Iran and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century.

Chapter 2

The Shah's Two Liberalizations: Re-Equilibration and Breakdown

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> To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is not merely the proper occupation of the historian, but the inalienable privilege of any man of parts and culture.
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> —Oscar Wilde[1]

In 2001, when, encouraged by a string of electoral victories by Iranian reformists, many hoped that the apparent liberalization of Iranian society and politics would lead to a democratization of Iran's political system, Mohammad-Reza Djalili cautioned that the obstacles to a transformation of the Islamist regime were structural, and that it was therefore an illusion to expect the reform movement to be the harbinger of a transition to democracy.[2] At the time, Djalili's scepticism raised many an optimist's eyebrow. Events, however, proved him right.

The fizzling out of the reform movement and the subsequent repression of the Green Movement were not the first instance in living memory that hopes for a peaceful transition to a democratic political system were dashed in Iran. Let us not forget that what later became the Islamic revolution started when beginning in 1977, Iran's ruler Mohammad Reza Shah stated his intention of liberalizing his regime. But unlike the more or less contemporary liberalizations in Southern Europe and Latin America, the liberalization failed and instead led to revolutionary change and ultimately another non-democratic regime. The object of social science being, in Max Weber's formulation, to

[1] Oscar Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, Richard Ellmann (ed.), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 349.
[2] Mohammad-Reza Djalili, *Iran: l'illusion réformiste*, Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2001.

understand why events are so and not *otherwise*,[3] this chapter aims at complementing analyses of the revolution by explaining the failure of political reform in Iran under the Shah.[4] In so doing, it also hopes to add analytic depth to the study of the Shah era, which, oddly enough, is one of the less studied periods of modern Iranian history.[5]

Introduction

A regime crisis that finds its dénouement in the installation of a radically different regime is recognized to have been a revolution only after the fact. In the months preceding the successful overthrow of the old order, many actors work towards either peaceful and gradual reform or re-equilibration of the regime. Many theorists of revolution, like Charles Tilly, admit the relevance of politics to revolutionary change by locating revolutionary movements 'at one end of the spectrum of political activity'.[6] My purpose is therefore not to propose an alternative explanation of the revolution, but to explain why 'politics as usual' did not defuse the crisis of 1977–1979.

Throughout 1977–1978, while the Shah was intimating that he wanted to open up Iranian politics, the opposition also demanded free elections. In mid-1978 few people inside or outside Iran believed that the Shah's regime would crumble only a few months later, and with it the old social order: as late as October 1978 one of the leaders of the political opposition, Mehdi Bazargan, thought that in the event of parliamentary elections organized by the regime, the opposition would win at most twenty seats.[7] An analysis of the Shah's unsuccessful liberalization can throw new light on the revolution by complementing the study of the structural factors that favoured the revolution with an analysis of the political sphere that prevented a peaceful transition to democracy. More concretely, if the stated intentions of the Shah coincided with the demands of the opposition, why did the liberalization not succeed?

The Shah's initiatives of 1977–1978 were not his first attempt to liberalize his rule. Earlier, in 1960, he had also promised to liberalize the political system and to allow for more participation, but that episode ended with a harden-

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[3] See his 'Objectivity in Social Science', in Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (trans. and eds.), New York: The Free Press, 1949, p. 72. Emphasis in the original.

[4] For theoretically informed studies of the revolution see for instance Saïd Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; and Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

[5] Cyrus Schayegh, '"Seeing Like a State": An Essay on the Historiography of Modern Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, 2010, pp. 7–61.

[6] Quoted in Michael S. Kimmel, *Revolution: A Sociological Interpretation*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990, p. 208.

[7] For details see H.E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990, p. 241.

ing of the Shah's rule after 1963. The parallels between the two episodes are striking. The beginnings of both coincided internally with downturns in economic activities and externally with Democratic administrations in the United States succeeding Republican administrations that had enjoyed especially close relations with the Shah.[8] In both cases the Shah promised free elections, but they were not held, as the gap between the regime and the opposition proved too wide. In both instances the liberal Nationalists proved unable to take advantage of the political opening, which led to severe regime crises. Iran thus exemplifies Tocqueville's warning that 'there can be no doubt that the moment when political rights are granted to a people who have till then been deprived of them is a time of crisis, a crisis which is often necessary but always dangerous.'[9]

The liberalization of the 1960s ended with the re-equilibration of the Shah's regime and the departure of Ayatollah Khomeini into exile, while the second led to the disintegration of the Shah's regime and Khomeini's return to Iran. The parallels between the two failed liberalizations allow a comparative analysis, as a diachronic approach 'maximizes comparability', as Arend Lijphart put it.[10] For an analysis of these failures the literature on transitions to democracy can provide many useful insights. The breakdown of many Latin American democracies in the 1960s and early 1970s, and then in the mid-1970s, 1980s, and 1990s the restoration of democracies in Southern Europe, Latin America, East Asia, Eastern Europe, and a few countries in Africa have made the study of regime transitions one of the most analytically sophisticated subfields of political science.[11] By focusing on the political forces, choices,

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[8] The impact of economic factors and US foreign policy in bringing about the two regime crises of 1960–63 and 1977–79 have been analysed so extensively that I will dispense with it, as my focus is the failure in both episodes to bring about a political settlement. On the economic background to both crises see Thomas Walton, 'Economic development and revolutionary upheavals in Iran', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 4(3), 1980, pp. 271–92; on the role of the United States see Richard Cottam, *Iran and the United States: A Cold War Case Study*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988, pp. 110–88.

[9] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1969, p. 239.

[10] On the value of diachronic comparisons in political science see Arend Lijphart, 'Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method', *American Political Science Review* 65, 1971, p. 689.

[11] Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978; Leonardo Morlino, *Come cambiano i regimi politici: strumenti di analisi*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 1980; Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986; Larry Diamond, Juan Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.), *Democracy in Developing Countries* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1988–89); and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991; Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Eu-*

and dynamics involved in the two regime crises of 1960–1963 and the transition from the monarchy to the Islamic Republic in Iran, and by analysing them in terms and categories developed by that subfield for the passage from authoritarianism to democracy, we can both ask questions about the nature of Iranian politics that might elude us if we focused exclusively on explaining the success of the revolution, and refine our understanding of transitions in general.[12]

The appropriateness of the transition paradigm to the two episodes, especially to the period preceding the Iranian revolution, can be challenged on the grounds that all successful transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America were cases of *re*democratization, whereas Iran has never been a full-fledged democracy. It follows that the only appropriate analytic framework for any comparative endeavour would have to be the *longue durée*, as the socio-historical factors favouring or impeding the movement toward democracy in Iran would have to be contrasted with long-term developments in other countries.[13] Such a project is indeed worthwhile, but does not obviate the need to study shorter episodes of regime transition and the opportunities for democratization that might arise in their course. There are three reasons for this.

First, while a discussion of long-term developments belongs to the sphere of *structure* and can illuminate the chances of democracy to take root in a country, the study of transitions is concerned with *conjuncture*: in moments of crisis what key actors do and when they do it can determine the course of events for years to come. I do not claim to answer the question whether democracy is viable in Iran, but instead seeks to understand why democracy was not established—however briefly—given that most actors in the regime crises of 1960–1963 and of 1977–1979 claimed it as their goal.

Second, while it is true that a hypothetical transition to democracy in Iran would not exactly be a re-democratization, Iranian politics have not always been equally authoritarian. The constitutional revolution of 1906–1911 put an end to the traditional monarchy, and the royal dictatorships of Reza Shah (1925–1941) and his son Mohammad Reza Shah (1953–1979) were in many ways modern dictatorships with traditional trappings; the two regimes were separated by twelve years of relative political pluralism in which the Shah reigned more than ruled.[14] Since neither autocrat ever abolished the liberal

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rope, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; and Lisa Anderson (ed.), *Tranistions to Democracy*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

[12] For a classification of regime transitions that includes violent revolution see Morlino, *Come cambiano i regimi politici*, pp. 86–107.

[13] As analysed for instance by Otto Hintze in 'The Preconditions of Representative Government in the Context of World History', in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze* (ed. with an Introduction by Felix Gilbert), New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 302–53; or by Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

[14] On this period see Fakhreddin Azimi, Iran: *The Crisis of Democracy 1941–1953*, New York: St. Martin's, 1989.

constitution of 1906–1907, that text remained a common point of reference for most politically articulate Iranians almost until the end of the monarchy. Democracy, or at least constitutional government, therefore, was an aspiration for significant sectors of Iranian society, which makes an argument for the historic inevitability of an Iranian *sonderweg* to theocracy an exercise in retrospective prediction. In this context it is significant that the fluctuations in Iran's long history of authoritarianism coincide quite closely with Huntington's five world-wide waves of regime changes, as the following table shows:[15]

TABLE 1: Iran's Regime Changes and the Three Waves of Democratization

WAVES OF REGIME CHANGE	IRAN'S REGIME CHANGES
First Democratization 1828–26	Constitutional Period 1906–25
First Reverse 1922–44	Reza Shah's Rule 1926–41
Second Democratization 1958–62	Liberalization of 1960–63
Second Reverse 1958–75	Shah's Rule 1953–78
Third Democratization 1974–	Liberalization 1978–79

Third, to conclude that possibilities for democratization are so limited in Iran, given its authoritarian legacy and unfavourable socioeconomic preconditions, that the failure of liberalization and democratization is a foregone conclusion and need not be analysed, may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. As Huntington reminds us, a lack of significant experience with democratic rule 'is not a decisive impediment to democratization or no countries would be democratic.'[16]

Liberalizations occur when rulers come to the conclusion that the price of continued repression exceeds the cost of toleration.[17] Typically, fissures develop within the regime, leading some elements in the regime to seek an accommodation with parts of the opposition. Whether the liberalization can be sustained and lead to a genuine democratization depends on the ability of civil society to wrest more concessions from the regime and sustain the momentum of the reform.[18] At this point a few definitions are in order. Liberalization as defined here, entails 'a mix of policy and social changes, such as less censorship of the media, somewhat greater working room for the organization of

[15] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 16.
[16] Ibid., p. 295.
[17] Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971, chapter 1.
[18] See O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

autonomous working-class activities, the introduction of some legal safeguards for individuals such as *habeas corpus*, the releasing of most political prisoners, the return of exiles, perhaps measures for improving the distribution of income, and, most important, the toleration of opposition'. Democratization includes liberalization and in addition 'open contestation over the right to win control of the government, [which] in turn requires free elections, the results of which determine who governs'.[19]

The Shah liberalized his regime twice, with very different results. But political initiatives do not take place in a societal vacuum, and therefore this exploration of why the liberalizing episodes of 1960–1963 and 1977–1979 had different outcomes begins with the evolution of Iranian society in the intervening years.

The Evolution of Iranian Society

Between the early 1960s and the late 1970s Iranian society underwent tremendous changes.[20] For the purpose of assessing the chances of hypothetical transitions to democracy, three of these changes are of great import: new paradigms of Iranian politics, an increasing divergence between state policies and societal norms, and the resulting deepening of the cultural divide in Iran's dual society.

New Paradigms

Samuel Huntington has drawn attention to the importance of the external environment in influencing whether a society moves in a democratic or non-democratic direction.[21] While the direct actions of foreign states can contribute to regime change (as happened in Iran in 1941 and 1953), the external environment is also important in that it forces political actors to draw comparisons between their own country and foreign nations, and indicate preferences. In a country like Iran this is of great importance, for reasons that have to do with Iran's place in the international system as an old state whose political institutions were not a legacy of colonialism.

Given Iran's backwardness compared to Europe, the goal of the country's political elite since the nineteenth century was to catch up with the West. For Iran to join the company of the advanced nations of the world on an equal footing, to meet their 'standard of civilization',[22] it had to emulate Europe. The constitution of 1906 was modelled after the Belgian constitution of 1831,

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[19] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*, p. 3.

[20] For a dated by still valid summary see Michael M.J. Fischer, 'Persian Society: Transformation and Strain', in Hossein Amirsadeghi (ed.), *Twentieth Century Iran*, London: Heinemann, 1977.

[21] Huntington, 'Will More Countries Become Democratic', *Political Science Quarterly* 99, 1984, pp. 205–07.

[22] Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.

and the various legal codes that were enacted sought to combine a Western-style legal order with aspects of the Islamic jurisprudence that had been the law of the land for centuries. In political life, Western models held sway after the rout of the traditionalists during the Constitutional Revolution.[23] Liberal Iranians wanted the Iranian polity to resemble Western democracies; the communists admired the Soviet Union. Although fascism made few explicit converts in what would later be called the Third World,[24] Iran's independence in the 1930s made it intellectually and emotionally possible for right-wing nationalists to sympathize with fascism and Nazism, quintessentially European phenomena, and to found parties in the 1940s.[25] As for the two Pahlavi Shahs, they, too, paid lip service to the Western-inspired constitution while violating it most of the time.

On the Iranian political scene of the early 1960s, the communists had been marginalized and the radical secular right was insignificant. Politics were dominated by the Shah, the Nationalists, and Ali Amini's circle. For the assessment of the chances for a transition to democracy, the important point is that most oppositionists still thought in terms of Western models. On the day in May 1961 when the Liberation Movement of Iran, then the most radical of Iran's constitutionalist opposition groups, was founded, Hasan Nazih, a leading member, said that his party wanted the Iranian governments to function like those of Sweden, Denmark, Britain, and Belgium.[26] The Third-World country Iranian Nationalists admired most was India. Clearly, the world's democracies provided the dominant paradigm for the Iranian opposition.

This changed after 1961, for a number of reasons. The first is generational. A new generation of Iranians blamed the inability of their elders to effect Iran's catching up with the West on their unquestioning acceptance of Western models. Jalal Al-e Ahmad's book *Gharbzadegi* exemplified this trend: it went so far as to praise the traditionalist opposition against the Constitutional Revolution for having resisted the imposition of Western models. Al-e Ahmad's book set the tone for oppositionist discourse in subsequent

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[23] See Saïd Amir Arjomand, 'The Ulama's Traditionalist Opposition to Parliamentarism: 1907–1909', *Middle Eastern Studies* 17(2), 1981, pp. 174–90.

[24] See Juan J. Linz, 'Some Notes Toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective', in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, Walter Laqueur (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, pp. 102–04.

[25] Iran is one of the few non-Western countries that had a self-consciously fascist, even Nazi, party in the 1940s. See Leonard Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964, pp. 216–19, who relates that at one point, in 1953, the court paid for the black shirts of Iranian Nazis who marched to place a wreath on Reza Shah's tomb on the day of his son's birthday. For a full study of Iran's Nazi party see Gholam-Reza Azizi, *Hezb-e Sosialist-e Melliye Kargaran-e Iran: Sumka*, Tehran, Markaz Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, 2005.

[26] See Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, p. 159.

years. His themes were amplified and given a religious twist by Ali Shari'ati, arguably the most influential Iranian intellectual in the 1970s.[27]

The second reason for this new critical attitude was the failure of the moderate opposition in 1960–1963 to wrest democratization from the Shah. The bloody repression by the Shah of the riots of June 1963 convinced many younger Nationalists that parliamentary methods were doomed in advance and that only armed struggle could topple the regime. The secular elements gradually coalesced with disgruntled members of the Communist Tudeh party to form the Marxist-Leninist Fada'iyan group, while the more religious activists soon founded the Mojahedin group.[28] Now even Mosaddeq's ouster in 1953 was imputed to his liberal ways and unwillingness to use more repression against his enemies. Beginning in the early 1970s the guerrilla groups mounted a more effective campaign against the Shah than their seniors in the National Front, the Liberation Movement of Iran, or the Tudeh— although in the end they were crushed too.

The third reason brings us back to the external environment. The decolonization of the 1950s and early 1960s and the rise of non-alignment as a new force in international politics provided new models for Iranians. Younger Iranians saw their country as a member of a Third World that had more in common with Asia, Africa, and Latin America than with Europe. Anti-imperialist struggles were much admired; Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam replaced the European states as the new exemplars. Some, like Ali Shari'ati, went so far as to blame India's economic stagnation on its democratic politics.[29] Western democracy as a form of government also met with increasing scepticism because of the support many Western countries gave the Shah. Thus, while democracy-orientated discourse had dominated political debate in the early 1960s, this was no longer the case in the late 1970s.

At a different level, pro-regime intellectuals also began propagating a more critical view of the West.[30] In 1974 the Iranian sociologist and high UNESCO official Ehsan Naraqi, a nephew of Ayatollah Kashani and in his youth a Tudeh sympathizer, published a book titled 'The Alienation of the West', which he addressed to those Iranians who admired the West. Both the capitalist and the socialist West, he wrote, shared an unhealthy preoccupation with materialism. While not denying the West's achievements in science and

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[27] See Brad Hanson, 'The 'Westoxication' of Iran: Depiction and Reactions of Behrangi, Al-e Ahmad, and Shariati', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15(1), 1983, pp. 1–23; and Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

[28] On the former see Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999, and on the latter Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

[29] Ali Shari'ati, *Ommat va emamat*, N.p.: LMI Reprint, 1977, pp. 161–69.

[30] See Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West*, pp. 131–155; and Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century*, Austin: Texas University Press, 1997, pp. 92–97.

technology, he analysed such Western ills as drug abuse, suicide, environmental deterioration, energy over-consumption, and the erosion of family values, quoting copiously from Western social critics, and concluded that Iran did not need Western counter-culture, as its own culture was a counter-culture.[31] Three years later, the first publication of the regime-sponsored 'Iranian Centre for the Study of Cultures' was a book titled 'Asia facing the West', which analysed the West's nefarious effects on Asian civilizations, i.e. Islam/Iran, China, India, and Japan.[32]

By the mid-1970s, therefore, intellectuals of all persuasions affected a critical discourse regarding the West. Within the opposition, the new emphasis on anti-imperialism meant that when the Shah began liberalizing his regime in 1977, the heirs of the Nationalist movement were split: some wanted to resume where they had left off in 1963, others advocated a *guerre à outrance* against a regime they considered an American stooge. In terms of the types of transition, the veterans of the National Front and the LMI wanted to work toward a *reforma-ruptura pactada* (transplacement), while the younger people insisted on a *ruptura* (replacement). The latter's immediate aims coincided with those of Khomeini, the leader of the religious opposition. To understand the strength of this force compared to 1963, we have to analyse the unanticipated consequences of the Shah's policies, which from his point of view, came close to constituting perverse effects.[33]

Perverse Effects of Cultural Engineering

In spite of the Shah's sporadic attempts to portray himself as a Muslim ruler – he would visit the shrine in Mashhad and his government paid for the restoration of major religious edifices in Qom and elsewhere – his regime on the whole pushed back the role of religion in society. Traditional Iranian culture is characterized by a synthesis of Iranian and Islamic elements, and most people do not perceive a contradiction or tension between the two. Yet under the Shah certain elements of the non-Islamic component of the country's culture were increasingly stressed at the expense of the religious component. A significant segment of Iran's population, mostly in Tehran, did not object to secularization, even welcomed it, but as educational opportunities for more traditional Iranians expanded, and as the cities, the traditional centres of political activity in Iran, grew in size as a result of the rural exodus, more and more non-Westernized Iranians received a higher education and thus became more self-conscious of the cultural gap between them and the country's elite. As they prospered in the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s, they lost the

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[31] Ehsan Naraqi, *Ghorbat-e gharb*, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1974.

[32] Dariush Shayegan, *Asia dar barabar-e gharb*, Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1977.

[33] See Robert K. Merton, 'The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action', *American Sociological Review* 1(6), 1936, pp. 894–904. For a good discussion of perverse effects as an extreme form of unanticipated consequences see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 35–42.

deference with which lower-status Iranians had hitherto tended to regard higher-status Iranians, and became resentful. Economic growth also strengthened the clergy. Since the income of Iran's Shiite clergy derived mainly from the voluntary contributions of the faithful, among whom the bazaar merchants were the richest, the improving fortunes of the bazaar merchants led to greater financial resources for the clergy.[34] The Shah's relations with the bazaar, which had never been good,[35] reached their nadir in the mid-1970s when inflationary pressures induced the regime to humiliate and prosecute thousands of merchants in an anti-profiteering campaign.[36] The very strata of society that had financially benefited from economic growth drew closer than ever to the clergy.

Government policies thus had perverse effects on two grounds: they increasingly departed from expected norms, even mocking them at times, and at the same time they strengthened the social strata that objected most to these policies. At the same time many Westernized Iranians became tempted by an Islamic alternative, either out of a sense of cultural disorientation or as a means to signify opposition to the Shah. The secularizing policies of the Shah led to an increase in a self-conscious religiosity that regarded the state with suspicion, as even policies that had a rational basis, such as the introduction of day-light saving's time, were now interpreted as a deliberate attempt to interfere with people's religious duties.[37]

It is difficult to substantiate the claim that in the 1970s religious fervour grew in Iran, but we have some evidence for that contention. In 1975, for instance, 26 per cent of respondents in a poll expected the influence of religion to grow in the future, while only 9 per cent expected it to decline.[38] Students and teachers acquainted with academic life in this period report an increase in the activities and visibility of Muslim associations on the campuses. This was due to the influx of lower-middle-class students from more traditional backgrounds whose educational opportunities had improved, but whose personal value systems clashed with the dominant value system of the universities,[39] which was quite Westernized.[40] As Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi

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[34] For details see Ahmad Ashraf, 'Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions', *Politics, Culture, and Society* 1, 1988, especially pp. 554–59.

[35] See Arang Keshavarzian, *Bazaar and State in Iran: The Politics of the Tehran Marketplace*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, especially pp. 128–46 and 228–69.

[36] For details see Nimah Mazaheri, 'State Repression in the Iranian Bazaar, 1975–1977: The Anti-Profiteering Campaign and an Impending Revolution', *Iranian Studies* 39(3), 2006), pp. 401–14.

[37] Siamak Movahedi, 'Cultural Preconceptions of Time: Can We Use Operational Time to Meddle in God's Time', *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 27(3), 1985, pp. 385-400.

[38] Abdolmohammad Kazemipur and Ali Rezaei, 'Religious Life Under Theocracy: the Case of Iran', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42(3), 2003, p. 353.

[39] Farhang Mehr, president of Pahlavi University in Shiraz, confirms this; personal interview, 19 August 1992, Boston. Mehdi Zarghamee, who headed Iran's prestigious

have shown, it was precisely high-school and university students who were the most active elements in the 1978 demonstrations.[41]

Another indicator is publishing activity. As literacy rose, and as politically motivated censorship grew stricter,[42] the volume of religious publications grew both in absolute terms and as a percentage of total output. Between 1954 and 1963, an average of 56.7 religious books were published annually, representing 10 per cent of all published books. By 1974, the numbers had risen to 541 and 33.5 per cent respectively.[43]

Finally, we have some interesting figures about the names Iranians chose for their children. On the whole, secular Iranians are much more likely to choose Persian names for their children than Muslim/Arabic ones, and preference for Persian names has grown with Westernization. A recent study about the city of Hamadan shows, however, that while the percentage of Persian given names grew between 1963 and 1973, it declined between 1973 and 1979. Conversely, Muslim names declined in frequency between 1963 and 1973, and rose between 1973 and 1979. Incidentally, the trends have been reversed under the Islamic Republic, leading the author to conclude that 'since both the Pahlavi regime and the present Islamic regime were interested in manipulating cultural trends, our findings demonstrate that, at least when it comes to selecting names for their children, people seem to resist the official cultural propaganda.'[44]

These state policies did of course not affect everybody equally. Significant sectors of Iran's population did become more secular in outlook, and perhaps even their proportion in the population grew. But they remained a minority. The result was a deepening of the gap between the Westernized and the non-Westernized segments of Iran's dual society.

Iran's Dual Society

Until the end of the nineteenth century, urban Iranians, rich and poor, were united by a common culture. Most urban neighbourhoods were inhabited by people from all rungs of the economic ladder, and people of all stations of life participated in religious rituals, which mitigated the divisive effect of economic inequality. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the Westerniza-

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Aryamehr University in 1975–1979, relates that when he apprised the Shah of the situation, the Shah angrily dismissed his analysis and blamed everything on Marxist agitation; personal interview, 7 August 1992, Boston.

[40] Marvin Zonis, 'Higher Education and Social Change: Problems and Prospects', in *Iran Faces the Seventies*, Ehasan Yar-Shater (ed.), New York: Praeger, 1971, pp. 251–52.

[41] Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, 'The State, Classes and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution', *State, Culture, and Society* 1, 1985, p. 26.

[42] *Encycopaedia Iranica*, s.v. 'Censorship'.

[43] Said Amir Arjomand, 'Shi'ite Islam and the Revolution in Iran', *Government and Opposition* 16, 1981, p. 311.

[44] Nader Habibi, 'Popularity of Islamic and Persian Names in Iran Before and After the Islamic Revolution', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24(), 1992, p. 260.

tion of increasing sectors of the Iranian elite, and later of the middle class, led to the appearance of a dual society. A minority of the population more and more abandoned traditional beliefs, behavioural patterns, and lifestyles, while the majority of Iranians remained faithful to their traditional way of life in which religious symbols played a key role.

In the early 1960s the societal dualism was still diffuse enough to allow both the Shah and the opposition to make appeals to both segments of the Iranian population, albeit on different grounds. The Shah presented himself as a modernizer to the elite and the middle class, and as traditional ruler to the masses. Likewise, the Nationalists drew support both from the Bazaar and from middle-class professionals. Cleavages in Iranian society were thus to some extent cross-cutting, a favourable precondition for democracy.[45]

After 1963 the situation changed and the gap between the two of segments of Iranian society widened. The traditional segment, increasingly urban as a result of the Shah's economic policies, witnessed with growing resentment the *nouveau-riche* excesses of the Westernized Iranian elite that benefited directly from the economic boom of the early 1970s, as Westernization and wealth now overlapped more and more. This widespread resentment made them receptive to Khomeini's populism:[46] 'resentment is a concomitant of that particular religious ethic of the disprivileged which . . . teaches that the unequal distribution of mundane goods is caused by the sinfulness and the illegality of the privileged, and that sooner or later God's wrath will overtake them', as Max Weber put it.[47] Since Khomeini articulated this resentment better than his rivals at the top of the Shiite hierarchy, his popularity grew, and this popularity in turn legitimized his explicitly non-democratic theory of the Islamic state. The 1906 constitution was a common reference of politically articulate Iranians no more.

The tension between the Westernized minority and the newly politicized traditional majority of the Iranian population had grave consequences for the regime transition of 1977–1979. Until 1963, regime figures and opposition leaders had shared a common background, and often socialized in spite of their political differences.[48] Had competitive politics been resumed after 1961, 'the severity of conflict [would have been] restrained by ties of friendship, family, interest, class, and ideology that pervaded the restricted group of

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[45] See Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 105–21.

[46] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeiniism*, Berkeley: California University Press, 1993, chapter 1.

[47] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds.), Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p. 494.

[48] To give but two examples, the leader of the National Front in 1960–63, Allahyar Saleh, was the brother of Jahanshah Saleh, the pro-court rector of Tehran University. Mehdi Bazargan, the leader of the LMI, had been a *lycée* class-mate in France of Abdollah Riazi, who in the 1960s and 1970s was the speaker of the Iranian parliament, and who made the grave error to return to Iran after Bazargan had been named prime minister. Bazargan could not prevent his execution.

notables who dominated the political life of the country.' Mutual guarantees, another prerequisite for a successful transition to democracy, would have been easier to arrange, as 'tolerance and mutual security are more likely to develop among a small elite sharing similar perspectives than among a large and heterogeneous collection of leaders representing social strata with widely varying goals, interests, and outlooks.'[49] By contrast, mass politics in the context of the dual society of the 1970s was a particularly inauspicious starting point for a transition to democracy, for, to quote Robert Dahl again, 'if a country is divided into majority and minority subcultures, then members of the majority have less need to be conciliatory toward the minority.'[50] The experience of Algeria, where in 1992 open elections bade fair to lead to a total victory of the Front Islamique du Salut representing primarily the *arabisant* segment of the population, proves this point: the elections were aborted by a military establishment representing the more secular, often French-educated ruling segment of the post-independence years.

The confrontation between the Shah and Iranian society in the late 1970s did of course not pit the Westernized and the more traditional segments against each other, for the Shah met with a lot of opposition among modern Iranian as well. The anti-Shah coalition included both direct followers of Khomeini and secular allies of the Islamic movement. The cleavage in the opposition affected its responses to the liberalizing initiatives of the Shah in a decisive way.

Iran's transition from monarchy to Islamic Republic was decisively shaped by the charismatic personality of Ayatollah Khomeini. But the appearance of a charismatic leader, while in and of itself unpredictable, becomes more likely under certain conditions. Elaborating on Weber's notion that charismatic leaders are 'natural' leaders in moments of distress,[51] Robert Tucker and Erik H. Erikson suggest that societies become 'charisma-hungry' when three forms of distress appear: fear, anxiety, especially as experienced by persons in an 'identity-vacuum', and the 'existential dread' that people suffer when the rituals of their existence have broken down.[52] The above discussion of the state of both politics and society in Iran bears out this hypothesis. Iranian society in the mid-1970s was pervaded by fear, mostly of SAVAK, the secret police; the dual-society syndrome led to a widespread cultural malaise exacerbated by the intellectual output of ideologues such as Shari'ati; and government policies that seemed to attack, or at least question, much that most Iranians held sacred. Hence the appeal of Khomeini, who promised release from such an intolerable situation. But in 1978 it was not clear that the realization of this promise was incompatible with an orderly transition. Even inside Iran the

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[49] Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 36 and 37.
[50] Ibid., p. 116.
[51] Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 1111–12.
[52] Robert C. Tucker, 'The Theory of Charismatic Leadership', *Daedalus* 97(), 1968, p. 745.

word *enqelab*, revolution, was not used until after Khomeini's return, instead the word *nehzat* (movement) was used. While most street demonstrators demanded an 'Islamic Government,' it was not clear what *form* such a regime would take. Enough Islamists had argued for a compatibility of Islam and democracy that the replacement of one non-democratic regime by another one did not seem preordained.

Evolution of the Shah's Regime

The nature of a non-democratic regime is not unrelated to the chances for a liberalization to result in democratization. This leads us to analyse the evolving nature of the Shah's regime. We will successively look at its age at the onset of transition and its sultanization.

The Age of the Regime

The first difference between 1960 and 1977 was that in 1960 the Shah's regime was just seven years old. After the coup of 1953 the Shah had eschewed a militarization of his regime by dismissing its leader, General Fazlollah Zahedi, from the premiership in 1955, and then civilianizing his rule. To the politicians who had been active before 1953, the years of royal dictatorship could plausibly appear as an interlude, an 'authoritarian situation',[53] rather than an authoritarian *regime*. An 'authoritarian situation' means that power holders make no attempt to find new and permanent legitimacy formulas for their non-democratic rule, thereby implicitly admitting its exceptional nature. This, in turn, allows for a relatively smooth return to the status quo ante, as India's return to democratic governance after Indira Gandhi's 1975–1977 state of emergency exemplifies.

In 1960 Iran's opposition politicians were impatient to end their forced abstinence from politics and resume political life as it had existed before the 1953 coup. Their goal was a restoration of the pre-1953 regime. That regime having included the Shah, compromise with him was acceptable to the opposition.

Far less continuity with the pre-dictatorship days obtained in 1977. Some of Mosaddeq's ministers were still alive, but Mosaddeq himself was dead, and his companions were mostly septuagenarians whose very names were unknown to most of the population. After 1963, although the Shah still paid lip service to the constitution, the regime's legitimizing formulas increasingly acknowledged the autocratic nature of the Shah's rule and justified it in terms

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[53] As defined by Juan Linz in his 'The Future of an Authoritarian Situation or the Institutionalization of an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Brazil', in *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future*, Alfred Stepan (ed.), New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973, pp. 235–36.

of Iran's history and its developmental needs.[54] One can therefore speak of a different regime, especially after the establishment of a single party in 1975.

Exposure to periods of relative liberalism in one's formative years tends to favour democratic attitudes. In a survey carried out in 1960 among top regime and opposition leaders in Iran, it was found that democratic attitudes correlated very positively with having spent one's early twenties either before Reza Shah's dictatorship or after his fall, while more authoritarian attitudes were shown by men having spent those years under Reza Shah's dictatorship.[55] By 1977 the Shah had ruled Iran autocratically for over two decades, and his dictatorship was all many Iranians had ever known, especially the young militants who demonstrated in the streets of Iranian cities in 1978–1979. Iran's pre-authoritarian legacy had much less impact on the second transition than on the first.[56]

Increased Sultanization

From 1953 to 1960 the Shah's rule was authoritarian, in the sense that a limited pluralism still obtained in society. Parliament, although not freely elected, meant something, as did the office of prime minister. The Shah ruled in alliance with conservative elements in Iranian society. The regime made efforts to reconcile at least some elements in civil society: in the staged elections of 1954 both the leader of the influential Teachers Association, Mohammad Derakhshesh, and a nephew of the pro-court Ayatollah Behbehani had been awarded seats in parliament. Although an opposition press was not tolerated, not all the mass media were under direct government control.[57]

After 1963, the nature of the Shah's regime began to change. From 1964 to 1975 Iran officially had a two-party system, but the 'oppositional' Mardom party did not have an identity of its own and was led by men who also belonged to the regime. After 1964 the Shah increasingly discarded the 'men of the regime' who had been his allies, and surrounded himself first with technocrats, and then more and more with sycophants.[58] The press was also muz-

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[54] The most elaborate formulations of the Shah's claim to legitimacy were written by non-Iranian academic scholars and published in the West at the very end of his rule. See Pio Filippani-Ronconi, 'The Tradition of Sacred Kingship in Iran', and George Lenczowski, 'Political Process and Institutions in Iran: The Second Pahlavi Kingship', in *Iran Under The Pahlavis*, George Lenczowski (ed.), Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978, pp. 51–83 and 433–75, respectively.

[55] G. Hossein Razi, 'Democratic-Authoritarian Attitudes and Social Background in a Non-Western Society', *Comparative Politics* 13(), 1981, p. 64.

[56] For a discussion of the importance of pre-authoritarian legacies in determine the outcomes of transitions see O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions*, pp. 21–23.

[57] For an interesting analysis of Iranian politics in the 1950s see Andrew F. Westwood, 'Politics of Distrust in Iran', *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 358 (March 1965).

[58] See Marvin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971, pp. 64–65, for an interesting episode symbolizing this shift.

zled: after 1963 about seventy publications that had generally supported the Shah without being controlled by the government were closed down. As his regime became more autocratic, it also became more corrupt, this corruption often involving family members and court cronies. Institutional decay was thus accompanied by ever-increasing corruption, which in turn was made possible by Iran's rising oil income. From being authoritarian in the decade 1953–1963, the Shah's regime became increasingly sultanistic after 1963.[59] There are many aspects to this sultanization, and each of them had implications for the liberalization of 1977, as compared to the liberalization of 1960.

The Role of the Shah

One basic fact about Iranian politics after 1953 was that for much of the Iranian opposition the Shah's authority was illegitimate, because of the outside interference to which he owed it. However, the institution of the monarchy was still legitimate enough for the Nationalists to work within the framework of the constitution and demand that the Shah reign but not rule. Given his perceived foreign connections, any compromise with the Shah was only possible if he accepted to reign within the limits assigned to him by the constitution.

The literature on transitions has emphasized the role of 'neutral' state institutions in successful transitions to democracy, for they can provide central foci of loyalty that transcend factional disputes. A constitutional monarch who is above politics can fill such a role, as King Juan Carlos of Spain demonstrated in the course of Spain's paradigmatic transition to democracy.[60] In Iran the Shah could probably have played such a role in 1960–1963, had he chosen to part with some of his powers. The moderate wing of the Nationalist opposition, essentially the National Front, never attacked the Shah openly and instead directed its criticisms at his prime ministers, thereby implicitly inviting the Shah to remain above the fray. The radical wing of the Nationalist opposition, essentially the Liberation Movement of Iran, did not keep up the pretence. Identifying the Shah personally as the source of autocracy, it explicitly invited him to assume his proper role as a constitutional monarch. As for Ayatollah Khomeini, even he addressed his remonstrances to Prime Minister Amir-Abbas Hoveyda as late as 1967, after having admonished the Shah in

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[59] As defined in H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, 'A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule', in *Sultanistic Regimes*, H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz (eds.), Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, pp. 7–23. For a full exploration of the last Shah's sultanism see Homa Katouzian, 'The Pahlavi Regime in Iran', in ibid., pp. 182–205.

[60] See Joel Podolny, 'The Role of the King in the Spanish Transition to Democracy', in *Politics, Society, and Democracy: The Case of Spain*, Richard Gunther (ed), Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992; and Charles Powell, *Juan Carlos: Spain's Self-Made Monarch*, London: St. Antony's/Macmillan, 1995.

1963 to better his ways.[61] On the government side, Prime Minister Ali Amini made it quite clear that he wanted to govern Iran rather than execute the Shah's orders. The Shah, however, could not accept any strong prime minister, and in 1962 he dismissed Amini.[62] The Shah's unwillingness to tolerate strong prime ministers cost him dearly in the long run, for, to quote Weber, 'a ruler needs a person who can take over responsibility for the acts of government, especially for failures and unpopular measures; this is still true of the Oriental caliph, sultan, and shah: They need the traditional figure of the Grand Vizier.' Weber goes on to say: 'In Persia, the attempt failed only a generation ago to abolish the position of the Grand Vizier in favor of bureaucratic ministries under the Shah's personal supervision, because this would have made him personally responsible for all troubles of the people and all administrative abuses; it also would have endangered, not only the ruler himself, but also his charismatic legitimacy. Therefore, the position of the Grand Vizier had to be restored so that it could protect the Shah and his charisma.'[63] Nasereddin Shah's monarchy, which Weber referred to, survived the constitutional revolution; Mohammad Reza Shah's did not survive the Islamic revolution.

After 1963 the Shah gradually dropped all pretence at reigning over a functioning democracy. The great wealth at his disposal after the oil price increases of the early 1970s fuelled the Shah's arrogance and self-righteousness, so that in a widely publicized interview he told Oriana Fallaci: 'I don't want that kind of democracy! . . . I don't know what to do with that kind of democracy' I don't want any part of it, it's all yours.'[64]

To legitimize his rule, the Shah tried to manipulate all symbols of legitimate authority: traditional (as monarch), legal-rational (by holding a plebiscite in January 1963 to approve his reforms), and charismatic (as leader of the White Revolution who would guide his people toward the 'Great Civilization').[65] But the very reforms the Shah set in motion after 1963 eroded the social bases of his traditional legitimacy, as the generally conservative landowners who had been his main allies before the agrarian reforms were eliminated as a powerful social class. Among the new professional middle class that became increasingly prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, the arbitrariness and corruption of his regime prevented its legitimation on legal-rational or charismatic grounds.

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[61] See *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini* (trans. and annotated by Hamid Algar), Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981, pp. 180, 189–94.

[62] In 1969 he admitted that Amini's tenure in office had been the worst period of American interference in Iran, when it tried to impose its type of regime on Iran. See his interview with *U.S. News and World Report*, January 27, 1969, p. 49. For an exhaustive treatment of this triangular relationship see Iraj Amini, *Bar bal-e bohran: zendegi-ye siyasi-ye Ali Amini*, Tehran, Nashr-e Mahi, 2009.

[63] Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 1147.

[64] *The New Republic* 169 (1 December 1973), p. 18.

[65] The terms are used as defined by Max Weber in *Economy and Society*, pp. 215–16.

By 1978 the vast majority of Iranians opposed the Shah's rule, and given the experience of 1953 and 1963, the slogan that the 'Shah must reign but not rule' had lost its attraction: when the Shah finally stated in late 1978 that he accepted merely to reign, nobody believed him. The monarchy itself had become illegitimate in the eyes of most Iranians, for, in the words of Giuseppe di Lampedusa's Prince Salina, 'kings who personify an idea should not, cannot, fall below a certain level for generations; if they do . . . the idea suffers too.'[66] In 1978 the closest approximation to a neutral arbiter Iranians had was Khomeini, in the sense that he led a vast oppositional movement without *seeming* to identify himself with any one of its components.

Democratic Façade

Like his father, the Shah was heir to the constitutional revolution; in one of his books he had written that he would never institute a single party because that was what the communists and Hitler had done.[67] The Shah also had to assuage the conscience of his Western friends,[68] a factor that had not affected his father, during whose rule fascism had been a credible alternative to liberal democracy. As a result the Shah, like some Latin American dictators, regularly, went through the motions of holding elections.[69]

In 1960, the memory of the relatively honest elections to the 16th majles of 1950 was still alive. The elections of 1954 and 1956 had been rigged, but a number of relatively independent personalities had still been elected. The elections to the 20th majles of 1960 were rigged also, but the Shah, feigning neutrality, dissolved that chamber for that very reason and called for new elections in 1961.[70] This time Prime Minister Ali Amini dissolved the parliament that resulted, arguing that better electoral laws were needed before Iran could have honest elections. Between 1954 and 1961, therefore, the hypocrisy was not total, and with some goodwill on both sides relatively honest elections could have been held.

Beginning with the elections to the 21st majles in 1964, however, elections became a complete farce. The results no longer had to be rigged, since the winning candidates were designated in advance. In the elections of 1964, 80 percent of the deputies entered parliament for the first time. When they began behaving like members of parliament, the secretary general of the ruling Iran

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[66] Giuseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, trans. Archibald Colquhoun, New York: Pantheon, 1960, p. 23.

[67] His Imperial Majesty Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlevi, Shahanshah of Iran, *Mission for My Country*, London: Hutchinson, 1960, p. 173.

[68] At the time the fictional character of the three legal parties was not apparent to everybody outside Iran. See for example Wolfgang Ule, 'Entwicklung und gegenwertiges Parteiwesen im Iran', *Vierteljahresberichte* 31, 1968.

[69] On the functions of these electoral exercises see A.-H. Banisadr, A. Ghazanfarpour, S. Ghazanfarpour, and P. Vieille, 'Les elections et leurs fonctions en Iran', *Revue Française de Science Politique* 27, 1977, pp. 34–63.

[70] For details see Andrew F. Westwood, 'Elections and Politics in Iran', *The Middle East Journal* 15(2), 1961, pp. 153–64.

Novin party, Manuchehr Kalali, reminded them that they had not been elected by the people, and should therefore stop acting as if they represented a constituency.[71]

The composition of the 1964–1979 parliaments compounded its increasing subservience. The proportion of landowners had held steady at 40 per cent between 1925 and 1961; in 1964 it fell to 23 per cent, and in the last majles of the monarchy it had reached 10 per cent.[72] While this reflects the Shah's attempt to change the social bases of his regime by replacing conservative landowners with middle class technocrats, it also meant that deputies were less independent, and less likely to challenge the government.

This type of pseudo-democracy is a very unfavourable starting point for democratization, as the prolonged and regular cynical manipulation of democratic procedures, practices, and symbols erodes their appeal among the citizenry. In a hypothetical transition to democracy, 'free elections' no longer constitute a clear and universally accepted break with the past, because the old regime maintains that elections have been free all along, and the losing parties of any really free election might contend that they lost only because the new elections were as farcical as previous ones.

As to the two official parties, they never acquired any autonomous status in the regime, and failed to provide a link with civil society. It is possible for regime-sponsored opposition parties to develop some life of their own and become authentic opposition parties in the course of a liberalization. The Brazilian MDB is an example of that,[73] but, unlike the Mardom Party in Iran, it had been cobbled together on the basis of pre-existing groups in civil society. Iran's parties, even the government party, resembled much more the so-called 'bloc parties' of Communist Eastern Europe.

In Iran the Shah reaffirmed his belief in a two-party system when he granted an audience to Mardom Party members on September 1, 1973.[74] Consequently, in 1974 the new secretary-general of the Mardom Party, Naser Ameri, showed considerable initiative during a by-election campaign in the north of the country. His attacks on the government of Amir-Abbas Hoveida met with a degree of popular enthusiasm that frightened the regime. After a vigorous campaign on both sides, the government candidate was declared the winner of the election. Ameri resigned and died in a car accident soon after. As a direct consequence of the spirited campaign waged by Ameri, the Shah, in a move that caught everyone by surprise, announced in early 1975 that the existing parties had not fulfilled their purpose, for which reason he ordered the

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[71] Interview with Manuchehr Kalali in the *Harvard Iranian Oral History Project*, transcript of tape 2, pp. 16–18.
[72] *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. 'Class System VI: Classes in the Pahlavi Period'.
[73] See Bolivar Lamounier, 'Authoritarian Brazil Revisited: The Impact of Elections on the Abertura', in *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation*, Alfred Stepan (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
[74] See Shaul Bakhash, 'Party politics', *Keyhan International*, 2 September 1973.

establishment of a new single party, the Rastakhiz, or Resurgence party.[75] Although the initial party program was frankly totalitarian,[76] the regime justified the creation of the single party in democratic terms, promising not to intervene in the parliamentary elections of June 1975, in which the electorate had the choice between different candidates all representing the same party programme. Unsurprisingly, a poll conducted by the Rastakhiz party among the youth indicated that only 13 per cent believed that people had a real and valid reason to participate in the elections.[77] A policy designed to mobilize the population in favour of the regime had the opposite effect: since party-membership was obligatory, one could no longer remain apolitical, and many Iranians became passive opponents of the regime. Even though the Shah soon ordered the Rastakhiz party to constitute two competing wings (each under a cabinet member), a Brazilian-style *abertura* was now ruled out, given that the Rastakhiz party was accorded a monopoly of political life. During the liberalization of 1977, the regime maintained the monopoly of the party in the early period, when moderates still dominated the oppositional movement. By the time the regime indicated that it would accept other parties, the moderates had been marginalized by the hardliners under Khomeini, who refused to work within the system.

By 1978 the Iranian state's very capacity to organize free elections was doubted. Even though the moderate opposition would probably have liked to participate in elections (knowing that it would not be allowed to win them), Khomeini made it quite clear that he opposed any electoral exercise staged by the Shah's government. This made the holding of 'transitional elections' in the course of a *reforma*, or 'transformation', to use Linz's and Huntington's terms, respectively, very unlikely. Any free elections would have to be carried out by the new regime, after a *ruptura*, or 'replacement'.[78]

The Fusion of Regime and State and the Disappearance of Semi-Oppositions

Robert Fishman has drawn attention to the different implications of regime-initiated, as opposed to state-initiated transitions. If the impetus for change comes from within the regime, as it did in Spain, the state structures can remain intact, and the change-oriented elements of the regime can partici-

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[75] There is a certain parallel here with King Carol of Romania's 'Front for National Resurrection' of 1938, but the immediate inspiration for the name seems to have come from the Arab Ba'th party.

[76] See Mehdi Mozaffari, *L'Iran*, Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence R. Pichon et R. Durand-Auzias, 1978, for a detailed discussion of the party program. See also Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980, pp. 136–38.

[77] Hassan Mohammadi-Nejad, 'The Iranian Parliamentary Elections of 1975', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 8(), 1977, p. 109.

[78] Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 114.

pate in shaping the post-transition polity. More continuity and stability are the result.[79]

Typically, 'semi-oppositions' play a crucial part in such transitions.[80] Semi-oppositions are specific to authoritarian regimes, and Juan Linz has defined them as 'those groups that are not dominant or represented in the governing group but, that are willing to participate in power without fundamentally challenging the system.' In Iran Ali Amini and his circle personified one subtype of this semi-opposition in the early 1960s, i.e., 'dissidents within the elite favouring long-run policies and institutional alternatives but accepting the top leadership—perhaps somewhat conditionally and temporarily—and willing to hold office.'[81]

In 1960–1963 the presence of Ali Amini on the political scene, occupying the political space between the Nationalists and the Shah, made a regime-initiated transition plausible. But Amini failed due to the combined efforts of the Shah and the Nationalist opposition. In 1977 the situation was very different: by then the personalization of the Shah's power had gone so far that there no longer was any respectable semi-opposition in Iran.

The second consequence of the increased personalism of the Shah's later years was that the distinction between regime and state became increasingly blurred.[82] By 1977, therefore, a regime-initiated transition had become more difficult to enact because no semi-opposition could act as a bridge between the regime and the opposition,[83] and because even within the narrow circle of power of his regime the Shah had not allowed any independent personalities to emerge, men who might have provided imaginative leadership in the Shah's stead.[84]

Alternatively, a state-initiated transition, in the form, for instance, of an army coup à la Portugal, was unlikely because state institutions, and in particular the army, lacked the autonomy to act on their own. As the state disintegrated in the last months of the Shah's regime, popular mobilization reached

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[79] Robert Fishman, 'Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy', *World Politics* 42(), April 1990, pp. .

[80] On the parts played by semi-oppositions in the Spanish and Portuguese transitions see Nancy Bermeo, 'Redemocratization and Transition Elections', *Comparative Politics* 19(), 1987, pp. 224–28.

[81] Juan J. Linz, 'Opposition to and under an Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain', *Regimes and Oppositions*, Robert Dahl (ed.), New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973. Quotes are from pp. 191 and 193–94.

[82] On this point see Khosrow Fatemi, 'Leadership by Distrust: The Shah's *Modus Operandi*,' *The Middle East Journal* 36(1), 1982, pp. 48–61.

[83] Amini was still around and offered his services, but the Shah distrusted him until the end.

[84] On the importance of imaginative leadership in moments of transition see Juan J. Linz, 'Innovative Leadership in the Transition to Democracy and a New Democracy: The Case of Spain', in *Innovative Leaders in International Politics*, Gabriel Sheffer (ed.), Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993. In Iran the term *qaht al-rejal* (dearth of statesmen) came to denote the situation.

revolutionary proportions, and the transition became in effect society-led. And as Alfred Stepan has argued, 'the most likely outcome of sharp crises of authoritarian regimes stemming from diffuse pressures and forces in society is either a newly constituted successor authoritarian government, or a caretaker military junta.'[85] The second scenario was ruled out because of the insufficient state autonomy, and the first was indeed what happened.

To sum up, the delegitimation of the Shah's personal role, of the state apparatus he headed, and of the procedures of liberal democracy were additional factors favouring the emergence of a political force totally unrelated to the existing regime, a force that would be embodied by Ayatollah Khomeini's charismatic leadership. As G. K. Chesterton so aptly put it, 'men trust a great man because they do not trust themselves. And hence the worship of great men always appears in times of weakness and cowardice. We never hear of great men until the time when all other men are small.'[86]

The Islamic Revolution as Failed Liberalization

When the Shah put an end to torture in Iranian prisons, released some political prisoners, relaxed censorship, and let it be known that henceforth he would grant greater civil liberties to his subjects, Iranians, unaware as they were of the Shah's terminal illness and hence his desire to bequeath a stable system to his son, imputed the liberalization of Iran's politics to President Carter's human rights campaign. The assumption that the Shah would not dare to clamp down as long as Carter was in office, encouraged the opposition to raise it head.

The first initiatives of the opposition were quite congruent with the experiences of transitions elsewhere. The writer and essayist Ali-Asghar Hajj-Seyyed-Javadi typified the 'exemplary individuals, who begin testing the boundaries of behaviour initially imposed by the incumbent regime'[87] when he wrote a 200-page letter outlining the ills of the system. Subsequently civil society revived, as professional associations showed new initiative and democratically elected their leaderships, who were often associated with the opposition. All this took place in 1977. At this point, the clergy had not joined the fray, and from his exile in Najaf Khomeini exhorted them to become active too:

> A new opportunity has appeared in Iran today . . . Now,
> writers belonging to political parties criticize [the regime].
> They write letters and sign petitions. You should write letters too …
> This is an opportunity that should not be lost.[88]

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[85] Stepan, 'Paths toward Redemocratization', pp. 78–79.
[86] G.K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1923, p. 269.
[87] O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions*, p. 49.
[88] Quoted in *Shahidi digar as rowhaniyat*, Najaf: n.p., 1978, pp. 56–57.

In 1977, the revival of civil society, a concomitant of liberalization, touched mainly the modern segment of society. Unnoticed by most of the Westernized Iranians who made up the memberships of the professional associations, unnoticed also by the Shah's security apparatus that had concentrated its vigilance on leftist groups, a vast associational network based on religious activities had sprung up in the traditional segment of Iranian society. In 1974, there were 12,300 religious associations in Tehran alone.[89] Most of the membership of these associations was made up of recent migrants to Tehran who were negatively affected by the deflationary measures announced in 1977 to cool down the overheated Iranian economy. In the liberalizing climate of 1977–1978 they became politicized and channelled their energies into anti-regime activities. The traditional *Ashura* celebrations thus gained a political significance whose emotional intensity the secular opposition could not match.[90] Therefore, civil society's mobilization was not coordinated by the secular opposition that had begun testing the limits of the Shah's liberalization in 1977, but by Khomeini's followers. After January 1978, when an article insulting Khomeini was published in the Iranian press, the religious opposition became a mass movement. The secular, liberal opposition, frustrated by the frequent reversals and incidents of repression that tend to accompany liberalizations, allied itself with the mass movement so as to escape irrelevance.[91]

The dualism of Iranian society meant that the secular elements based in the professional associations could not control the mass movement: the popular sector did not trust the middle-class professionals enough to be led by them, their tactical alliance notwithstanding. This in turn meant that their capacity to negotiate with the regime, and demand further concessions in return for foregoing further mass mobilization, was seriously impaired.[92] More generally, the whole strategy of reform 'with the help of the perspective of revolution', possible in 1961, was not credible, since a successful implementation of this strategy depends on the revolutionaries being neither too strong nor too weak.[93] Pacts, in which moderates on both sides settle on a peaceful transition that marginalizes hardliners, became impossible, and with them any realistic hope for a negotiated settlement.

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[89] For details see Amir Arjomand, 'Shi'ite Islam and the Revolution in Iran', p. 312.

[90] See Farhad Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran: The Migrant Poor, Urban Marginality and Politics*, New York: New York University Press, 1980, especially chapters 5 and 6.

[91] For details on the progress of the oppositional movement see Abrahamian, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions*, chapter 11.

[92] This tactic is key to many successful transitions. See O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions*, p. 41.

[93] A.O. Hirschman, 'Models of Reformmongering', in *Journeys Toward Progress: Studies of Economic Policy-Making in Latin America*, New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1963, p. 284.

Another factor that contributed to the impasse was the Shah regime's tendency to make concessions too late. Timing is crucial in transitions, as Juan Linz has shown; *delayed* actions, in particular, are likely to be *belated* actions in that they are taken too late to achieve their purpose.[94] Iranian politics in the second half of 1978 exemplifies this.

In 1977, when the moderates still dominated the opposition, the regime insisted that political activity be carried out within the Rastakhiz party. In July 1978 Bazargan accepted the principle of an electoral dénouement of the crisis by stating that 'if the Shah is ready to implement all provisions of the Constitution, then we are prepared to accept the monarchy and participate in the elections,'[95] but the Shah would have nothing of it. In October 1978 the leaders of the political opposition, Bazargan for the LMI and Karim Sanjabi for the National Front, went to Paris to try to induce Khomeini to agree to a negotiated settlement, perhaps involving elections, but Khomeini turned down their request, arguing that the Shah's regime did not have enough legitimacy to hold elections, and that an election campaign would dissipate the energies of the movement.[96] Given the Shah's and Khomeini's intransigence, the moderate opposition leaders publicly committed themselves to support Khomeini's call for an end to the monarchy. And so it happened that when in November 1978 the Shah finally conceded that opposition parties would be allowed to contest the elections, the moderates were in no position to accept such a deal.

In December 1978 anti-Shah demonstrations of unprecedented proportions left no doubt that a 'coalition government' consisting of oppositional politicians and pro-Shah figures was out of the question. The alternative now was between a bloody repression, which would almost certainly have led to civil war, and the departure of the Shah and his replacement by a revolutionary government. A military coup was unlikely, for two reasons. First, the organizational structure of the armed forces under the Shah's increased sultanization impeded unity of purpose among the top commanders—in fact, many officers started negotiating with the revolutionaries on an individual basis. Second, defections among the rank and file reached proportions that put the reliability of the troops in serious doubt.[97] In this situation, the question was whether the revolutionaries would seize power (as had happened twenty years earlier in Cuba), or receive the reins of power from their predecessors (as in Czechoslovakia in 1989), thereby avoiding the bloodshed of a showdown.

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[94] Juan J. Linz, 'Time and Regime Change', in Juan J. Linz, *Robert Michels, Political Sociology, and the Future of Democracy*, H. E. Chehabi (ed.), New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006, pp. 85–87.

[95] *Asnad-e Laneh-ye Jasusan* [Documents of the Spies' Nest], vol. 24, p. 16.

[96] For details see Chehabi, *Iranian Politics*, pp. 242–46.

[97] On the mood among the military in the last months of the revolution see the memoirs of the last joint chief of staff, General Qarabaghi. See *E'terafat-e zheneral*, Tehran: Ney, 1986.

The prospects for a negotiated denouement of the crisis seemed to brighten when the Shah succeeded in persuading one of the moderate opposition leaders, Shapur Bakhtiar, to accept the position of prime minister and soon thereafter left the country in January 1979. Since Bakhtiar lacked a strong independent social base, the revolutionaries interpreted his nomination not as a victory, as he had hoped, but rather as a defection to the Shah's side on his part. Given his ties of friendship with the political leadership in Tehran, however, negotiations continued. It is indicative of the weariness of the liberals within the regime (due to the fusion of regime and state, as discussed above) and of the general disarray that befell it after the Shah's departure, that American officials partook in the negotiations, playing the role of surrogate regime liberals. But now the object of these negotiations could only be to arrange a *machtübergabe*, or transfer of power.[98] By early February 1979 it was agreed that Bakhtiar would go to Paris, present his resignation to Khomeini, and be reinstalled by him as prime minister, taking more oppositionists into his cabinet. This plan was sabotaged by opposition hardliners in Tehran,[99] much to the regret of political moderates like Bazargan, who wrote later that 'if this path had been taken, God knows how much destruction and bloodshed could have been avoided.'[100]

Bakhtiar could not prevent the return to Iran of Khomeini, who named the liberal Islamist Mehdi Bazargan prime minister on 4 February 1979. Iran now entered a brief period of 'dual power', to use Trotsky's term, and in these days of mass mobilization the state rapidly disintegrated, as entire ministries went over to the revolutionaries and declared their allegiance to the Bazargan government. On 9 February mobs stormed barracks and armed themselves, and two days later the army declared its neutrality. Bakhtiar went first into hiding and later into exile, while Bazargan put together a provisional government consisting of moderate Nationalists. The new regime thus came into place through a process of *machtergreifung*, seizure of power.

The nine months from February to November 1979, when the Provisional Government resigned in the wake of the seizure of the American embassy, were a period of liberal government in Iran. However, since no free elections took place during this period, it must be considered a liberal transition temporarily brought about by the power vacuum created by the Shah's departure, rather than a democratic interlude separating two non-democratic regimes. The cause of democracy was not completely lost in 1979, for the men who ran the Iranian government until November belonged to the liberal and democ-

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[98] The terms *machtübergabe* and *machtergreifung* are taken from M. Rainer Lepsius, 'Machtübernahme und Machtübergabe: Zur Strategie des Regimewechsels', in *Sozialtheorie und soziale Praxis: Eduard Baumgarten zum 70. Geburtstag*, Hans Albert (ed.), Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1971, pp. 158–73.

[99] For a good, if somewhat tendentious, account of these last minute negotiations see Ibrahim Yazdi, *Akharin talashha dar akharin ruzha*, Tehran: Zafar, 1984.

[100] Mehdi Bazargan, *Enqelab-e Iran dar do harekat*, Tehran: Naraqi, 1984, p. 74.

ratic wing of the anti-Shah opposition. The 'confining conditions'[101] they faced, however, were such that an inauguration of democracy was extremely difficult. But that is another story.[102]

Conclusion

Our discussion of the transition of 1977–1979 compared to the crisis of 1960–1963 has shown that the prospects for democratization in 1978 were far less favourable than in the earlier period. To use metaphors popularized by the transition literature, in both episodes Iranian leaders lacked *virtù*, but in 1977–1979 *fortuna* had turned against them as well in the form of increased social tensions, increased mass-mobilization, and the emergence of a charismatic leader championing a non-democratic form of government.

Whether democracy would have survived in Iran if the Shah had been serious about democratization in 1960–1963 is a hypothetical, and therefore unanswerable, question. What I have tried to show is *how* the failure of democratization in the early 1960s, and the subsequent changes both inside the regime and in society at large, made a transition to democracy *even more* difficult to effect in 1977–1979. Let us hope that just as the uprising of 1963 was a dress-rehearsal for the revolution of 1978/79, the Green Movement of the summer of 2009 will one day be seen as the precursor of a genuine democratization in Iran.[103]

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[101] As used and analysed by Otto Kirchheimer, 'Confining Conditions and Revolutionary Breakthroughs', *The American Political Science Review* 59(4), 1965, pp. 964–74.

[102] Which I have told in 'The provisional government and the transition from monarchy to Islamic Republic in Iran', in *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions*, Yossi Shain and Juan J. Linz (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 127–43 and 278–81.

[103] On the Green Movement see Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel (eds.), *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future*, Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2010; and Farhad Khosrokhavar's chapter in this volume

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