial states. Hekmat accused the traditional left

of being accomplices to the national bourgeoisie, which he saw as being among the primary enemies of the workers.

The Radical Left thus distinguished itself within the New Left in at least three important ways. First, it completely rejected Iran's traditional Left and its ideological beacons, including the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China. Second, the Radical Left rejected the reformist-oriented SM and was unwilling to compromise with the Islamic Republic's factions altogether, which it saw as representing different factions of the national bourgeoisie. Finally, it placed its main emphasis on the struggle between labor and capital, meaning the working class and progressive allies such as the women's movement became the focus of its activism off campus rather than cooperation with state factions. The Radical Left was successful in spreading its ideas and influence across Iranian universities in major urban areas, in some cases even infiltrating official university organizations such as ISA. Moreover, it managed to create alliances outside universities, including certain important labor unions such as the Tehran Bus Drivers Union and some key NGOs active in the Women's Movement. Over time, Radical Left groups formed a nationwide network at a number of universities in 2006, calling itself Freedom and Equality Seeking Students (*Daneshjuyan-e Azadikhah va Barabaritalab*, or DAB). This network not only produced diverse leftist publications, but was also able to hold large on-campus events and demonstrations, including commemorations of the National Student Day (16 Azar), Labor Day (1 May), and International Women's Day (8 March).

By 2007, the DAB became dominant within the New Left, being active and influential on university campuses nationwide. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's administration, however, was determined to close the social and political space and as a result took several measures to significantly increase the pressure on university students. These measures included: (a) introducing a "star-system" to target political students and impede their academic advancement (see ICHRI 2010); (b) increasing gender segregation, including proscribing separate study materials and subjects for men and women; and (c) announcing what can be labeled a Second Cultural Revolution for Islamizing the curriculum and purging dissident students and professors. DAB, while successful in occupying increasingly greater amounts of university space with its nationwide network consisting of around 40 members, also found it hard to operate in the hostile new environment. Its decisive defeat as an active movement came when more

than 30 of its members were arrested by security forces following a major demonstration commemorating National Student Day on 4 December 2007, with around 500 students in attendance at the UT event alone. This marked the DAB's last public stand on a large scale. Most of the arrested students were subject to solitary confinement and interrogations for at least one month and released only after large bail payments, placing significant financial pressure on their families. Although a few of these students were acquitted following their final trials, the majority were sentenced to one to four years in prison or suspended sentences. In 2008, struggles for recreating the New Left took place, the most significant of which included Socialist Students of Iranian Universities (*Daneshjuyan-e Sosialist-e Daneshgahha-ye Iran*). The project was ultimately unsuccessful because of the Ahmadinejad administration's repression as well as differences among leftist student activists who disagreed on both the reasons for their defeat and the correct way forward.

In 2009, student political activism experienced something of a revival when the campaign of Mir-Hossein Mousavi, with its relatively strong social justice theme, gained traction on campuses. The reelection of Ahmadinejad in the 2009 presidential elections came as a shock, and allegations of electoral fraud were enough to mobilize millions of people in the Green Movement. The latter movement was quite successful in breaking the securitized atmosphere of universities as well as keeping the goal of social justice somewhat alive on the SM's agenda. With the gradual decline of the Green Movement following the repression by security forces, however, the social justice ideals championed by Mousavi never had a chance to be fully absorbed and practiced by the SM. In the securitized post-2009 atmosphere a new social justice-driven project emerged, named the "Parallel Academy" (*Academy-e Movazi*) and largely based out of the UT's Faculty of Social Sciences, with a focus on translating, publishing, and lecturing on the literature of critical theory in universities. The Parallel Academy was more intellectual, focusing on academic and theoretical issues, and less action oriented, largely setting aside the type of social and political activism exhibited by the New Left. Although this appears to continue existing in study groups off campus, the Parallel Academy ceased official activities on campus in 2011. Student social justice activism has been in near limbo ever since.

Conclusion

This chapter tried to show the cycles of rise and fall of social justice activism during the 80-year history of SM. During the Pahlavi era, the social inequalities resulted from government's exclusionary political and economic policies alongside the then popular socialist ideas made the struggle for social justice the SM's top priority. After the 1979 revolution, however, social justice gradually became marginalized in the SM's agenda as a result of the Cultural Revolution, Iran–Iraq War, and triumph of the neoliberalism over Iranian higher education system. A new wave of struggle for social justice was manifested in a new leftist SM in the early 2000s that ultimately could not survive the Ahmadinejad administration's hostile and suppressive policies toward the universities. Arguably, this history has important theoretical and practical insights for a future Iranian SM with social justice as its top priority. The last part highlights a set of these insights.

First, the history of SM in Iran shows that social justice activism on campuses has largely been under the influence of different interpretations of orthodox Marxism as represented by leftist organizations. Social democracy, among the most powerful and coherent theoretical frameworks for social justice activism, have rarely been utilized by the Iranian SM. Since orthodox Marxist theories have often not been fully successful in advancing the SM's agenda of social justice, the future SM would do well to turn to a social democratic theoretical framework.

Second, the theoretical frameworks adopted by the SM have been borrowed from abroad, often with little or no effort to adapt them to the local context. The history of Iranian social movements show that ignoring the unique aspects of the Iranian cultural and political traditions can impede the progress of the social justice agenda. In this sense, a future social justice discourse must synthesize foreign theories with ideas emerging from Iran's domestic context and traditions.

Third, student activism has historically been linked to political currents outside the university and followed their demands, ignoring the students demands related to education and living conditions. Not surprisingly, when students do not witness any improvements in their day-to-day life, they are very likely to leave the ranks of the SM. Addressing issues related to student life would help absorb larger number of students to the movement, giving it a very strong backbone suitable for political struggle both inside and outside of the university.

Fourth, the experiences of the Reformist and New Left SMs have shown that either absolute dependence on or complete isolation from state political factions can damage the successful pursuit of student causes. In order to advance its social justice agenda, the SM needs to have a more nuanced and balanced approach toward elite politics. While attempting to mobilize its base at the university level, the SM would better advance its agenda by making well thought-out alliances with the state's more progressive factions.

Fifth, while social justice activism of the SM has historically advocated an alliance of social movements, in practice it has largely failed to establish an organic relationship with other progressive social movements. In fact, the SM has regrettably often moved in the opposite direction, putting much energy and effort in bickering with other social movements over theoretical and practical disagreements. The SM must realize that after its own base inside universities, other social movements constitute its most potent source of power. The destinies of progressive social movements are deeply intertwined, and they will stand or fall together.

By reflecting critically on its history and incorporating the above insights into its theory and practice, a social justice-driven SM of the future will hopefully be more successful than its predecessors.

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The Left's Contribution to Social Justice in Iran: A Brief Historical Overview

Afshin Matin-asgari

Applying a global social justice frame to modern Iranian history, this chapter focuses on constitutionalism as a form of governmentality based on social contract and responsive to social justice demands. More specifically, this chapter will argue that within modern Iran's constitutional tradition, the most expansive and effective social justice projects have been proposed by leftist movements, that is, primarily socialists and communists, whose agenda has been borrowed and partially implemented by nationalist and Islamist movements and regimes.

Defining Social Justice

Despite its relative novelty, the concept of social justice has a contested trajectory of meanings. Since the 1970s, a body of work by American philosopher John Rawls has been central to English-language scholarly debates on social justice. Broadly, Rawls places social justice within the liberal tradition of political philosophy, basing it on social contract theories of government. He defines justice as "fairness" in the functioning of an ideal-type political system called "property-owning democracy." Such a system could entail social and economic inequality, but, he argues, it

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must allow for their "fair" regulation in favor of those in less-advantaged social positions. In practice, Rawls' model of social justice corresponds to mid-twentieth-century forms of the liberal democratic or social democratic welfare state (Rawls 1993, 1999, 2001). Since the 1980s, neoliberal and libertarian ideologies have challenged the Rawlsian model, while globally the gap between small property-owning minorities and large disadvantaged majorities has widened. Therefore, in a Rawlsian sense, the aggregate magnitude of social "fairness," or social justice, has significantly diminished at both national and international levels. Meanwhile, by early twenty-first century, social and/or socialist demands for justice once again are gaining relevance in increasingly globalized conditions (Pogge 1989, 2004; Miller 1989). Contemporary global understandings of social justice are found in the discourse of the United Nations, for example, in documents such as the publications of the International Forum for Social Development. This document provides a succinct history of the concept of social justice, noting its close linkage to nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist movements and ideologies:

> The concept first surfaced in Western thought and political language in the wake of the industrial revolution and the parallel development of the socialist doctrine … It was born as a revolutionary slogan embodying the ideals of progress and fraternity. Following the revolutions that shook Europe in the mid-1800, social justice became a rallying cry for progressive thinkers and social activists … By the mid-twentieth century, the concept of social justice had become central to the ideologies and programs of virtually all the Leftist and centrist political parties around the world, and few dared to oppose it directly. Social Justice represented the essence and the *raison d'être* of the social democrat doctrine and Leftist mark in the decades following the Second World War. (The International Forum for Social Development 2006: 11–12)

As noted above, modern notions of social justice are predicated upon universal understandings of the term "social." Thus, while practical applications of social justice take place within nation-states, "there is clearly a universal dimension to social justice, with humanity as the common factor" (The International Forum for Social Development 2006: 12). Put differently, the universality of social justice rests on "the idea that all developments relating to justice occur in society, whether at the local, national, or global level, and by the related desire to restore the comprehensive, overarching concept of the term 'social'" (The International

Forum for Social Development 2006: 3). Moreover, recognizing the universality of concepts such as "social" and "justice" is in line with recent non-Eurocentric trends in world history and international relations. In other words, as international relations theorist Kamran Matin argues, all particular "social" and/or "national" formation are products of ongoing historical interactions with their global environment (Matin 2013; Hunt 2014). In this chapter, social justice refers to a constellation of ideas and movements that challenge hierarchies of class, gender, ethnicity, and race at both national and international levels. These universal social justice norms are not fixed or given, but constantly reconstructed and reconfigured on a global scale. Such norms include the discourse and practices of government by consent and contract, socialism, anarchism, feminism, environmentalism, labor rights, human rights, international law, and transnational treaties and obligations (Bookchin 1982; Klein 2014). Finally, the chapter's focus on the Iranian Left conforms to world history paradigms whereby socialists, social democrats, and communists have led international social justice movements.

Premodern to Modern Notions of Society and Justice: Constitutionalism and Social Democracy

Within an Iranian historical context, it is clear that Persian language equivalents of the terms "justice" and "society" are historical constructions whose meaning have changed over time. The originally Arabic terms *adalat* (justice) and *ejetama'* (society) can be found in medieval Persian religious, political and philosophical tracts, used in varied and different contexts, but never joined together in constructions such as *adalat-e ejtema'i*, or "social justice." Older Persian meanings of *ejtema'* denote "groups" or "associations" composed of similar individual members, a meaning somewhat close to the term's modern usage. However, *adalat* is a more complex abstract noun, involving multiple layers of normative meaning. For example, *adl* or *adalat*, meaning "justice," is among God's defining attributes in Shi'i theology, as well as the distinguishing quality of proper kingship in pre-Islamic Iranian and Islamic traditions of monarchy. In both cases, such premodern notions of justice presuppose metaphysical and social hierarchy rather than equality. In other words, neither Allah nor "just" shahs or sultans were expected to treat Muslims and nonbelievers,

men and women, and slaves and their owners, equally (Skjaervo 2012; Tusi 1964; Yavari 2014). Such nonegalitarian notions of justice of course were not peculiar to Iran or Islam, but prevailed in premodern Christian Europe and throughout the world (Crone 2002).

Modern Iran followed global patterns whereby the terms "social" and "national" were linked together, just as "society" was equated with the "nation." Thus, the idea of Iran as a modern "society," or "nation," was a modernist project, whose actualization began with the 1906–1911 Constitutional Revolution. As early twentieth-century nationalist historians and statesmen, such as Ahmad Kasravi and Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, had noted, a unitary Iranian "nation" (*tudeh/mellat Iran*) was an "imagined community" that was to be created and actualized. And as the first generation of Iranian nationalists agreed, the creation of a modern Iranian nation or society could be accomplished only by a strong modernizing state (Matin-asgari 2012a). The formation of the Iranian nation-state followed a universal "template" that first had appeared in the French and American, including Latin American, national revolutions. In the course of the twentieth century, this nation-state model became truly global, having spread to postcolonial Asia and Africa (Anderson 1991). However, modern national cultures are not facsimiles of a single modernist universal script, but exhibit varied features due to two main reasons. First, conceptions of global modernity inevitably are conflicted and fraught with internal tension and antinomies. Second, individual national cultures are invariably "original" because they each blend distinct premodern historical and cultural traditions with equally shifting and incongruent global influences (Matin 2013; Matin-asgari 2009).

Ultimately, while modern nations claim autonomous self-sustaining historical trajectories, they are shaped and transformed through their interactions with international political and economic structures. Thus, as with its formation as a nation, Iran's modern social justice project was shaped largely by global and international patterns and agendas. This was true of Iran's constitutional movement, the broad political frame within which modern notions of social justice were conceived and pursued. The constitutional movement originated in the Qajar polity's need for "self-strengthening" in the wake of its defeats by British and Russian imperial encroachments. But the question of social justice surfaced only when the constitutional movement became revolutionary in 1910, following a civil war that restored the new constitutional regime through popular mobilization. At that point, the global agenda of social justice was introduced

into Iran by the Democrat Party, whose political program was directly borrowed from European Social Democracy. The Democrat Party's program called for universal suffrage, equal citizenship rights regardless of gender and religion, the separation of religion and politics, freedoms of expression, the press and associations, universal conscription, income tax, land reform, labor protection laws, compulsory public education, and the nationalization of forests, pastures and mines (Bahar 1978: 8–10; Ettehadieh 2001: 309–347). Often mislabeled "bourgeois" or "liberal" democratic, this was in fact an agenda advanced globally by the Left, consisting of socialists and anarchists, and most effectively by European Marxist parties united in the Second International and led by Germany's Social Democratic Party (Eley 2002: 4–6).

A key intellectual innovation of Iran's Democrat Party was its joining together the notions of "social/society" to "democracy," thus advocating an ideal social order that was "just" because it was both democratic and egalitarian. Groundbreaking in terms of both ideology and political organization, Democrats became the prototype of twentieth-century Iran's political parties, whether leftist or rightist, secular or Islamic (Taqizadeh 1959: 116–117). Thus, Iran's first conservative political party copied the Democrat Party's name, organizational form, nomenclature, and even parts of its program. Calling themselves Social Moderates (*Ejtemaʿiyun Eʿtedaliyun*), the conservatives adopted the socialist label (*ejtemaʿiyun*), claiming to embrace a "moderate" version of the Democrats' social justice agenda. Their Party's stated objective was to contain the revolution's radicalization by "moderating" its social justice demands in accordance with Islamic precepts on the sanctity of property, social rank, and gender hierarchy (Ettehadieh 2001: 346–347).

As with its vision and political agenda, Iranian social democracy was cosmopolitan and internationalist in terms of membership. In addition to Iranians, the party included significant contingents of Armenians and Azeris who had come from the Caucasus to fight Iranian counter-revolution. Theses trans-Caucasian revolutionaries were exemplified by leaders like Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh, an Azeri intellectual from Baku, who was the Constitutional era's most advanced theorist. Rasulzadeh edited and wrote for *Iran-e no*, organ of the Democrat Party and the country's leading constitutionalist periodical (Afary 1996: 81–82). Yet, the revolution's potential for advancing a social justice agenda was resisted strongly by conservative factions and soon thwarted when Russian armies invaded and occupied northern Iran in 1911. This counter-revolutionary intervention,

followed by British and Ottoman occupation of the rest of Iran during WWI, suspended both Iranian sovereignty and constitutional government.

FROM SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONALISM TO AUTHORITARIAN NATIONALISM: THE 1920s

The 1911–1921 decade in Iran was defined by war, famine, foreign occupation, and a suspended revolution. It was precisely during this chaotic and destructive decade that Iranian nationalism, with its prioritization of nation-building over constitutional government and social justice, took shape. Nationalist historiography depicts 1911–1921 as a "catastrophic" decade, when revolutionary ideals, as well as Iran's very nationhood, were lost, the latter to be restored by a centralizing Pahlavi state in the 1920s. In fact, the idea of 1921 Iran being in "catastrophic" conditions originated with the British instigators of the military coup that launched Reza Khan's political career (Cronin 2010: 4–6; Malihi et al. 2016). This perspective was shared by intellectual statesmen, like Hassan Taqizadeh and Mohammad-Ali Foroughi, and even by an independent-minded historian like Ahmad Kasravi, to justify their backing of Reza Khan's rise to power. But the rise of the Pahlavi state appears very different from a social justice, rather than nationalist, perspective. To begin, the British-backed 1921 coup occurred when the catastrophic conditions of WWI had passed and Iran's independence was accepted by a tacit Anglo-Soviet agreement. The British had given up their 1919 agenda for turning Iran into a "protectorate," while the Soviets officially endorsed Iranian sovereignty in a treaty signed in 1921 (Matin-asgari 2012). Thus, from a social justice perspective, the real challenge in 1920s Iran was not to secure national independence but to maintain the constitutional revolution's potential promise of social justice.

It was precisely at this decisive conjuncture that the nationalist elite gave up the pursuit of social justice and constitutional government, prioritizing instead the project of authoritarian nation-state building by a political regime that was essentially a military dictatorship. Reza Shah's dictatorship was the product of this authoritarian nationalist consensus, not its cause. The intellectual elite's retreat from constitutionalism and social justice can be traced in the pages of the flagship nationalist journal *Kaveh*. Published in Berlin between 1915 and 1922, *Kaveh* had begun as a social democratic constitutionalist periodical but ended up advocating "benevolent despotism." By 1921, *Kaveh* no longer was concerned with

empowering ordinary citizens or upholding the interests of urban and rural lower classes. Instead, it proposed a nationalist agenda to be pursued by "the Iranian people themselves," without recourse to constitutional government, national legislation or parliament (*Kaveh* 1921a: 2–3; Matin-asgari 2014). This new political vision was clearly stated in one of *Kaveh*'s last issues:

> We believe only three options exist for ruling Iran. First, benevolent despotism, prompting progress and civilization, in other words what Europeans call "enlightened despotism," … Second, malevolent despotism, which most despotic governments, with a few exceptions, actually are. Third, flawed and imperfect constitutionalism. A fourth option, a benevolent perfect constitutionalism, is undoubtedly preferable to all of the above. But that is possible only in progressive countries and not in Iran, and hence irrelevant to our discussion. (*Kaveh* 1921b: 3)

According to this article, the best option for Iran was "a patriotic, civilized, and domineering despot," a choice that soon presented itself in the person of Reza Khan. As *Kaveh* had admitted, other options, involving social justice and subaltern empowerment, were possible through commitment to Iran's "flawed and imperfect constitutionalism." But *Kaveh* and Iranian nationalist circles in Berlin and Tehran no longer prioritized constitutionalism and social justice. The nationalist elite now preferred a hyper-centralized government forcibly imposing top-down modernization, cultural uniformity, and political unanimity. These demands were explicitly stated in the 1921 program of Young Iran, an "association," as opposed to a political party, formed by European-educated intellectuals:

> Establishing a secular government in Iran and fully secularizing the legal system; Disenfranchising illiterate citizens; Ending capitulations and revising foreign trade agreements; Progressive taxation; Adopting the better parts of European civilization; Sending male and female students to Europe; Paying special attention to education, including compulsory elementary education, secondary and technical-industrial education, and changing the Persian alphabet; Removing all barriers to women's liberation; and constructing railroads, museums, libraries and theatres. (Meskub 1994: 30)

The above program in fact reversed the social justice gains of the Constitutional era by calling for lower class disenfranchisement, dropping commitment to the freedom of political parties and the press, as

well as to land reform and labor protection, and turning "women's liberation" into an empty slogan devoid of reference to equal rights. Soon after the formation of Young Iran, its leaders met with war minister Reza Khan who promised to implement their program (Meskub 1994: 37–38). Consolidating power as the head of the new Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Shah by the 1930s ruled in flagrant violation of modern norms in social, political, or economic justice. The physical and cultural infrastructure of a modern state were laid out via improvements in transportation and communication, while a rudimentary system of public education imposed linguistic and ideological conformity. Constitutional government became a façade for a modernizing dictatorship, with the Majles being dominated by a landlord ruling class, whom Reza Shah had joined via massive expropriation of landed estates. The utter lack of justice was manifest in Reza Shah's literally murderous treatment not only of political dissidents but also the pillars of his own dictatorship including statesmen like Ali-Akbar Davar, the architect of Iran's modern justice system (Cronin 2010).

Mid-Century Marxist Hegemony in Constitutional Government and Social Justice

Once again demonstrating the impact of global context, Iran's modern social justice agenda was revived during the Second World War, when Allied occupation overthrew Reza Shah, allowing semi-democratic constitutional government to function from 1941 to 1953. In these crucial dozen years, the Marxist Left revived the social justice legacy of the constitutional era by advancing a comprehensive reform program appealing to urban and rural middle and lower classes. Thus, the Marxist Tudeh (Masses) Party offered a roster of social reforms benefiting "workers, peasants and women" as well as "middle class" intellectuals, artisans, small landowners, and low-ranking government employees. It demanded the eight-hour day, disability insurance, pensions, and subsidized housing for workers; the redistribution of state and crown lands to peasants; the purchase of large private estates by the government and their resale to landless peasants on easy terms; establishing rural schools and health clinics; equal political rights and equal pay for women; government support of poor mothers and children; and job security, higher pay, and lower taxes for salaried government employees (Abrahamian 1982: 284). A major contribution to the cause of social justice was the Tudeh Party's systematic

advocacy of women's full and equal citizenship rights. This demand was articulated through the party-affiliated Women's Organization (*Tashkilat-e Zanan*) and the Iranian Women's Party (*Hezb-e Zanan-e Iran*), both of which were launched in 1943. It also appeared in the Tudeh Party's 1944 program, which asked for women's equal rights to vote for and be elected in legislature, as well as their equal rights in marriage laws (Matin and Mohajer 2015: 188–191).

Moreover, Marxists virtually established the meaning of trade union activism in Iran. Within a few years, the Tudeh-affiliated Central Council of Federated Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers was leading several hundred thousand working men and women, from oil workers to carpet weavers, in countrywide strikes and political action aimed at the betterment of their lives (Abrahamian 1982: 299–303). By the mid-1940s, British and American diplomats saw the Tudeh Party as "the only coherent political force" and "the only large, well organized, and functioning political machine" in Iran (Abrahamian 1982: 300). The Party's following and political impact continued to grow beyond the 1945–1946 Azerbaijan autonomy crisis, its subsequent 1948 internal party split, and even under conditions of semi-legality after the party was implicated in the 1949 attempted assassination of the Shah (Abrahamian 1982: 303, 321).

The Left's hegemony in setting mid-twentieth-century Iran's social justice agenda was predicated on its predominance in the field of cultural production, with Tudeh Party members and sympathizers leading among university professors and students, elementary and secondary school teachers, journalists, writers, translators, artists, and lower ranking government employees. The Left also dominated a translation movement which, prior to the age of cinema and television, shaped both elite and popular perceptions of a just social order on a global scale. Thus, the worldview of mid-century educated Iranians was literally defined by leftist or socially conscious writers such as Jack London, Anatole France, Mark Twain, Gustav Flaubert, Charles Dickens, Romain Rolland, Ignazio Silone, Pearl Buck, Nikos Kazantzakis, John Steinbeck, Maxim Gorky, Berthold Brecht, Anthon Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, Mikhail Sholokhov, Émile Zola, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Gide, Maurice Maeterlinck, Bernard Shaw, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner (Abedini 1987: 117–124; Qazi 1994). Marxist hegemony in defining a just national and international order is recorded in numerous contemporary testimonies such as the following by essayist and literary critic Shahrokh Mesukb:

> In those years, the Tudeh Party was a fertile ground of aspirations to intellectuals and toilers of our long-suffering country, who, aghast with social oppression, dedicated their lives to defeating destiny and remaking the world and its people … On this path, we to found our place in the universal progressive movement of the Left … a new self-chosen identity, empowering the oppressed and making the subjugated stronger than their rulers. (Meskub 1992: 23–24)

Meskub notes how Marxism responded even to its followers' metaphysical and religious yearnings by providing a "powerful promise of worldly resurrection and earthly paradise, becoming a panacea to social ills …" (Meskub 1992: 24). Such messianic aspects of Marxism, in addition to its secular political appeal, gave impetus to the emergence of Iran's Marxist-inflected Islamic social justice project. Thus, the Islamic Left of the 1960s–1970s built on foundations laid by the God-worshipping Socialists (*Nehzat-e Khodaparastan-e Sosiyalist*) who originated Iran's version of "Islamic socialism" during the early 1950s in response to the Tudeh Party's powerful ideological challenge. Rejecting traditional and clerical Shi'ism, God-worshipping Socialists redefined Islam as a perfect ethical, political and socioeconomic system, a genuine "scientific socialism" first proposed by the Prophet Mohammad. Possibly influenced by Khalil Maleki's anti-Stalinist Marxism, God-worshipping Socialists projected the above schema globally, advocating a "median bloc" of countries standing between capitalist and communist blocs. Their vision of Islam, as a "third path" between communism and capitalism, then reappeared in the 1960s–1970s intellectual production of thinkers like Ali Shari'ati and the Organization of the Iranian Peoples Mojahedin. Shari'ati was 1970s Iran's most influential dissident Muslim intellectual, whose anticlerical Marxist-inflected interpretation of Shi'ism overlapped with the Mojahedin Organization's advocacy and practice of guerrilla armed struggle as the proper path toward establishing social justice in an Islamic classless society (Rahnama 1998: 31–32; Nekuruh 1997).

This leads to the ironic conclusion that a communist organization was mid-twentieth-century Iran's foremost proponents of social justice, as well the most successful political party in a semi-democratic constitutional system. Though Stalinist, the Tudeh Party quickly became adept at spreading its political impact via parliamentary methods, with little preparation for alternative revolutionary or insurrectionary paths to power. In fact, the party's strict adherence to legal and peaceful struggle became a fatal weakness when

it failed to respond to the US-sponsored 1953 military coup. Nevertheless, the Tudeh Party's social justice agenda survived to resonate in the Pahlavi era's most important social and economic reform project, the 1960s Shah-People White Revolution, whose main planks, that is, land reform, women's franchise, and attention to labor, were borrowed directly from the Marxist Left. Moreover, during the 1960s–1970s, leftist intellectual hegemony continued within the radical opposition, being manifest also in the fact that the regime's key political personnel included a large number of renegade communists and leftists (Matin-asgari 2007).

The above narration is not meant as uncritical endorsement of the Iranian Left's social justice agenda, particularly when it comes to actual subaltern empowerment. The Left's dominant Stalinist ideology was indeed elitist and antidemocratic, but not all leftist were Stalinists, while during the 1960s–1970s, even the Tudeh Party had aligned itself with the liberal opposition's call for the restoration of constitutional government (Matin-asgari 2002: 67; Behrooz 1999: 77–82). On the other hand, it is debatable whether leftist campaigns, such as the 1970s Marxist and Islamist guerrilla armed struggle, advanced the cause of social justice or democratization (Vahabzadeh 2010). Ultimately, and like most of its global cohorts, Iran's radical Left failed to see that popular revolutions might not advance the cause of social justice. This particular lack of foresight of course cost the Iranian Left dearly, leading to the destruction of an entire generation of secular and Muslim leftists by the Islamic Republic.

Concluding Remarks and Notes on the Future of Social Justice in Iran

To conclude, it seems appropriate to pick up the broken thread of Iran's social justice project by returning to the Left's historic moment of defeat in the early 1980s. Despite its exaggerated self-image, the postrevolutionary Left had a small social base. For example, in the Left's only instance of participation in national elections, Fadai candidates received about ten percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections of 1980 (Vahabzadeh 2010: 67). Given the postrevolutionary Left's limited social base, as well as the Islamic Republic's determined enmity, the prospect of the Left coming to power, or even power-sharing, was unrealistic. A more pragmatic course was for the Left to become the voice of social justice, peacefully upholding and defending the nation's democratic rights and

freedoms. It is often forgotten that a faction of the Left actually pursued this path, until it too was destroyed by the Islamic Republic. In retrospect, this particular faction arguably represents the Left's most significant postrevolutionary contribution, while also pointing to a possible path for the Left's future. Here, I have in mind the experience of the Democratic National Front (*Jebheh-ye Demokratik-e Melli*), a political coalition led by former Marxist political prisoner Shokrollah Paknezhad and the small group of Left Unity (*Ettehad-e Chap*), composed mostly of the leaders of the 1960s–1970s student opposition abroad. The Democratic National Front proposed a grand coalition joining together the entire Left with the National Front and all other liberal secular and religious groups and organizations. Significantly, this grand coalition included Kurdish and Azeri (Azerbaijani) political parties that wielded considerable popular support among Iran's repressed ethnic or national minorities. The 1979 collapse of central state authority had allowed autonomy-seeking ethnic and religious tendencies (particularly in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan) to practice a *de facto* form of federalist governmentality. Together these movements embodied a fundamental social justice challenge, posing the question of whether a revolutionary Iranian nation-state could hold together democratically. A positive response meant postrevolutionary power-sharing in autonomous regions and throughout the country with multiple political parties, including leftist and autonomous Kurdish and Azeri parties. Rejecting this option, the revised draft constitution of the Islamic Republic, based on *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist) invested ultimate state power in the hands of a nonelected clerical elite. But there was widespread opposition to this proposed constitution, with parts of Iran, like Kurdistan, in armed rebellion against it. In fact, the new constitution may not have passed in a free referendum. However, the Islamic Republic managed to impose its Constitution in the midst of extraordinary conditions caused by its hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy. The hostage crisis then led to a real threat to the regime's existence as it precipitated a catastrophic war with Iraq. These partially self-imposed "existential crises" defined the character of the postrevolutionary regime, which soon crushed all opposition in a bloody reign of terror. Meanwhile, as was done under the Shah, the Islamic Republic borrowed and implemented some of the Left's social and populist agenda, while totally crushing the Left's democratizing and social empowerment project.

Close to four decades later, the Islamic Republic is a statist crony capitalist regime, whose young and restless population is burdened by widening

social inequality, while suffering political, cultural, and gender repression. Internationally, the regime is negotiating terms of behavior dictated by global powers, abandoning decades of enormously costly "anti-imperialist" posturing. But this is also a crucial moment of potential systemic change domestically for a regime whose self-definition, including its rationalization of political repression and economic failure, hinges on a supposed defiance of the international order. In such conditions, social justice agendas are likely to once again find urgency and relevance. Such agendas might reconnect selectively to leftist traditions of intellectual and political flexibility, defining social justice as democratization via challenging hierarchies of class, ethnicity, and gender, and through the empowerment of multiple social agents (Vahabzadeh 2010: 226–243). An existing model for this political orientation is the People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP), a leftist political organization active in Turkey since 2012. Similar to Greece's SYRIZA and Spain's Podemos parties, the HDP proposes a democratic socialist alternative, while opposing religious, gender, racial, and ethnic inequality. It also is strongly environmentalist and opposed to nuclear power. While participating in parliamentary politics, the HDP does not seek to form a government but to transform society through grassroots empowerment.

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Iran: Multiple Sources of a Grassroots Social Democracy?

Mojtaba Mahdavi

Alternative discourses to the (neo)liberal agenda, above all the social justice alternative, are often marginalized and demoralized; we are told to tailor our imagination to what is available/possible and to think of change in the realm of the hegemonic discourse or within the margins of the status quo. The politico-intellectual crises in orthodox Marxism and the prevalence of the neoliberal discourse have dashed some hopes for the rise and realization of social democracy in Iran. This chapter is an attempt to challenge this ahistorical position. It suggests that the quest for social justice and social democracy is neither new nor restricted to a particular socio-intellectual trend in modern Iran. It is as old as the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, and as broad as secular and religious socialists of Muslim, Marxist, and nationalist origins. The idea of a grassroots social democracy in Iran holds deep and diverse socio-intellectual roots.

More specifically, in this chapter, I will first problematize the limits of liberal paradigm and highlight the merits of the twin pillars of a grassroots social democracy: social justice and societal empowerment. In the second part, I will shed light on Iran's deep and diverse local tradition of social democracy. The chapter briefly demonstrates the contribution of intellectual discourses of Mohammad Nakhshab (1923–1970), Khalil

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Maleki (1903–1969), and Ali Shariʻati (1933–1977) to a *social* approach
to democracy. The conclusion suggests that contemporary Iran can learn
from the global and local experience/tradition of egalitarian/social
democracy. It also sheds light on the possibility of a discourse building
toward a grassroots social democracy in Iran.

LIMITS OF LIBERAL PARADIGM AND MERITS OF TWIN PILLARS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

The limits of liberal paradigm of democracy have been extensively exam-
ined in the literature. This include Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's
alternative discourse of *radical democracy* (1985), Jacques Derrida's pow-
erful concept of *democracy-to-come* (2010, 2005) and Jürgen Habermas's
theory of *deliberative democracy* (1996), among others. In this section,
I will examine the major limitation of liberal paradigm of democracy/
democratization: the liberal discourse ignores the substance and social
character of democracy. It overlooks the twin pillars of *social* elements
of democracy, namely *social justice* and *societal empowerment.* Social jus-
tice and societal empowerment give substance and a tangible meaning to
the abstract, ahistorical, and often elitist concepts of rights, liberty, and
democracy. They liberate demos from an elitist, state-centric, and, more
importantly, a market-driven democracy. The social pillars of democracy
facilitate a bottom-up, grassroots approach to democratization, help
empower the ordinary people, let the "subaltern speak," and disarm and
defeat right-wing populist demagogues whose rhetoric of social justice
often misleads the masses.

There is a negative correlation between democratic aspiration and
social inequality. "Poverty can trap societies in its grip" and most often
"breeds dictatorships" (Przeworski et al. 2000: 270–277). *Social* equality
gives meaning and substance to political democracy; it makes the value
of democratic ideas tangible to the public. By contrast, social inequal-
ity leads to a gradual decline of democratic aspirations in civil society; it
gives rise to populist–authoritarian trends and pushes democratic ideas
and institutions at bay. The "middle class poor" (Bayat 2009) is often the
main victim of neoliberal market economy. However, the abstract liberal
discourse of rights and freedom is not attractive to this class, and they
sometimes turn into the foot soldiers of right-wing populist demagogues
who use social justice in their political platforms. A critical *social* approach
to democracy/democratization challenges the orthodox class analysis; it

contest the liberal idea of the *myth of the middle class*, in which middle class is perceived as the *only major* driving force for democracy. Instead, it highlights the significance of middle-class and the poor for the rise and realization of democracy.

Furthermore, a meaningful social democracy requires not only an open and inclusive political society, but also an open and inclusive economic society (Walzer 1990: 160). Social injustice and (neo)liberal market fundamentalism undo democracy. In *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, Wendy Brown argues that "neoliberalism, is a particular form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms and is quietly undoing basic elements of democracy. These elements include vocabularies and principles of justice, political cultures, habits of citizenship, practices of rule, and above all, *democratic imaginaries*" (2015a: 17). More specifically, the catastrophe is simply beyond "degrading democracy" into "plutocracy"; it is "normative economization of political life" (2015a: 201). The (neo)liberal "reason" produces extreme social inequality, reduces human agent into a "market actor," and empowers capital, not the citizens (Brown 2015b). The liberal reason is asocial. It is extremely fragile in politics of social justice and is negligent of societal empowerment.

Societal empowerment is about strengthening civil society and establishing democratic procedures based on engagement, dialogue, and deliberation of civil society. In "Three Normative Models of Democracy," Jürgen Habermas (1996: 23) introduces a "deliberative" concept of democracy where politics is about deliberation of civil society and democracy aims at the "institutionalization of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens." In the liberal paradigm, argues Habermas, society is perceived as a "market-structured network of interactions among *private* persons." Politics is the function of "pushing *private* interests against a government apparatus" (Habermas 1996: 21; emphasis added). Civil society is subordinated to the state because the state is the "guardian of a market-society" (Habermas 1996: 26). In deliberative democracy, however, civil dialogue and deliberation in the public sphere provide a societal network and a fair and inclusive process of "democratic will formation" (Habermas 1996: 26).

The liberal paradigm, Habermas (1996: 27) argues, "hinges not on the democratic self-determination of deliberating citizens but on the legal institutionalization of an economic society that is supposed to guarantee an essentially *nonpolitical* common good by the satisfaction of *private* preferences." In the liberal model, "the rule of law is applied to many isolated private subjects." In deliberative democracy, however, the "normative

content arises from the very structure of communicative action" (Habermas 1996: 28). It challenges the liberal notion of apolitical private citizen.

In the deliberative model of democracy, "the boundaries between 'state' and 'society' are respected"; however, "*civil society provides the social basis of autonomous public spheres that remain as distinct from the economic system as from the [political] administration.*" This implies that civil society "should gain the strength to hold its own against the two other mechanisms of social integration—money and administrative power" (Habermas 1996: 28; emphasis added). Deliberative democracy enables a "decentered society" where power "springs from the interactions between legally institutionalized will-formation and culturally mobilized public" (Habermas 1996: 28;). Deliberative democracy provides a medium for a "*conscious* integration of the *legal community*" (Habermas 1996: 30; emphasis added). It works with "the higher-level inter-subjectivity of communication processes that flow through both parliamentary bodies and the informal networks of the public sphere" (Habermas 1996: 28).

Habermas's concept of deliberative democracy, in sum, aims "to bring universalistic principles of justice into the horizon of the specific form of life of a particular community" (Habermas 1996: 25). In other words, "the content of political decisions that can be enforced by the state *must be formulated* in a language that is accessible to all citizens and it *must be possible to justify them*" in this language" (Habermas 2006: 9; emphasis added). To this end, we need to place civil society in the center by keeping distance from (neo)liberal elitism and empowering social forces in their quest for socio-political changes. The elitist conception of politics has resulted in the institutional weakness of democratic social forces. The repressive nature of the state has certainly reduced the opportunity for intellectuals to mobilize the social forces. Equally important, however, is the formulation of progressive ideas in a language accessible to ordinary people. This brings us to the significance and relevance of culture, tradition, and history in quest for social democracy.

If the *social* approach is central to the success of a sustainable and meaningful democracy, the same approach should be applied to the question of tradition, culture, and religion. The social approach implies that tradition/culture is a living phenomenon. Social agents/actors give meaning to the abstract ideas. Hence, as Asef Bayat (2007) argues, rather than asking abstract, essentialist, and cliché question of whether the local culture and/or religion is compatible with democracy, we would need to ask *how*

ordinary people can make their traditional, cultural, and/or religious values compatible with democracy? In other words, under what *social conditions* can they accomplish such a significant task? How can they participate in this process? How would they transcend the *theological* categories of the religious and the secular into a larger *sociological* context of daily life? This social approach acknowledges the power of *social agents* in Iran's quest for a social democracy from within.

Moreover, as Jürgen Habermas (1987) has famously argued, modernity is an "unfinished project." Some social theories suggest "'tradition' is likewise a perpetually unfinished project—that is how people understand their traditions and apply them to practical situation" (Anderson et al. 1998; Monshipouri 2003). The notion of an *unfinished project of tradition* implies that tradition and change are not mutually exclusive concepts, and there is a constant and critical dialogue between the local tradition and a global quest for social justice. A discursive dialogue with culture, and mining the tradition could show that modern concepts of social justice and democracy are universal and have native roots in the intellectual soil of every society. Habermas (2006) even suggests that under certain conditions "the secular citizens must open their minds," in order to learn from "the normative truth content of a religious expression" and enter into "dialogue" with their fellow religious citizens. Such a dialogue serves societal empowerment, and thus the success and stability of a grassroots democracy. A dialogue with people's traditions and cultures, in sum, empowers civil society, facilitates active and deliberative engagement, and provides the most effective path to challenge the status quo. It brings change from within.

Iran: Multiple Sources of a Grassroots Social Democracy

Like many other nations, Iranians "are the inheritors and the carries of three cultures at once." These triple cultural heritages "are of national, religious, and Western origins. While steeped in an ancient national culture, we are also immersed in our religious culture, and we are at the same time awash in successive waves coming from the Western shores. Whatever solutions that we decide for our problems must come from this mixed heritage" (Soroush 2000: 156). In socio-political terms, three major social forces in modern Iran—nationalists, socialists, and Islamic

forces—represent such a mixed and complex cultural/intellectual heritage. Despite their different origins, these social forces/trends are neither monolithic nor hold a pure identity. There are elements of Islamic culture and Western ideas of socialism and liberalism among the Iranian nationalists; socialists have been exposed to nationalism and Islamic culture; and Islamic forces have adopted elements of nationalism and Western ideas of socialism and liberalism. With such a complex and crosscutting identity, these trends need to have a *critical* dialogue with each other.

Each of the three socio-intellectual trends in Iran is represented by a number of thinkers and public intellectuals. In each trend, however, there is only a handful of original, authentic, and independent thinkers whose legacy/tradition could still contribute to Iran's grassroots social democracy: Khalil Maleki (1903–1969) from a nationalist discourse, Mostafa Sho'a'ian (1936–1975) and Bijan Jazani (1937–1975) from a Marxist tradition, and Mohammad Nakhshab (1923–1970) and Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977) from a progressive Islam. In this chapter, however, I will briefly examine the discourses of Mohammad Nakhshab, Khalil Maleki, and Ali Shari'ati.

"To find one's own way one cannot depend on the words of the master," argues Walter Mignolo, "one has to delink and disobey" (2015: xxiv). Mohammad Nakhshab, Khalil Maleki, and Ali Shari'ati disobeyed and delinked from the dominant discourses of their time: Soviet Marxism, Pahlavi's autocratic Western modernism, and orthodox/traditional Islam. They were original thinkers and exercised an "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo 2015). They began to think independently about Iran and the world. They dared to discover and experienced failure and success in their intellectual journeys. They challenged the "gatekeepers and regulators of thought," those who claimed the monopoly over the "word of God" or the "word of Reason" (Mignolo 2015: xv). They "delinked" from the establishment and that is why we may dare to (re-)discover their approach.

Mohammad Nakhshab (1923–1970): A Socialist Theist

In the 1940s, socialism made a profound impact on young Muslim activists. Mohammad Mekanik (known as Mohammad Nakhshab) and Jalal ed-Din Ashtiyani were founding fathers of the Socialist Theists Movement (*Nehzat-e Khodaparastan-e Sosiyalist*) in 1944 (Hunter 2014: 72; Taghavi 2005: 13–15). The Socialist Theists synthesized "Islamic spirituality and socialist ideas and thus developed what they called a 'middle school of

thought' between idealism and materialism; they characterized this as 'positive socialism'" (Hunter 2014: 72). According to Mohammad Nakhshab, the leading ideologue of the Socialist Theists Movement, freedom and social justice are the core values of both Islam and socialism. Islamic discourse, he argued, is a mediated worldview (*maktab-e vaseteh*); it stands between idealism and materialism, and between communism and capitalism. More specifically, there is more affinity between Islam and socialism than between materialism/Marxism and socialism. There is an inherent contradiction, he argued, between socialism as a humanist/ethical ideal and materialist philosophy of Marxism. Socialism, it was argued, is a sacred struggle of selfless individuals whose ethical responsibility and political ideals are not correlated with their socio-economic base. For the Socialist Theists, the spiritual element of Islam provides strong incentive for people to fight for freedom and social justice. It is much easier to disseminate socialist ideals in Iran, he argued, through the Islamic concepts (Nakhshab 2002; Nekuruh 1997). The Socialist Theists boldly and confidently believed that "in terms of advocating justice and progress, Islam does not lag behind Marxism. On the contrary, because of its emphasis on freedom and democracy it is superior to it." Nonetheless, "socialism or the public ownership of means of production," they argued, remains "the shortest way of overcoming injustice, poverty, ignorance, self-alienation, misery, and exploitation" (Hunter 2014: 72; Taghavi 2005: 27).

The Socialist Theists challenged the hegemony of any privileged class over others and fought simultaneously at least in three fronts: first and foremost, they were anticlerical in the context of Islamic tradition. There is no clerical *class* in Islam, they argued. "The clergy, instead of emphasizing Islam's progressive social and economic messages, had focused on metaphysics and has imbued Islam with bizarre mysteries, miracles, and in general, superstition" (Hunter 2014: 72). Socialism, they argued, was the essence of Islam; they interpreted the Quranic concept of *showra* (consultation) as a form of democratic socialism and reinterpreted the Quran in light of *humanist* (not Soviet) socialism (Rahnama 2000: 25). It is worth noting that their idea of *the affinity between Islam and socialism* inspired many young Muslims in the 1960s and 1970s. Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977), Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleqani (1911–1979), and others were influenced by such a novel and revolutionary discourse. The impact of the Socialist Theists in Taleqani's book, *Islam and Ownership* (1953), is evident (Shahibzadeh 2015). The Socialist Theists, known as the intellectual

father of the Islamic Left, contributed immensely to the cause of social democratic interpretation of Islam.

Second, the Socialist Theists were critical of Western liberal democracy. Jalal ed-Din Ashtiyani, one of the two founders of the Movement, offers a very interesting critique of Western liberal democracy:

> Western societies, which form a small part of the family of nations, enjoy the state of affluence at the expense of poverty and suffering of many others. Nevertheless, the signs of decline and self-alienation can also be seen in the West. The role of capitalism and *misguided democracy* have turned people into machine-parts and into talking ballot-papers, which can be sold and bought … Political parties are turning into election shops. (Ashtiyani quoted in Hunter 2014: 73; Taghavi 2005: 32–33; original emphasis)

As Hunter points out, "the Socialist Theists were essentially against the domination of a particular class over others, but they had no clear idea of how to reconcile the requirements of safeguarding individual freedom and the running of a society" (Hunter 2014: 73).

Third, the Socialist Theists challenged the state-centered Soviet-style socialism and instead offered a *humanist* and *social-based* socialism. They clearly opposed Iran's pro-Soviet Marxist political party, the Tudeh Party, both for its materialist philosophy as well as for its Soviet-style socialism. Equally important, they contested the Tudeh Party's political dependency on the Soviet Unions policy. The Tudeh Party's support to the Soviet's demand for oil concession in Iran's northern provinces (the proposed Caspian oil concession) contributed to the split within the Tudeh Party in 1944. The emergence of the Socialist Theists coincided with the rise of anti-Soviet socialist trends among other social forces in Iran.

Khalil Maleki (1903–1969): A Pioneer of Indigenous Socialism?

The Soviet Union adapted an interventionist and neocolonial policy toward Iran in 1942 and 1943. The Soviets were instrumental in creating two secessionist/separatist governments of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. The Tudeh Party blindly supported Moscow's policy. For the Tudeh party, "a socialist government by nature could not have colonial or neocolonial tendencies" (Hunter 2014: 67). The Tudeh Party's blind submission to the Soviets was challenged from within. A number of prominent members of the

Tudeh Party such as Khalil Maleki (1903–1969) and Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923–1969) left the party and supported the government's nationalist policy as an expression of Iran's national sovereignty. Maleki left the Tudeh Party and joined the *Hezb-e Zahmatkeshan* (Toilers' Party) in 1947 where he published his newspaper *Niru-ye Sevvom* (*The Third Force*). He became interested in the Toilers' Party since the party program was against "all forms of imperialism including Russian imperialism." Soon, however, he left the Toilers' Party as the Party began opposing Mosaddeq's oil nationalization policy. Maleki founded his own party.

Khalil Maleki developed a novel theory and created a new political party to pursue his authentic social justice and indigenous socialism. Maleki's theory of "Separate Roads to Socialism" was materialized in the formation of a new party called The Third Force (*Niru-ye Sevvom*). The Third Force Party distanced itself from a pro-Soviet Leninist Marxism/socialism and a right-wing/centrist nationalism. For Khalil Maleki, Soviet socialism was nothing short of a state capitalism (*kapitalism-e dowlati*). It is quite remarkable that Maleki opposed antidemocratic nature of Stalinism as early as 1940s, and opposed, in the same manner, Maoism, which became the new Marxist fashion in the late 1960s. In a letter written in 1967, he criticized the Maoist tendencies among Iranian intellectuals in Europe: "The gentlemen do not retreat one step from their scientific socialism of Marx in its Leninist interpretation. Unfortunately, they are incapable of understanding the significant events that have taken place since Marx and Lenin. We fought against Stalin once, and we came out victorious" (Maleki quoted in Pishdad and Katouzian 2002: 9; Shahibzadeh 2016: 24).

The Third Force did not become a major political party, but its democratic socialism with an anti-imperialist/anti-American character had a profound impact on the struggle for democracy in Iran after the 1953 coup. The Socialist Theists and the Third Force made a considerable impact on the rise of the secular and Islamic left/social democrats in the 1970s. Maleki's Third Force turned into a symbol of support for an indigenous democratic socialism vis-à-vis Soviet socialism; it successfully synthesized the idea of socialism with respect for national sovereignty and dignity of indigenous culture. It is worth noting that it was Khalil Maleki who for the first time proposed and promoted the discourse of "Return to the Self" (*bazgasht beh khish*) in Iran (Vahdat 2002: 110). His indigenous approach contributed to the prominence of the discourse of "Return to the Self" in Iran in 1970s. What makes Khalil Maleki relevant today, in short, is nothing but a core of his argument: *Socialism would be the result*

of every society's indigenous experiences (Burhan 1997; Katouzian 2004: 165–188; Katouzian 2003: 24–52; emphasis added.).

It is crucial to acknowledge here the impact of Maleki's indigenous or "nonalignment" socialism on young and enthusiastic Iranian Marxist Mostafa Sho'a'iyan (1936–1975). As Peyman Vahabzadeh (2007a,b) argues, "in a situation parallel to Maleki's split from, and criticism of, the Tudeh Party, Sho'a'iyan's iconoclastic engagement with *Fada'i-ye Khalq*" demonstrates "his principled originality as well as his lone reassertion of the role of dissident intellectuals" (2007a: 406).

In his work, *Revolution* (*Enqelab*), Sho'a'iyan problematized the ideological roots of the Soviets' betrayal of the Jangali Movement in the Caspian region (1920–1921). "What is significant about *Revolution*," argues Vahabzadeh (2007a: 409), "is that it stems from a particular experience and then emerges as a universal theory that refuses canonical Marxism." It is probably safe to argue that Sho'a'iyan's grassroots approach for change is best encapsulated in his own words of "*relying on the Iranian nation*" (Sho'a'iyan 1976: 15; Vahabzadeh 2007a: 416). He was a radical critique of "tradition of killing thinking" (Sho'a'iyan 1976: 22; Vahabzadeh 2007a: 419), that is, a blind imitation of the foreign agendas/platforms, turning the intellectual Left into the "idle consumers" of "any nicely-packaged imported theory" (Vahabzadeh 2007a: 418–419). Sho'a'iyan identified "democratic openness as the Achilles's heel of dogmatic and Stalinist rule of ideologically blinded individuals at the helms of leftist groups" and thus boldly broke away with this tradition (Vahabzadeh 2007a: 413). The conventional Left of the time penalized Sho'a'iyan. He was accused of being "American Marxist" by the Fadai Guerrillas who deployed the term in order to intimidate him and undermine his indigenous and independent thinking (Vahabzadeh 2007a: 409). His original, bold, and independent thinking—though it certainly suffers from its limitations—cost him to live in a harsh and isolated life until his death in 1976. As Peyman Vahabzadeh (2007a: 405) argues, Mostafa Sho'a'iyan's "maverick and uncompromising thinking and singular leftism" and his unconventional and "uncanonical" leftism, which "challenged all doctrinal versions of Marxism," makes him relevant in today's context.

Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977): Toward a Spiritual Social Democracy?

Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977) is probably the most sophisticated and influential socialist Muslim in modern Iran. For Shari'ati, "*social objectivity*

creates religious subjectivity," not the other way around (1981: 30; original emphasis). This is how the socio-political hierarchy creates polytheism. The struggle between monotheism (*towhid*) and polytheism (*shirk*) is a social, not a theological, conflict between two social forces in history. Polytheism is a religion of polytheistic social formation such as class, race, or other forms of domination; it aims to justify the status quo. Monotheism, in its socio-historical terms, is the struggle for human emancipation; it aims at self- and social awareness and responsibility. For Shari'ati, institutionalized religion has always undermined the emancipatory aspect of religion. Religion is "human awareness," a "source of existential responsibility," which would lead to social responsibility. In *Religion against Religion*, Shari'ati argues, "if I speak of religion, it is not the religion which has prevailed in human history, but a religion whose prophets rose for the elimination of *social polytheism*. I speak of a religion, which is not realized yet. Thus our reliance on religion is not a return to the past, but a continuation of history" (Shari'ati quoted in Mahdavi 2011: 102–106; original emphasis).

Shari'ati (1998a) made a clear distinction between his indigenous and authentic idea of "Return to the Self" (*bazgasht beh khish*) and a regressive and nostalgic return to the past. The first approach, he argued, involves a critical reexamination of our tradition/historical legacy in order to liberate the nations' tradition from all kinds of hegemonic discourses—institutionalize religion of the clerical class as well as the autocratic/colonial modernization. The second approach, however, is best represented by "Return to the Plough" (*bazgasht beh khish*)! The two homophones *khish* (self) and *khish* (plough) in Persian were used to conceptualize and characterize the discourse of Return to the Self.

Structures of domination, Shari'ati argues, have constantly hindered self- and social-awareness of human beings in history. In his Gramscian approach/formulation, structures of domination rested upon a triangle of economic power, political oppression, and inner ideological/cultural justification. He provides a critique of the three pillars of "trinity of oppression," *zar-zur-tazvir* (gold-coercion-deception) or *tala-tigh-tasbih* (gold-sword-rosary), meaning material injustice (*estesmar*), political dictatorship (*estebdad*), and religious and other forms of cultural alienation (*estehmar*). Shari'ati offers a three-dimensional ideal type—"a trinity of freedom, social justice, and spirituality" (*azadi, barabari, va 'erfan*)—in opposition to the "trinity of oppression" and in recognition of self- and social-awareness (Mahdavi 2011: 102–106).

The problem, argued Shari'ati (1982: 37), was that freedom without social justice degenerated into a freedom of market, not a freedom of human beings. Social justice without freedom undermined human dignity, and spirituality without freedom and social justice ignored the core/essence of our humanity. These ideals turned into regressive forces, new means of domination, and served the status quo. The solution to this problem, Shari'ati argued, is to synthesize the three ideals, making a three-dimensional self and society/polity. In other words, the unity and harmony of three ideals of freedom, social justice, and spirituality bring about self- and social awareness, human emancipation, and harmonizes the relationship between nature, man, and God. The unity of three ideals would free human being from the bond of divine and materialistic determinism. It "frees mankind from the *captivity of heaven and earth alike* and arrives at *true humanism*" (Shari'ati 1982: 85–90: Manoochehri 2003; Mahdavi 2011: 102–106; emphasis added).

More specifically, the core of Shari'ati's discourse is threefold: freedom and democracy without capitalism and neoliberal market fundamentalism, social justice and socialism without authoritarianism and materialism, and spirituality and ethics without organized religion and clericalism. For Shari'ati, the existing democracies offer only a minimum requirement of an ideal radical democracy. Shari'ati tends to agree with *demokrasi-ye showra'i* (consultative democracy), which relies on active and effective participation of citizens in the public sphere. Shari'ati's strong egalitarian leaning and constant critique of all forms of social injustice/inequality makes him a socialist thinker. For Shari'ati (1982: 107), however, socialism is not merely a mode of production; rather, it is a way of life. He is critical of state socialism, and worshipping personality, party, and state; he advocates *humanist socialism*. For Shari'ati, freedom and social justice must be complemented with modern spirituality. Nonetheless, he makes it crystal clear that freedom and social justice remain the top priorities for the ordinary people, and spirituality is futile without freedom and social justice. Shari'ati (1995: 1266) uses the symbolic story of the Adam and the Forbidden Fruit in the Garden of Eden to highlight the significance of civil rights and social justice, and to demonstrate how mysticism may turn into a false conciseness and religious deception: "In the Garden of Eden," argues Shari'ati (1995: 1266), "Adam was blessed with every gift from God. Every fruit in this bountiful garden was permitted, with the exception of one fruit, [the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil], which had been forbidden" (1995: 1266). Yet in our world, continues

Shari'ati, "the ordinary people are denied access to most every fruit. *The permitted fruits have become forbidden for us.*" He then asks, "How are we to go after the forbidden fruit when our basic human rights (*hoquq-e adamiyat*) has not been recognized, when we have been denied the God given gifts of this garden, when we have not tasted even its permitted fruits?" (1995: 1266; emphasis added) Then he forcefully makes his point:

> To preach about love to those who do not have bread is nothing but a nasty deception dressed as piety and asceticism. And to tell those with no drinking water the story of Alexander's search for the fountain of eternal life is nothing but a bad joke! Intellectuals must remember that in our context, our mission is to *help people find the permitted fruits, not to send them after the forbidden one.*

Moreover, Shari'ati (1982: 52) is well aware of the shortcomings of official mysticism: the established/institutionalized religion and mysticism "became a shackle on the foot of the spiritual and material evolution of mankind." It "actually separates man from his own humanity. It makes him into an importunate beggar, a slave of unseen forces beyond his power; it deposes him and alienates him from his own will. It is this established religion that today we are familiar with" (Shari'ati 1982: 60). Nonetheless, modern critical *'erfan* and spirituality, he argues, provide a modern spiritual vision; ontology and epistemology sharply differ from religious formalism and passive, apolitical mysticism. It provides us a synthetic spirituality in a critical dialogue with other religious traditions and modern concepts. It is, in fact, a *post-religious spirituality* (Mahdavi 2011: 102–106).

For Shari'ati, the trinity of freedom, social justice, and spirituality (*azadi, barabari, va 'erfan*) is not a mechanical marriage of three distinct concepts. Rather, it is a dialectical approach toward self- and social emancipation; it puts together three inseparable dimensions of man and society. In sum, Shari'ati's trinity of *azadi*, *barabari*, and *'erfan*, the most relevant core of his discourse, translates into a new polity of *spiritual social democracy*. This ideal type clearly needs theorizing the role of spirituality in the public sphere so the theory could translates into a workable synthetic political model of *spiritual social democracy* (Mahdavi 2011: 102–106). Nonetheless, Shari'ati's original approach to the self- and social emancipation could contribute to the idea of a grassroots social democracy in Iran.

The "iron cage" of modernity, Max Weber (2001: 124; Dabashi 2015: 20) argued, might well produce "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart." Ali Shari'ati's three-dimensional alternative discourse of freedom, social justice, and spirituality was an attempt to overcome the dark side of modernity and to liberate/emancipate modern humanity from modernity's "iron cage." Equally significant, yet, was his radical critique of *resilient fence of tradition*. In his own words, two equally destructive and deceptive forces/discourses captivate us, and each produces a different form of false consciousness, cultural alienation, and deception: "*Estehmar*" and again "*Estehmar*"! The first refers to colonial modernity, market fundamentalism, and alienation by the hegemonic/colonial western modernity. The second refers to religious deception and dogma (Shari'ati 1998a). Shari'ati invites us to exercise an act of "epistemic disobedience," "delinking" from the establishment—"the gatekeepers" of "word of reason" and "word of God." His approach is an invitation to think through a solution from within.

Conclusion: Toward Discourse Building and Decolonial Knowledge Production

Western liberal/capitalist democracy does not represent, contrary to the views of its advocates, "the end point of mankind's ideological evolution" (Fukuyama 1989: 271). The liberal paradigm remains in a profound crisis. The liberal discourse undermines the twin pillars of socio elements of democracy: *social justice* and *societal empowerment*. Social justice gives meaning and substance to democracy; it makes the value of democratic ideas tangible to the public. Social inequality results in a gradual decline of democratic aspirations in civil society; it gives rise to populist-authoritarian trends and pushes democratic ideas and institutions at bay. Social justice brings the abstract value of democracy into the daily life of the people. Societal empowerment strengthens and promotes dialogue and deliberation of civil society. In this chapter, I examined Habermas's concept of deliberative democracy as one among several alternative egalitarian/social approaches to liberal democracy, and I argued how it may contribute to the rise of a grassroots social democracy in Iran. A deliberative model of democratic will-formation can empower civil society, guarantee an equal and inclusive participation, and generate a democratic ethics of citizenship. Democratic ideas are ineffective if ordinary people do not reach them. As

Max Weber (1998: 61–63) reminds us, ideas are powerless unless fused with material forces. Democratic ideas can last longer if strong, active, and engaged social forces participate in the public sphere.

The popular quest for *edalat-e ejtema'i* (social justice) has a long history in modern Iran. *Adalat* (Justice) was the first socialist party in Iran around the turn of the twentieth century. Popular demands for *Edalatkhaneh* (House of Justice) during the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, the significance of *Ferqeh-ye Ejtema'iyun-e 'Ammiyun* (Social Democratic Party) in the first Parliament (*Majles*) and the *Ferqeh-ye Demokrat* (Democratic Party) in the second *Majles* are well known. The contribution of Taghi Errani's Group of 53 to the growth of socialist discourse in Iran is a fact. Other secular and religious public intellectuals and socio-political forces/movements in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s advanced the discourse of social democracy in Iran: Nakhshab's Socialist Theists, Maleki's Third Force, Shari'ati's discourse of spiritual social democracy are indicative of deep and diverse roots of a quest for social justice and social democracy in Iran. Moreover, the idea of social justice was one of the central slogans of the 1979 Iranian revolution. The quest for social justice continues to surface in a number of social movements in postrevolutionary Iran: women, students, workers, and middle-class poor remain the focal point of social movements for social justice in postrevolutionary Iran.

Multiple sources of social democracy from the global experiences and the local traditions can contribute to a birth of Iran's genuine and bottom-up social democracy. In this chapter, I examined how intellectual discourses of Mohammad Nakhshab, Khalil Maleki, and Ali Shari'ati could contribute to the rise and realization of a grassroots social democracy in Iran. Nakhshab, Maleki, and Shari'ati disobeyed and delinked from the dominant discourse of their time. Their "epistemic disobedience," independent thinking, authenticity, and indigenous approach toward a grassroots social democracy remain relevant for today's Iran. We certainly must problematize their legacy, acknowledge their achievements and failures, and learn from their limitations. These public intellectuals did dare to discover new ways, indigenous approaches, and alternative modernities that are attentive to local and global experiences. They dared to discover a third way—a *glocal* approach. They delinked from the omnipotent of the local Tradition and the juggernaut of the Universal West. Their "decolonial horizons," to use Mingolo's words, made them to aim at "epistemic pluriversality." They were pioneers of the Iranian version of what

Argentinian philosopher Enrique Dussel (2012: 28–58) would describe as "transmodernity."

Argentinian scholar Rodolfo Kusch (1922–1979) in his work *Indigenous and Popular Thinking in America* asked "what could be the meaning of [Heidegger's] *Dasein* in America, given that it was a concept nourished and propelled by a certain ethos of the concept of the German middle class between the two wars" (Mignolo 2015: xxiii). He then used an indigenous word "*utcatha*," which "has certain parallels with *Dasein*, a word that Heidegger picked up from popular German" (Mignolo 2015: xxiii). The lesson to learn, argues Walter Mignolo (2015: xxiii), is that an "indigenous ways of thinking" requires a "simultaneous process" of engagement and "delinking." In this process, the point is "not to reject" or dismiss the West "but, on the contrary, to know it in order to delink from it." In other words, as Hamid Dabashi (2015: 2) argues, we need "a declaration of independence," from local and global "exhausted epistemics" in order to think and act boldly and independently.

"Historical conditions are the bedrock of ideas," writes Dabashi (2015: 6); the Muslim world, Iran included, "is changing; these changes are the *conditio sine qua non* of new ideas that are yet to be articulated" (Dabashi 2015: 6). There is much *unthought* in the original thought of these scholars. What is needed today is to expand their original ideas *beyond their intension* in order to materialize Iran's century-old quest for a grassroots social democracy.

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Social Justice and Democracy in Iran: In Search of the Missing Link

Peyman Vahabzadeh

The modern concept of social justice in Iran was crystallized in its nascent manifestations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the complex processes that led to the Constitutional Revolution (1906–1911). Due to the particular geohistorical and intellectual influences that informed the Constitutional Revolution, the idea of social justice was represented by the emerging social democracy containing the labor movement as well as the early women's associations. This *analytical* chapter draws on an *interpretive history* of Iran's particular (but not exclusive) entry into political modernity with the Constitutional Revolution in order to *theoretically* account for the missing *conceptual* link between the *unfinished project of social justice* and the *ongoing struggles for democracy* in Iran. Specifically, I first ascertain that social democracy has been an essential component of Iranian political modernity along with constitutionalism and the rule of law. From this historical observation, I extract theoretical arguments in favor of reestablishing conceptual links between democratization and constitutionalism, on the one hand, and social justice, on the other. I will conclude by arguing that a *lived and living concept of social justice* in the continuing struggles for democratization allows for participatory self-assertion.

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Return of an Incomplete Project

The events that have been unfolding in Iran in the past few years leading up to the momentous and historic nationwide protest movement in 2009 contain certain implications for the potential transformations in the country. After the experience of the Reformist government of Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005), which has been unsuccessful in introducing reforms to the existing political constellation, social movements—women's, student, workers', and youth movements, as well as pro-Reform individuals and parties—persisted to varying degrees at different times. Despite continued and surgically repressive policies of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government (2005–2013), these movements have been steadfast in trying to challenge the unjust and discriminatory laws of the country, as well as the unfair and disempowering treatment of the working people due to the growing neoliberalization of economy. Each movement embarks on this inevitable but perilous journey according to its specific demographic constituencies, organizational potentials, and capacities for mobilization (see Vahabzadeh 2016).

There is a general agreement among scholars that the protest movement of 2009–2010, called the Green Movement, is reminiscent *not* of the 1979 Revolution, but of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911, the historic turning point that epitomizes Iran's entry into political modernity a century earlier (see Dabashi 2012; Hashemi and Postel 2010; Jahanbegloo 2012). This *conceptual–historical* connection is not accidental: the *spirit* dominating the post-Reformism movements (including the Green Movement) has been consistently a democratic one as these movements, against the backdrop of continued political repression, social restrictions, and discriminatory laws, have been aiming at not only influencing policy and having greater popular input within the existing political apparatus through a redefined concept of citizenship (which the state consistently ignores) but also pushing for democratizing social life, through increasing participation of growing numbers of diverse social actors. Even within the Reform movement—which is not really a "movement" but more of an elite circle of actors within or close to the ruling establishment (although they have now been largely excluded from the ruling elite)—there had been intellectual and theoretical streaks of democratic, participatory readings of the origins of Islamic community in Medina (est. 622 CE) and the problems of governance within an Islamic state, as I have shown elsewhere (Vahabzadeh 2004; see Soroush 1992;

Kadivar 2001; Khatami 2001; Mir-Hosseini and Tapper 2006). The presence of this intellectual stream within Shi'i political thought and clerical debates over the nature of the Islamic government reveals that although a tendency toward "strong state" has indeed informed the principles of the Islamic Republic—which surprisingly brings the postrevolutionary state in line with the prerevolutionary state, as Vanessa Martin (2000: 10) has shown—Shi'i political thought is not necessarily reducible to such a principle. The issues dominating the growing public discourse, which takes place outside of the state's limited and imposed space, are those of human rights, civil society, citizenship, government accountability, and of course, the rule of law, and by law I mean *just laws* (or nondiscriminatory laws), which implies that the sources of law must be sought in modern egalitarian principles (however formal) instead of traditional sources (*Shari'a*) based on differential treatment of different societal groups. The women's movement epitomizes the tendency toward the former (see Hoodfar and Sadeghi 2009; Ahmadi Khorasani 2009). In short, the last vivid public manifestation of Iranian people's collective vision for their future unambiguously reveals a tendency toward a "civil rights" movement. If we agree that the Constitutional Revolution marks Iran's entry into political modernity, then in my reading, the recent movements, and the Green Movement above all, stand out as Iran's point of *reentry into the original project of political modernity in a country in which the process of democratic development has been interrupted and delayed by the autocratic tendencies that are tied to economic interests of the ruling elite under the country's rentier state.*

Writing this chapter at the time when social movements in Iran are under tremendous pressure and when the horizons for meaningful change seem bleak (Vahabzadeh 2016), I must nevertheless acknowledge that the recent movements indicate the return of an interrupted national impulse to the living and breathing but deteriorating Iranian social and political scene. This observation is the gift of an interpretive approach to history.

RETHINKING THE ORIGINAL MOMENT

The parallel between the two historic moments across a century— the Constitutional Revolution and the Green Movement—affords me another comparison. Historians of the Constitutional Revolution agree (albeit to varying degrees due to their differing analytical frameworks) that social democracy in its various manifestations has played a

vital role in the movement that brought Iran its first Constitution and elected Parliament, generating both visions and activists (see Abrahamian 1982, 2008; Afary 1996; Chaqueri 2001, 2010; Cronin 2004). Let us be clear about the defining aspect of constitutionalism: given the context of disintegrating Iran due to imperialist encroachments and subsequent ill-perceived and poorly managed conflicts with Russian and British imperialisms that resulted in significant territorial losses in the nineteenth century (Abrahamian 2008: 36), and given also the rampant corruption and selling the country's resources through concessions by a stagnating ruling elite, the Constitutional movement was without a doubt a collective attempt at garnering institutionally enabled self-rule, responsible governance, and national self-assertion. This is nowhere better shown than through the rapid emergence of the *anjomans* or grassroots associations, the very (nonviolent) *democratic–institutive origins of a new body politic*, as Hannah Arendt holds (1963: 262, 266–267), an experiment lost to turmoil in the aftermath of the constitutional movement and to the subsequent rise of Reza Shah. Indeed, the constitutional-era scholarship cannot succeed without in-depth analyses of *anjomans* as grassroots democracy (Afary 1996; Chaqueri 2001). The ephemeral appearance of the *showra* (or "council," in particular workers' councils) in the revolutionary years of 1978–1979 also attests to the importance of grassroots self-organization as the principal form of democracy. Since I am enumerating historic parallels here, let me quote Cosroe Chaqueri who, in observing the comparison between the Constitutional Revolution and the Islamic Revolution, states, "there was no single charismatic leader in the Constitutional Revolution … On the whole, the *anjomans*, collective leadership, and cooperation were the hallmark of this period" (2001: 111). Stated differently, "The leaders [were] unknown" (Spring-Rice 1907 letter as quoted in Afary 1996: 63). This is yet another striking parallel between the Green Movement and the constitutional movement.

The democratic aspect of the Constitutional Revolution should be understood in the context of the Russian and British imperialisms forcing Iran into the world capitalist economy that structurally shifted age-old Iranian political and economic systems, thus producing the socioeconomic conditions for constitutionalism (Chaqueri 2001: 2). The *primary* trajectory of constitutionalism was to reduce the harm of the (unresponsive and corrupt) state, that inorganically dangled above the people, through constitutional checks and balances (Vahabzadeh 2010b). Only by way of this did grassroots participation, advocacy of freedom of press and

associations, or imposing restrictions of clerical influence in politics and everyday life (in particular by women and social democrats) become the defining characteristics of constitutionalism. No wonder, then, that with the increasing diminishment of associations and marginalization of the original revolutionary leaders, the road was paved for Reza Shah's "repressive development" through a strong state that committed the constitutionalist spirit to melancholic memory.

It is true that social justice and social democracy have been among the constitutive discourses of many early twentieth-century movements for political modernity, both through the formation of new nation-states out of the old empires in Europe (e.g., Germany and Russia) and with the process of decolonization in Africa and Asia (such as African socialism) (see Emre 2014: 1–27; Claudin 1975; Anderson 2010). In the Iranian case, we notice the social democratic element within constitutionalism holding together the two essential components of the movement: *the struggles for social justice through upholding the collective rights of the workers and the marginalized (women and certain minorities) were in fact thoroughly and inseparably intertwined with the* anjoman*-style democratic experiments and advocacy of rights-based citizenship.*

The mass migration of Iranians to Transcaucasia resulted from the disintegration of traditional economy—a process that detached multitudes of peasants from the land and to a changing economy unable to absorb them (Chaqueri 2001: 77; Afary 1996: 17–19). Naturally, with the growing association of Iranian migrant workers with Transcaucasia labor movement and the influence of Russian social democracy, this phenomenon had an impact on the nascent labor movement in Iran, with possibly the first recorded Iranian labor action having taken place in the Caspian port of Anzali between November and December 1906 (Chaqueri 2001: 90). The year in which this action took place is important. The Constitutional Revolution provided an opportunity for a new form of popular sovereignty to emerge with the first *anjomans* in Tehran and Rasht as early as 1907 (Chaqueri 2001: 100–101), but the secret societies that immensely contributed to the intellectual debates and political organizations, as well as guild self-organizations, best manifested during the sanctuary at British legation in Tehran in August 1906, preceded and sewed the seeds for later *anjomans* (Afary 1996: 53, 57, 73–78). The first *political* public rally of women in Iranian history also took place at this time (Afary 1996: 54). It is hard to conceive the popular, armed uprising against Mohammad Ali Shah's Cossack-aided coup in June 1908 (after his first attempt was defeated

by Tehran's *anjomans*), an uprising pioneered by Tabriz revolutionaries led by Sattar Khan in July 1908, without grassroots self-organizations. It is equally hard to conceive the victory of revolutionaries without the significant mobilization of Iranian social democrats (aided by their Caucasian comrades) (Chaqueri 2001: 102) and minorities, Armenians, and Azali Babis (Affary 1996: 39). The *anjomans*, many of which formed along guild lines, provided a significant means of mass mobilization, and as the movement progressed, the *anjomans* provided popular foundations for the formal bodies of government. The origins of social democratic organizations go back to the foundation of Hemmat in late 1904, which led to the foundation of *Ferqeh-ye Ejtema'iyun 'Ammiyun* (*Mojahed*) in 1905. In their program as well as in their politics, the Social Democrats advocated rights and freedoms, and they proposed a bill of rights to the Majlis, containing not only freedom of press, speech, and organization, but also the rights of workers (Afary 1996: 86). Also important is the key role of Armenian social democracy in the constitutional movement. In addition to the social democratic element, there emerged also *Ferqeh-ye Demokrat-e Iran* (Democratic Party of Iran), around 1909, that emphasized constitutional rights, liberties, and equality among citizens regardless of race, religion, or nationality (Chaqueri 2010: 26–27). Women's *anjomans* played a key role in the movement, radicalizing its social democratic tendency. Women's contributions ranged from demanding women's suffrage to creating schools for female education and participating in the Revolution as militiawomen (Afary 1996: 177–208). In fact women's *anjomans* contributed to the social democratic aspect of the movement (Afary 1996: 208). In short, the "Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was truly a turning point in the history of Iranian women. Muslim, Armenian, Zoroastrian, Azail Babi, Baha'i, and Jewish advocates of women's rights joined their voices, took back the segregated streets, claimed a new space for women in the newspapers, created safe educational and political organizations where women's ideas, resources, and creative energies were galvanized and channeled into new projects" (Afary 1996: 208). The early women's movement, as Cosroe Chaqueri argues, should not be attributed to western influence; rather, its roots must be sought in the Iranian history (2006). Thus, the Constitutional Revolution brought out the unique composition of social democratic and liberal elements. The advocacy of the rights of working people, as the original manifestation of today's vast array of struggles for social, economic, gender, national, religious, and linguistic justice, grew simultaneously with the nation's struggle for democratic citizenship through the turbulent years of constitutional movement.

The above facts, although hastily presented here, are important because they indicate an *archè*—a *founding gesture and an institutive moment* that inform the entire subsequent history to our day: *Iran's road to democratic citizenship has contained an undeniable social justice component.* In light of this observation, we can now clearly see how the social justice element reappears in every historic period following the Constitutional Revolution most vividly when dictatorship has been slackened but also under impossible conditions.

The Parallel Discourses

Constitutionalism provides an opportunity for founding the rule of law, creation of civil society, and emergence of rights-bearing citizens, but it also bears the potential for allowing, through the discourse of citizenship, the means for struggles for recognition by oppressed classes and subaltern (demographic) groups, their effective and meaningful *inclusion not as individuals but as groups with shared socioeconomic interests*, in the emerging body politic. *This dual origin of Iranian political modernity has been the subject of selective and active amnesia in much of the contemporary debates* by the advocates of free-market capitalism that, in today's Iran, translates into removing "barriers to competitiveness" (see Nili 2004; Sariolqalam 2013; Tabibiyan 2013), which translates into suspending the collective rights of Iranian working class (Rouhani 2012; see also Hosseinzadeh 2014).

Iranian history since constitutionalism has been marked by a continued struggle of democracy and social justice against "repressive development" represented by the state: in the precarious semi-democratic intervals between autocratic rules—1906–1925, 1940–1953, 1960–1963, 1979–1981—as well as during, and in spite of, periods of repression—1960s–1970s, 1997–2005, 2009–2010, 2012–present—social democratic, leftist, or left-leaning parties, or myriad associations, labor unions, women's networks, advocacy groups, and/or other citizen initiatives have emerged, flourished, persisted, and deepened democratic citizenship, often at dear human costs. Waves of repression following intervals of relative freedom (notably post-1953 coup and in 1981–1988) have unleashed unimaginable purges. Under the brutal conditions of autocracy, advocates of social justice were always the sacrificial lamb. We need to note that every time the social justice element came to the fore in the periods of interval, despite their ideological visors and the strategic political errors of leftist parties, advocates of social justice—political and cultural leftists, labor

unionists, women's associations, and the student movement—contributed immensely to collective organization, enhancement of rights, expansion of public discourse and public debate, introduction of new ideas, and last but not least, participatory democracy.

Since the Constitutional Revolution and up to the late 1980s, social justice has been represented and/or embodied, and thus preserved, primarily by the Left and labor movement, as well as, to varying degrees and depending on the historical moments, women's movements, and the nationalist minorities' movements. From this observation, two consequences follow: *first*, the Left, in its myriad manifestations, has indeed preserved the idea of social justice. Thus, for our hermeneutics of history, despite its ebbs and flows, the Left has continually linked Iran's socioeconomic and political development to the Constitutional Revolution. *Second*, due to the clinical and brutal purges of thousands of leftist activists—secular and Muslim—in the 1980s and the subsequent outmigration of tens of thousands of left-leaning dissidents and other activists in the 1980s and 1990s, the Left in general has been eliminated from Iranian social and political scene, and its presence has been reduced, only after the rise of Reformist government, to intellectual circles and journals, as well as the short-lived Red student union, Students for Freedom and Equality. The Left's visible absence in today's Iran has led to the *near erasure of the discourse social justice from public life and political debates*, to the extent that Iran's turn to neoliberal policies since the 1990s has been met with no socially formidable contender. Despite the grave human cost paid by the leftist, labor, women, student, and nationalist activists, these activists showed an undying appeal for advocating the rights of the most marginalized.

The credit due to the Iranian Left for its role in perpetuating a *public discourse of social justice* and defense of the poor and needy does not vindicate its problems. Historically, and exceptions aside, leftist groups have generally been doctrinal and dogmatic in their self-declared versions of Marxism, and many of leftist groups have shown symptoms of Stalinism and hubristic violence (see Behrooz 2000; Chaqueri 2011a; 2011b; Vahabzadeh 2010a). Nonetheless, when the Left generally has had the opportunity to express itself in open conditions, it has advocated the rights of the working people, the poor, ethnic or national minorities, and also to some extent women—albeit mostly from an ideological standpoint. The Left cannot exclusively refer to socialists or Marxists: by "Left," I denote social democratic intellectuals, significant parts of every social movement advocacy group (women's, student, workers', and minority rights

movements), social justice–oriented Muslims, and even certain individual clerics (see Mahdavi 2013; 2014).

The Iranian state has resolutely been authoritarian and repressive at political and social levels in the past 37 years. The changing demographics of the country has resulted in the rising of women and youth as formidable demographic forces that proved their potency in bringing the Reformist government of Mohammad Khatami to power in 1997 and mobilizing and manning the Green Movement of 2009. Since the early 1990s, women's, youth, and student movements, as well as critical journalism and legal advocacy, have been at the forefront of the movement for challenging state repression and legally sanctioned discriminations. Consequently, a growing discourse of rights and citizenship has dominated the social and political discourse outside of the state orbit. For one thing, the democratic-rights tendency has grown into an organic public discourse among Iranian women (see Osanloo 2009).

Given the background of elimination of the voices of social justice and in the context of rising neoliberal socioeconomic policies since the late 1980s, reference to social justice has also been rendered absent within the rising rights-oriented discourses in the country. It seems that in a country with massive poverty and economic injustices the issue of social justice— the basic issue of subsistence and survival—has been *overdetermined* by the existing identity politics whose intellectual origins go back to their activists' daily experiences in confronting the state's repressive and discriminatory measures through legal and semiological challenges. From the roaring discourse of human and individual rights, which gained visible public currency with the rise of the Reform movement and election of Khatami in 1997, until recent workers' and teachers' protests (Vahabzadeh 2016), concepts of economic and social rights have been surprisingly absent. Daily newspaper *E'temad* reported in April 2014 that even after the promised wage increase and subsidy reallocation program, the wages of unskilled workers in Iranian cities stand at one-third of the poverty line (Baba'i 2014). An international source also indicates that between 2004 and 2011, "the minimum real wages of workers in Iran [has fallen] by 36 %" (FIDH 2013: 52). Political economy scholar Mohammad Maljoo has dedicated several studies to the declining conditions of the working class in Iran (2006, 2007). I do not intend to offer statistics, but these obvious indicators highlight an alarming trend: when raising the issue that in a country rich with resources—with the fourth largest oil reserves in the world—and yet staggering and increasing poverty, Reformists and

secular republicans (many of whom having made great personal sacrifices to defend the rights of Iranian people) sadly turn into free-trade apologists for global capitalism. Moreover, advocates of human and citizen rights by and large ignore the issues of subsistence, poverty, and indignation. The absence of social justice discourse cannot be felt more intensely.

Key Clarifications: Articulatory Practices

These observations necessitate two clarifications. The first clarification: these historical lessons indicate that the democratic project in Iran—as a developing country—is tied to the project of social justice, creation of fair and equitable conditions, recognition and institutionalization of collective rights, and fighting poverty as a means of ensuring the meaningful participation and defending the irreducible dignity of the citizens. This is *not* a statement of values (which renders these arguments relative to the author's views); on the contrary, it points out the s*tructural necessity for the country's socioeconomic development*: since "development" literally involves increasing access to service and commodity outputs through infrastructure building and manufactured or agricultural production, it necessitates diverse and specialized workforce, a social and demographic dimension. Neoliberal–capitalist policies in peripheral countries aim at advancing economic growth for short-term profit at the expense of working class and without the proper development of the workforce. These policies also subsume the people's *needs* under profit-oriented export–import economy that benefits foreign economic powers. Hence social justice literally entails the *socialized* aspect of economic vitality, which cannot be addressed outside of the relations set-up to bring *just conditions* to the workforce. The principle of social development, of course, is applicable in intersectional relations and to socially or culturally disadvantaged groups such as women, minorities, and marginalized. Any social project involving the aforementioned objectives, regardless of our choice of lexicon, is a project of a Left. This Left not only is future oriented but also pursues the social projects that would benefit the most vulnerable peoples within society, while it develops policy platforms for the proper and participatory growth of the workforce.

This brings us to the inevitable question of *representation* that involves any social project such as this. Compared to identity politics and identity-based movements, which are at the heart of democratic movements

today, the Left's advocacy of the working class and the poor and vulnerable indicates a key difference: the relationship between, say, the women's movement and its constituents is *organic*, which reminds us of Antonio Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971: 5–23). Women's rights activists dwell in the lived experience of discriminatory laws against women in advocating gender justice. This "organic" representation also applies to the advocates of social justice for the national, linguistic, or religious minorities. But it does not always apply to the Left. The relationship between leftist intellectuals and the vulnerable they defend is often *historical.* Or to state it differently, following Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), the Left's representation and defense of the rights of the working class and socially vulnerable depends on the *articulation of the constituents' demands within the existing political and public discourse.* At the same time, the workers' and teachers' unions' leaders and activists build organic relations with their constituents. Awareness of this facet will prevent the advocates of social justice from falling into the naïve concept of representation (assuming, like Iranian old Left, that they somehow naturally represent the working class) and instead aim at mobilizing the working men and women through the construction of a public discourse and converging articulatory practices. Between the lived experience of imposed poverty and unfair and unlivable working conditions, on the one hand, and the movement for social and economic justice, on the other, there is a long road to travel. But the same problem, and thus critique, of representation also applies to the women's movement: the organic connection of women's movement to the lived experience of women does not automatically allow the former to represent the latter. The key factor in all representational politics remains one thing alone: *articulation.*

This brings me to the second clarification: this vision of renewed Left as a social project must be nondoctrinal; or in other words, it should not be extracted from age-old seemingly unshakable theoretical truisms. This is because this project is driven by a *plurality of demands for equality, equity, and justice*—these essential components of *social justice.* In fact, in our postcommunist era, we need to liberate the Left from ideological truisms and its self-acclaimed representation of the underprivileged. In this model, *social justice has irreducible connections with human and civil rights*, although projects pertaining to social justice cannot be reduced to free-market, liberal defenders of rights. Social groups that collectively experience the adverse effects of inequalities and discriminations need

organizations, mandates, platforms, and political alliances to succeed. The movements of workers, women, students, youth, and national or religious minorities' rights need to enter into alliances to effect changes. No single movement can be dubbed a social justice movement in and by itself. As such, the creative movements of the poor such as the current-day demand-oriented workers' and teachers' protests and unionist movements need more effective means of connecting with the overall strategy for a change that will effect measurable improvements in their everyday life conditions.

In short, the return of social democracy, both as a public discourse and as an umbrella movement, is an outcome of the *co-articulation of plurality of demands* and attempts at transforming the laws and the future of the country. The project that I advocate involves championing citizenship, but not in terms of rights of abstract individuals. Moreover, this social democratic project has a certain disregard for political power as the privileged keyholder to solutions. As a bottom-up project of social democracy, it primarily invests in creating grassroots movements, self-help and empowering networks, and municipal democracies that would effect concrete changes in the everyday lives of the citizens. And yet, what I perceive as social democracy is not naïve about the policy-making power of the state. In conceptual terms, and following Ernesto Laclau again, this project involves the construction of a potentially *vast alliance of social movements through a hegemonic front* that advocate the changing *nodal points* of struggles for social justice. This hegemony functions as an "absent totality" in that its (Gramscian) "war of position" involves the rearrangement of the political and policy trenches according to the available and effective social powers of which a movement can avail itself. This is not a social imaginary fathomed in isolation and abstraction: despite the existing repressive conditions and despite the state security's continued attempts at influencing and manipulating collective action, today's social movements have already sewn the seeds of tomorrow's hegemonic front for citizen and collective rights as well as social justice.

The Conceptual Missing Link

Iran's struggle for democracy has always contained the element of social justice—a component largely lacking at the current historical moment. We do know that history can go every which way and that it has no internal logic: *the historical return of social democracy will therefore depend on the presence and articulation of current activists.* This does not mean the

return *to* social democracy as we know it, a return to used-up ideas that no longer work, but to *reinvent it* entirely according to the historic agents of our time. That said, I have yet to show the *missing link* conceptually. Those of us who lived through the historic days of 1979 recall that the clerical leadership of the Revolution drew heavily on the notion of the "downtrodden" to legitimize itself and unite the people through a timid and inconsistent, but always present, allusion to social justice. In reflecting on a "revolution of the downtrodden" (*enqelab-e kukhneshinan*, as Ayatollah Khomeini famously declared) that has resulted in the ruling class of plunder capitalists I am always reminded of Hannah Arendt's observation: "No revolution has ever solved the 'social question' and liberated men from the predicament of want, but all revolutions, with the exception of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, have followed the example of the French Revolution and used and misused the mighty forces of misery and destitution in their struggle against tyranny and oppression" (Arendt 1963: 112). *Abject social conditions are to be considered as a social force*, one that, in the hands of the politicians, can liberate peoples or subjugate them. The missing link is to be sought in the dominant discourse of rights with its emphasis on citizenship and individual rights.

My argument here is that the concept of human rights—in its dominant configuration and in its various current institutional implementations—significantly lacks the element of social justice. This lack stems from the origins of the concept of rights with the propertied middle class in Europe around the seventeenth century. I refer the interested reader to Domenico Losurdo's compelling substantiation of this affinity (2011). He reveals the historic connection between the philosophical principles of liberalism, on the one hand, and property ownership, slavery, and colonialism, on the other. As the concept expanded by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it still had its object in *categorical rights*—rights of the individual as well as rights bestowed upon groups that had shared interests. Since it is only the state that has the institutional ability to bestow rights upon citizens, the entire movement of expansion of rights has remained state-centric and, in the international political body, institutionalized by powerful organizations. I have already dedicated a theoretical study to the oppressive aspect of this conception of rights (Vahabzadeh 2003: 103–140). The Iranian advocates of various discourses of rights have generally uncritically accepted state centrism. They forget that poverty and indignation represent the anonymous stream of violence against the deliberate and free action of people (Arendt 1963: 113). The concept of economic and social

rights, which connects the discourse of rights to social justice, has been consistently ignored, or at best given a lip service.

The discourse of rights needs to be expanded to include not only the basic human rights but also economic and social rights, without which the full dignity of humans cannot be restored. What we have witnessed is that the working poor, the vulnerable (the elderly and disabled), and victims of economic discrimination (above all children, women, minorities) have been largely anonymized by the discourse of rights and political parties that, seemingly, try to represent their interests. Obviously, political parties are the crucial nodal points for affecting a country's future and for political decision-making through an electoral process. But parties run on generic platforms because they primarily seek political power. Besides, Iranian security at present surgically prevents and prosecutes all genuine, demand-oriented grassroots collective action (and instead it mobilizes its own "movements" to threaten and overwhelm protesting publics). The vulnerable sectors of the population, however, can play a significant role in expanding civil society and thus nourishing democracy. They can achieve this through self-organization, by creating and promoting workers' unions, teachers' unions, neighborhood advocacy groups, interest-based social networks, real consumer cooperatives, citizen-initiative natural-disaster relief networks, animal rights and environmentalist organizations, and other forms of grassroots self-organizations: these collective actions constitute present-day *anjomans* that persevere on demanding collective and individual rights *regardless* of the state and its policies. This indicates that given the unresponsive nature of the Iranian state, the source of human rights is not the state or the abstract citizen represented through casting ballot upon being summoned; rather *the source of human and citizens' rights and the extent to which these rights can be advocated and deepened depend on the grassroots collective action of disenfranchised peoples*. In short, *social movements are the sources of politics, not the states*. The extent to which the interest-based grassroots organizations will organize themselves will determine the contribution of the country's most deprived to building a future democracy. Thus, the conceptual missing link between social justice and democracy rests in the participation of grassroots organizations of Iran's most vulnerable, a collective project which, under current controlled politics and repressive conditions, can proceed from one of the most fundamental forms of participatory democracy: the councils in their various manifestations, and by extension, municipal participatory democracy. This is how the hegemonic front to which I alluded can begin

its formation. *It has been true that under democratic conditions struggles for social justice thrive, but here we are missing the crucial point that struggles for social justice have always brought to the public discourse grassroots efforts for democracy.*

Iranians enjoy a history rich with social and political experiments. Institutive moments are often sedimented under layers of oblivion caused by future actions, policies, and discourses. This chapter offers a reactivation of the foundational moment of participatory democracy oriented toward advocacy of social justice as well as the legal–formal registration of citizens' rights. The lesson is unavoidable: *the conceptual congruity between social justice and democratization in Iran not only has historical precedence, but also has one hundred years of lived, collective experience attached to it.* To reactivate the visions of a new Iran that were originally enacted through the Constitutional Revolution and to complete the unfinished project of political modernity, we need to turn away from a state-centric to a social movement-oriented indicator of modernity. We need not negate political institutions and socioeconomic development. Quite the contrary, my proposed conceptual–epistemological shift recognizes that rights and citizenship are the outcome of visions and forces of collective actors from all walks of life as people grapple, time and again but always with new vigor and vision, with the "social question."

Through the revolutionary years of 1905–1906, as mobilization toward the future Constitutional Revolution shaped up, with the growing demands of increasingly disillusioned and disenchanted participants, Iranian people as Shi'i Muslim nation were transformed into the "nation of Iran" (Afary 1996: 53–54). Indeed, the Constitutional Revolution marked the birth of a new nation. Only the future will tell if the new generation in Iran (60 % of Iranian population is under 30 years of age) is destined to bring about the reemergence of Iranians as a new nation bound by the principles of dignity, social justice, and participatory democracy.

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Afterword: Social Justice in Iran: Further Research

This book offers possibly the first collection dedicated to social justice studies in Iran. It is hoped that the multi- and interdisciplinary contributions in this book, written by scholars and activists from wide-ranging academic and nonacademic backgrounds, set the stage for the much-needed, future research on the subject. Understandably, this volume cannot possibly address the complexities of the multiple issues pertaining to social justice, including gender justice, justice for workers, vulnerable, the socially and economically disenfranchised, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities, as well as ecological justice. This project therefore invites further research on the topic of the Iranians' struggles for social justice since Iran's entry into political modernity around the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. As such, future research can be accommodated within four tentative and nonexclusive thematic–conceptual categories.

Political Economy and Economic Justice

Understanding the economic, policy, and legal factors that enable or deny social and economic justice is key to understanding this phenomenon. It is through the implementation of state policies that ideology and power are exercised, negotiated, or forced, causing measurable impact on the people's lives. Iran's reliance on oil revenue is of particular interest in that such a national resource tends to yield an unresponsive state and ties a country to the world market. The resource revenue can either be monopolized by the ruling class or be distributed in the form of social programs among the

population, just as it can be utilized for either the developmental projects that benefit a capitalist class or a development that increases the human development index and collective growth of a nation.

History and Politics

Struggles for social justice have been constant in modern Iranian history, despite serious, often belligerent, setbacks and repressions imposed on Iranians. For over a century, social justice and social democracy have been integral components of political modernity and the process of democratization. Notwithstanding its errors, failures, and dogmas, the Iranian Left—in its diverse shades, tendencies, organizational shapes, and ideological inclinations (Marxist-oriented, social democratic, or Shi'i)—has championed the cause of the working class, the poor, the vulnerable, and ethnic minorities. Both history and politics of social justice and social democracy constitute key research areas, in particular because such research reveals the present and anticipates the future tendencies in the people's struggles for a better future. The connection between democratic struggles and social justice rests with these unfolding tendencies and in relation to the repressive policies of the Iranian state.

Subjectivity, Agency, Justice

The construction of subjectivity lies at the heart of any struggle. In our context, subjectivity is always split between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic constructs. Social justice agency arises from subjectivity and stands between the culturally, socially, and politically constructed subjectivities, on the one hand, and the issues, exigencies, and movements that challenge the status quo and thus contest such constructed subjectivities, on the other. The multiplicity of subject positions allows for the emergence of new agents: women, workers, students, religious, ethnic, sexual, or linguistic minorities, as well as the advocates for the poor, disabled, ecology, and animals. These movements are deployed by shared, and changing, concept(s) of justice. Individual and collective initiatives and creative responses bring together subjectivity, agency, and justice. It is the shared and growing concept of justice—advocated by agents and propagated through collective action and advocacy literature—that turns commonly shared and received social, cultural, or political practices into sites of antagonism and contestation.

Social Movements and Collective Action

The arch manifestation of struggles for social justice and participatory democracy is collective actions of those who emerge in the public sphere as agents of change and justice. Collective action represents the embodied notions of justice posed against the perceived injustices as these are articulated by agents of a cause and social movement activists. The study of social movements is therefore important in that social movements reveal the sites of present and future antagonisms, changing values and sensibilities, and common conception of the good.

These four categories are by no means exclusive. They are meant to provide guidelines for future study. As Iran rapidly moves toward neoliberal economic policies that impede socialized human growth for the purpose of privatized production of goods and capital; as the country imperils its working people, abandons its vulnerable, and pushes its ecology into irrecoverable destruction; and as state policies undermine the dignity of women, workers, minorities, and defenders of social justice and human rights, attending to the issues of social justice and opening a new scholarly and public discourse to study it prove to be imperative.

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