THE GROWING TREND TOWARDS POLITICAL SECULARIZATION IN IRAN: A DEVIANT CASE

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Abstract

The prevailing view about the Muslim world is that it is moving towards embracing Islamism and rejecting secularism and modernity. The thesis of this paper is that there is a demand for political secularization in Iran which makes Iran stand out as a deviant case. This paper seeks first to explain the historical context of the current situation, to illustrate how certain factors out of the past have a direct bearing on the political setting today, and then to examine the agents and manifestations of this demand for secularization in contemporary Iran. The methodology used is that of deviant and interpretive case studies. Secularization theory and Modernization theory are broken down and analyzed in the Iranian context. Contrary to the predictions of many theorists, modernization is not always unilinear and all-encompassing. Some areas progress, while others regress. The general conclusion of this thesis is that the demand for political secularization has been expressed through, and can be seen in, societal unrest, voting patterns, and opposition activities. Advances have been made towards modernization in areas such as education and the media, but retreats from modernization in such areas as a rational basis for government can also be seen. This thesis concludes that the retreat to tradition through a political system that is a strict theocracy—a system never before experienced in Iran—coupled with regime repression, have turned many Iranians against the idea of Islamism and have exacerbated the demand for secularization on a political level.
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I. Introduction

At the end of the Cold War, just as some in the West thought that the “end of history” was at hand and that liberal democracy had overcome all other philosophies concerning the governance of man, another ideology was organizing itself in such a way as to be able to challenge the victorious parties. In the past decade, when given a reasonably fair chance, Muslim voters in Algeria, Pakistan, and Turkey have voted resoundingly for Islamist-leaning parties. Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad seem to be the most powerful parties in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. Islamists in Iraq seem to be influential and popular enough to affect the political landscape in the future. In other Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, Islamists have been largely oppressed, but nevertheless seem to pose the only significant anti-regime opposition. Furthermore, in Southeast Asia one finds a region where religious revivalism coincides in places with ethnic violence, thus producing a compounded security threat to the region. Militant groups such as Jamaah Islamiya and al Qaeda have at least nominal support among ordinary Muslims all over the Islamic world.

Iran, however, has a particularly peculiar vantage point from which to experience the new world in which we live. Now that the Taliban are out of power, Iran is the only country in the world that looks at Millenarian Islamism from the inside looking out.¹ As is evidenced by the fact that it is one of the few countries that is safe from the terror of al Qaeda and its affiliates, the Islamic Republic² is practically the only society of which Osama bin Laden would likely approve.

¹ The distinction is rule by clerics (not just Muslim clerics). This distinguishes Iran from Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Israel—religious states with secular leaders. It also distinguishes Iran from “Islamic states” with Islamic law—Saudi Arabia and Pakistan etc.
² Capital letters will be used for ‘Islamic Republic’ where it is meant to refer to the name of the country; otherwise ‘republic’ will not be capitalized. The same principle will be used for the word ‘Prophet/prophet’, i.e., capitalized when it refers to Mohammad.
Iran also differs from other Islamic countries in that it has had periods in the last century of political and religious freedom, rapid economic development and prosperity, and has had no history of direct Western colonialism. It has today reverted to a religious state that is reminiscent of Western Europe in the dark ages.

The broad underlying questions of this paper will thus be the following: given the apparent resurgence of Islamist tendencies among the people of the Islamic world, why has Iranian sentiment manifested itself in ways that would suggest a rejection of Islamism? Are Iranians becoming more secular? If so, what has led to the growth of secularism in Iranian society and how does it manifest itself? On what level is secularism in Iran growing? How does the Iranian case fit into the mould of modernization theory? Is contemporary Iran an exception to modernization theory?

This paper will be explanatory, historical, and argumentative. Theoretically, secularization will be defined and broken down into its component parts. Modernization theory will be used only insofar as it helps in understanding secularization. A descriptive and narrative perspective will be employed in order to examine secularization in its historical context in Iran. This paper therefore ought not to be construed as scientific, since the arguments are neither statistical nor experimental in nature. If any measurement of the demand for secularization in Iran is taken, it would be on an ordinal scale, where ‘more’ can be distinguished from ‘less’ without delving into precise numbers. Admittedly, while such a probabilistic study is weaker in explanatory value than universal generalizations acquired from larger comparisons, the purpose of this paper is to use available theories in an effort to explain occurrences within Iran, not to devise general hypotheses regarding secularization, wherein Iran is one of many case studies. Even an area studies approach would provide too many different variables to be analytically
useful (Iran is predominantly Shiite, others are not; Iran is not Arab, many surrounding countries are; Iran has had a very different historical experience from neighbours, etc.)

Arend Lijphart separates case studies into six different categories. The two that would be most appropriate in describing the intentions of this paper would be the 'interpretive case study' and the 'deviant case study'. What follows are definitions of interpretive and deviant case studies as outlined by Lijphart.

Interpretive case studies... are selected for analysis because of an interest in the case rather than an interest in formulation of a general theory. They [also]... make explicit use of established theoretical propositions. In these studies, a generalization is applied to a specific case with the aim of throwing light on the case rather than of improving the generalization in any way.

Deviant case analyses are studies of single cases that are known to deviate from established generalizations. They are selected in order to reveal why the cases are deviant – that is, to uncover relevant additional variables that were not considered previously, or to refine the (operational) definitions of some or all of the case variables...They weaken the original proposition, but suggest a modified proposition that may be stronger. The validity of the proposition in its modified form must be established by further comparative analysis.

In discussing the merits of single case studies, Lijphart states that...the great advantage of the case study is that by focusing on a single case, that case can be intensively examined even when the research resources at the investigator's disposal are relatively limited. The scientific status of the case study is somewhat ambiguous, however, because science is a generalizing activity. A single case can constitute neither the basis for a valid generalization nor the ground for disproving an established generalization.

The argument set forth in this paper is that while it is difficult to measure many of the aspects of secularization in a positivist statistical fashion, there is evidence of the demand for it on a political level that has manifested itself in the form of discontent and dissent. A thorough look at both the agents and the expressions of this dissent will be carried out in order to show the

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4 Ibid., p.692
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p.691
ways in which discontent with the regime is in effect a demand for the removal of religion as the ideological basis for the state in terms of laws and government, as well as for the removal of the clergy from power.

A caveat of supreme importance is that secularization does not mean the abandonment of religion or of irreligiousness, though there is some anecdotal evidence of that as well. In fact, Iranian society has become so polarized in terms of personal religion that some are highly religious and some possess a quality that goes beyond irreligion in the sense that they not only oppose religion, but have come to despise it. As we shall see, Iranians have not always been this way, and while most of those alive today have no memory of any system other than a theocracy, their beliefs are to a certain extent shaped by both their recent (20th century) and ancient pasts.

In order to gain a full understanding of what is happening in terms of secularism in Iran, it is highly useful to undertake an historical approach. The history of Iran is particularly important in examining secularism in light of the 'deviant case' approach outlined by Lijphart because it is that history that sets Iran apart from the established generalizations about the trend towards Islamism in other Muslim countries. Iranian encounters, first with Zoroastrianism, then with Islam and finally with Shiism, are crucial in determining precursor influences of religion in contemporary Iran. Furthermore, in undertaking such an approach, a more thorough examination of historical secularism can be accomplished in that the relationships between religion and society can be seen as they have progressed over the centuries.

Although much of the theoretical literature that concerns secularization is sociological in nature, the scope of the main thesis of this paper will be political.

The theocracy in Iran and the threat of the establishment of theocracies across the Islamic world has raised an important question for modernization theory: does modernization really
bring secularization? Modernization theory was formulated primarily in the 1950’s and 1960’s by scholars who saw a new trend emerging in the developing world, one that was borne out of the hope that Western economic, political and social achievements would eventually become universal. This theory did not emerge out of sheer optimism; the emancipation of many developing states from colonial rule could be seen as empirical evidence of the beginning of a process of maturation in those societies similar to the maturation that occurred in Western societies towards the end of the Enlightenment. Granted, there were hiccups like coups and wars along the way, but these were dismissed by such eminent scholars as Samuel P. Huntington,

Almost anything that happens in the ‘developing’ countries – coups, ethnic struggles, revolutionary wars – becomes part of the process of development, however contradictory or retrogressive this may appear on the surface.\(^7\)

The theory was therefore not abandoned, just expanded. It is nevertheless important to use this theory in order to better understand which aspects of it are useful in explaining secularization, and which are irrelevant.

This paper will also undertake a structural and ideational analysis as well as one that looks at agential aspects. While materialistic evidence such as economic factors are mentioned and are relevant to modernization, they do not necessarily contribute in themselves to the understanding of secularism. Agential arguments are stated in the most broad sense since focussing on elite agency for example, would discourage a full understanding that could be gained by examining trends, such as political unrest, that are instigated by sectors of society that are not considered elite.

The reasoning for looking at ideational issues is that while particular agents in certain countries, such as Osama bin Laden or Ayatollah Khomeini, may play a significant part in altering the political context of a given country or countries, they are by no means sufficient in

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\(^7\) Huntington, Samuel P., “Political Development and Political Decay,” *World Politics*, XVII (April 1965), p.390
explaining the overall trends that have occurred across the region as a whole. It is the ideas and philosophies that they espouse that give their movements force. Secularism is also first and foremost an idea that is adopted or rejected in the minds of the people. Nevertheless, it can also be a structural characteristic of a state. The goal of democratic Islamists and militant Islamists alike is to alter the structure of the state, which lends itself to a structural analysis of the aforementioned issues.

This paper will also assert that the simple causal mechanism inferred by early scholars that claimed that modernization will bring about secularism is insufficient and inadequate in properly explaining surges in Islamism. As we shall see, when disaggregated, both modernization and secularism are far more complex than they seem and their component parts can simultaneously move in opposite directions, thereby complicating the causal effect given by the original theory. Let us begin by examining the theory itself more closely.

II. Theoretical Considerations

Definitions

In endeavouring to formulate a coherent and cogent assessment of secularization in Iran, it is necessary to define several terms before using them in this paper. These terms are ‘secularization’, ‘polity’, ‘Islamism’, and ‘political Islam’.

Jeffrey Hadden’s critique of secularization summarizes Talcott Parson’s 1951 definition of secularization theory as:

Once the world was filled with the sacred – in thought, practice, and institutional form. After the reformation and the Renaissance, the forces of modernization swept across the globe and secularization, a corollary historical process, loosened
the dominance of the sacred. In due course, the sacred shall disappear altogether except, possibly, in the private realm.\(^8\)

Peter L. Berger defines secularization as “the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.”\(^9\) For the purpose of the analysis and conclusions of this paper, secularization will be used in a political sense, whereby the separation of mosque and state on a political and institutional level is implied. Nevertheless, other interpretations of the term, which are much broader, will be examined in the theoretical section.

A ‘polity’ is defined in *Comparative Politics: An Institutional and Cross-National Approach* as “…a distinctive level of political behaviour and government organization or, even more succinctly, a political system. The most commonly studied polity is the nation-state, though the term can also refer to local, state, provincial, regional, and international levels of politics and government.”\(^10\)

Islamism is a broad concept which refers to the idea that “Islam as a body of faith has something important to say about how politics and society should be ordered in the contemporary Muslim world and who seeks to implement this idea in some fashion.”\(^11\) The larger ideology of Islamism also encompasses the smaller one of political Islam, known as “the attempt to create an Islamic state.”\(^12\)

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A Brief History of Secularism

Although secularism is commonly thought to have begun during the Age of Enlightenment, in fact it began with the sermon recorded in St. Mark’s Gospel, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.”\(^\text{13}\) It was also later refined and linked to Modernization theory during the latter’s heyday in the early part of the second half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. While ideas about secularization did emerge during the Enlightenment, the rulers and clergy who advocated them on a political level within the realm of Christianity have throughout history looked to that particular phrase as the reasoning behind their secular positions. What the philosophers of the Enlightenment added to this was the study of secularism not on a political level, but rather on a cognitive and normative level. The basic thesis of those early secularization theorists was that “the infantile illusions of religion would be outgrown.”\(^\text{14}\) In other words, as people would modernize and evolve from simple to complex beings, religion would gradually fade and be discarded both on individual and collective levels.

St. Mark’s Gospel was forgotten when Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in the 4\(^{th}\) century CE and began persecuting non-Christians. From then on, emperors would interfere in Church affairs and would see themselves as defenders of the faith, thus destroying the secularism that was instilled in Christianity during its embryonic phase. Then, because of interference by successive emperors during the medieval ages, the Popes began to assert their independence, claiming that they could even excommunicate and depose emperors if they so wished.\(^\text{15}\) As a result, the positions of Pope and emperor would at times be one, and at times would stand opposed to one another. But what is clear is that the non-interference by the clergy

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\(^{14}\) Paraphrased from Sigmund Freud, in Hadden, p.3

\(^{15}\) Shelat, p.16
in political affairs that is enshrined in the very notion of secularism had vanished between the eras of the Roman Empire and the Enlightenment.

What the philosophers noticed was that rapid technological advance and modernization connected to states based on rational ideology in all levels of society had brought with them a diminished role for the clergy. The laïcité enshrined by the French revolution, the Darwinian theory of evolution and the abolition of the Holy Roman Empire were all considered signs of the progress of humanity. Darwinian theory itself was used as a model for secularization theory, where humanity was seen to progress in stages from the simple unicellular being to the complexities of a person, from primitive to modern, from superstitious to rational, and from religious to secular.  

The problem with the conclusion that these philosophers drew is that they made the mistake of equating a rejection of the Catholic Church with the rejection of religion altogether. The distinction here is subtle, but nevertheless vital. Religion on its own is by definition infallible, but the Church is run by clergymen who are obviously not infallible. Thus when the clergy enter the political sphere and attempt to rule, they are bound to encounter a certain segment of the population which are unhappy with their policies, as happens to any politician. A key problem of secularization theory is its assumption that the advent of a staunchly secular and rational state such as France in the 18th and 19th centuries would necessarily mean that its people had also become secular on a cognitive, and to a certain extent even a normative, level.

It is also worthy to note that according to Peter Berger, the term ‘secularization’ itself "was originally employed in the wake of the Wars of Religion to denote the removal of territory or property from the control of ecclesiastical authorities." 

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16 Hadden, p.5
17 Berger, p.106
The problem, however, was twofold. Not only were there difficulties between Pope and emperor, but there were also wars between different denominations of Christianity after the Protestant Reformation. As Charles Taylor describes in his essay, “Modes of Secularism,” two variations of secularism emerged from these conflicts. The first was the ‘common ground approach’, where:

The aim was to establish a certain ethic of peaceful coexistence and political order, a set of grounds for obedience, which while still theistic, even Christian, was based on those doctrines which were common to all Christian sects, or even to all theists. This could be grounded on a version of natural law, which... was indeed conceived as being independent of revelation but still connected to theism, because the same reasoning which bring us to the law brings us to God.\(^{19}\)

This approach was promulgated by the likes of John Locke and Gottfried Liebniz. It was also adopted by the founders of the United States, because of the fact that at the time of the writing of the constitution, various states had their own independent churches. While Taylor emphasizes that it has since been interpreted in a much broader sense, the initial intention was to prevent the state from showing any preference towards any one denomination. Therefore, there could be one people under God, but the First Amendment to the Constitution clearly states that, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”\(^{20}\)

The second variation of secularism consisted in trying to define an ‘independent political ethic’. According to Taylor, this first came from Grotius in the early 17\(^{th}\) century.\(^{21}\) He argued that humans are rational creatures who are sociable and if we take these as axioms, we can derive theorems about how we ought to treat one another. “For instance, the violation of our solemnly


\(^{19}\) *Ibid.*, p.33

\(^{20}\) U.S. Constitution Online, [http://usconstitution.net](http://usconstitution.net)

\(^{21}\) Taylor from Bhargava, p.33
given word can be argued to be at odds with the nature of a sociable being who is also rational, i.e. proceeds by rules or precepts. Grotius is led to pronounce the words: *etsi Deus non daretur...*, [sic] even if God didn’t exist, these norms would be binding on us.”

In other words, a political ethic can be devised that would be independent of religion and could serve to avoid conflict with the clergy and between denominations because it would be based on undeniable and agreed upon laws derived from what we know about the human condition. This can be seen as a precursor to laïcité.

**Secularization Explained**

Much of the theoretical works that deal with the process of secularization are sociological in nature. They examine to varying degrees the ways in which religion is removed from life at organizational, institutional and personal levels (albeit they each seem to find their own way of labelling the same categories). The concern for this paper is to find links between the sociological and political aspects of secularization which, when properly defined and delineated, can have profound meaning when examining contemporary Iran.

While Peter Glasner’s book, *The Sociology of Secularization* is meant to be a critique of the concept that outlines the ways in which it is in fact a myth, it provides an interesting way of categorizing the ways in which secularization can occur. As with modernization theory, the most important fault that he finds with regard to secularization is the problem of linearity, namely that secularization does not necessarily progress from religious to secular in a straight line or in a uniform manner.

The first category he deals with is “institutional secularization”, which is itself divided into subsections labelled ‘decline’, ‘routinization’, ‘differentiation’, and ‘disengagement’.

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22 Taylor from Bhargava, p.34
Structural differentiation represents the differentiation of the functions of society and religion. This is meant to characterize the resolution of issues by society on its own, without the institutional guidance of religion. It could also signify the delineation of certain aspects of life specifically to religion, such as marriage and divorce, without the interference of non-religious institutions. This, however, does not necessarily mean that religion is losing its strength, it could be a sign of the religion becoming more resilient and adaptable, while trading functional ground with society.

Disengagement is the desire to disengage certain key aspects of social life and to emancipate them from religious tutelage. The difference between disengagement and differentiation is that disengagement occurs when religion is clearly losing ground and differentiation is simply the clear separation of the roles of religion and society over a given population. The issue that arises within the disengagement typology is that it does not show clearly the difference between a society that is disengaged, and one that is opposed to religion. In other words, would contemporary France and Turkey be examples of disengaging societies, or does societal opposition towards religion signify another typology altogether?

The second category delineated by Glasner is the normative one. Here, secularization is divided into generalization, transformation, desacralization and secularism. Desacralization ties in well with some of the tenets of modernization theory where society moves towards science as the basis of explanation and away from religion. In other words, desacralization entails the rationalization of society. Glasner is not as bold as modernization theorists in attempting to explain what causes desacralization, but nevertheless manages to identify it as a characteristic of secularization when one undertakes a descriptive approach towards this phenomenon.
Karel Dobbelaere’s treatment of secularization is useful in that rather than attempting to criticize secularization, his essay entitled “The Secularization of Society”\(^{24}\) seeks to find the underlying mechanisms of secularization. He too points to differentiation (though he calls it functional differentiation, but acknowledges that there are many terms for the same thing) between religion and society as a measure of secularization.

His view is essentially that secularization theory ought to be given more precise and systemic meaning rather than discarded altogether. He does this by outlining a certain way of measuring secularization on a linear scale defined by functional differentiation. Indicators of differentiation would be the degree of segregation of role systems and role expectations between the different subsystems of society. Such subsystems are the economy, polity, family, education, and science. According to him this should then be analyzed to see the development of professional and complementary roles in the different institutional domains and the degree of inclusion established in the domains. He goes on to say that the level of functional rationalization of the different institutions and the individuation of decisions would be another indicator of the degree of functional differentiation that had been achieved.\(^{25}\) This is essentially a reiteration of Glasner’s structural differentiation and disengagement. While Glasner views differentiation as only one of many symptoms of secularization, Dobbelaere seems to see this one institutional aspect as the most useful if not the sole underlying mechanism of secularization. Once again, the same problems that arise in the treatment of Glasner tend to arise in Dobbelaere’s discussion of differentiation.


\(^{25}\) Dobbelaere from Hadden and Shupe, p.38
Another important author who provides categories of secularization in his book, *Religion and Political Modernization*, is Donald E. Smith. For him, secularization occurs in five distinct areas: polity-separation secularization, polity-expansion secularization, political-culture secularization, political process secularization, and polity-dominance secularization.\(^{26}\) Polity-separation secularization is a description of the institutional separation of religion and state, where the state disavows any religion as the basis for its legitimacy and does not recognize any religion as the official religion of the state. This is very similar to the 'common ground approach' outlined by Charles Taylor. Polity-expansion secularization is when the state takes over areas of society that were previously controlled by traditional religious jurisdiction. Glasner and Dobbelare's disengagement and differentiation could be seen as versions of polity-expansion secularization. Examples of this would be education, law, economic activity, and so on. Political-culture secularization, according to Smith, occurs when the values of the polity are transformed in such a way as to accept secularism as a given and demand its implementation. Normative secularization could be put in this category. Political process secularization denotes a decline in the political saliency of religious leaders and parties. A corollary of this phenomenon is that religious identity will be weakened in the minds of the people. Polity-dominance secularization occurs when a radical programme of secularization is embarked upon by some form of revolutionary regime which recognizes no area of religious autonomy. The goal of such regimes is to eliminate the influence of religion entirely from society.\(^{27}\) Although Smith sees communist regimes as examples in this category, French and Turkish laïcité could also be examples of polity-dominance.

\(^{26}\) Smith, Donald E., *Religion and Political Modernization*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, p.8

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
Two things are important to note with regards to Smith's writings on secularization. The first is that he acknowledges that not all the categories of secularization have to move in the same direction simultaneously. He admits that steps can be taken backwards in some categories while others are still moving slowly forward. Second, he claims that in the long run, political process secularization will inevitably proceed forward. That is to say, the decline in the political saliency of religious leaders and institutions, and the weakening of religious identity will eventually happen.

Aspects of Modernization Theory

C.E. Black, an early scholar in this field, breaks down modernization into four phases in his book, *The Dynamics of Modernization; a Study in Comparative History*. The first one is called “the challenge of modernity,” which entails the initial confrontation of a society with modern ideas and institutions and the emergence of advocates of modernity. The second is the consolidation of modernizing leadership, or the transfer of power from traditional to modernizing leaders. The third is economic and social transformation, or the transition from a rural and agrarian society to an urban and industrial one. Finally, the fourth phase is the integration of society, or the fundamental reorganization of society.

The phases Black outlines, however, are more useful in describing Enlightenment-era European societies and post-colonial developing countries in their initial phases than contemporary Middle Eastern ones. Nonetheless, if we interpret his phases in different ways or slightly modify some of them, we may find them more useful in this study. Perhaps the “challenge of modernity” could also be read as the amount and frequency of “exposure to modernity.” The consolidation of modernizing leadership could be viewed as the continuation of

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sustained modernizing leadership. Economic and social transformation ought to be seen as economic and social progress. For example, the diversification of an economy, the raising of standards of living, increases in gross domestic product per capita, health care, women’s rights, and so on. Finally, the integration of society could be seen as the political awareness of the populace, mass mobilization, participation and legal equality among citizens.

I believe that with these adjustments, Black’s interpretation of modernization can be more useful in examining countries that have moved beyond agrarian and feudal systems. So the question arises, what about if there is economic progress without social progress, as in Saudi Arabia? What if there is no economic or social progress, no sustained modernizing leadership, but a highly politicized populace, as in Iran? As we can see, not all levers of modernization necessarily move in the same direction at the same time. If these countries are modernizing, are they also becoming secular? What part of them is becoming secular? For answers to these questions, we must turn to another author.

Samuel P. Huntington divides modernization into four separate categories. The first is rationalization, as in the development of a meritocratic and universalistic society. The second category is differentiation (a functionally specific society), third is mass participation and mobilization, and fourth is a consequent ability to accomplish a broad range of goals in their territory. As a result, rationalization and differentiation are the links between modernization and secularization theories.

Huntington distinguishes himself by adding the factors of pace and process of modernization to the theory. With regards to the pace, he claims that rapid modernization may lead to political decay if there is a lack of a strong institutional foundation and from this derives the notion that political stability is paramount to modernization, even if it is at the cost of
maintaining an authoritarian system. In other words, institutionalization must come before mobilization in order to prevent an authoritarian system from taking hold. As for the process, he recognizes that the scheme of modernization ought not be viewed as a simple dichotomy, and outlines nine characteristics of “The Grand Process of Modernization.” These characteristics are:

1. Modernization is a revolutionary process
2. Modernization is a complex process
3. Modernization is a systemic process
4. Modernization is a global process
5. Modernization is a lengthy process
6. Modernization is a phased process
7. Modernization is a homogenizing process
8. Modernization is an irreversible process
9. Modernization is a progressive process [italics in original] 

Modernization is revolutionary in the sense that the transition from tradition to modernity will involve radical change in patterns of human life. It is complex in that “It cannot easily be reduced to a single factor or to a single dimension. It involves changes in virtually all areas of human thought and behaviour.” The systemic aspect of modernization will be discussed below. Modernization is global in that all societies were at some point traditional and all are either modern or in the process of becoming modern. This implies that modernization is constantly moving in a positive direction, which is not always the case. Huntington further posits that modernization is a lengthy process that will necessarily be measured at least in generations. It is homogenizing in the sense that he believes standards of modernization are universal, and since they are irreversible, all nations of the world will eventually converge in some modern utopia. Finally, it is progressive in that “in the long run, modernization is not only inevitable, it is also desirable.”

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p.290
The characteristics that are relevant for this study are the ones about irreversibility, "phased modernization" and the notion that modernization is a systemic process. While he claims that modernization is a systemic process in that all aspects of it must go together, in another article, he – like Donald Smith – recognizes that all of these things do not necessarily go together or occur simultaneously.\textsuperscript{33} As we have seen, not all aspects of modernization move forward in the developing world, even by Huntington’s own definition. Whereas mass participation and mobilization may be difficult to reverse, virtually every reversion to authoritarianism will be a move away from rationalization and meritocracy in a given country. Also, the notion that modernization occurs in phases implies a continuous, linear model that ought to be measurable. Again, since various components of modernization often move in different directions, a phased model is illogical.

\textbf{Critics of Modernization Theory}

In their article entitled “Secularization, Industrialization, and Khomeini’s Islamic Republic,” Cheryl Benard and Zalmay Khalilzad seek “...to examine the failure of modernization theory to accommodate the re-emergence of political movements on the basis of religion on a scale of significance that cannot be dismissed as momentary fluctuations in the secularization process...”\textsuperscript{34} In this endeavour, one of the first things they do is to define modernization. The definition that they come up with is as follows:

[Modernization theory] encompassed the essential elements of ‘industrialization in economics; secularization in thought and social and legal organization’; urbanization; the acquisition of modern patterns of behaviour, personality, and communication – ‘cosmopolitan attitudes’; democratization in the political sphere; and integration into the ‘world culture.’\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}
While this is probably an over-ambitious definition, it nevertheless shows that they attempted to look at modernization as a yard-stick by which they could measure their case study, revolutionary Iran. The problem with their logic is that while they understood that modernization was a complex and problematic issue, they regard secularism as a single, unified concept. In this respect, authors whose academic focus is primarily secularism have taken the view that a more sophisticated interpretation is necessary in attempting to analyze any causal relationship between it and modernization. Nevertheless, Benard and Khalilzad reach the conclusion that

The basic assumption that industrialization, urbanization, literacy, and secularization were concomitant and interrelated elements that constituted modernization was incorrect. Instead, some of these developments may take place in various degrees and combinations; or, economic modernization may occur without necessarily bringing about the other developments.\(^\text{36}\)

Terrance Carroll comes to similar conclusions in his article, “Secularization and Modernity,”

This apparent contradiction between the findings of at least some studies of the role of specific religions in particular countries and the more general literature on political modernization raises the possibility that the relationship between religion and political change may be considerably more complex than is usually suggested. In this article I argue that there is no necessary relationship between secularization and the development of a modern state.\(^\text{37}\)

While his conclusions agree with my argument, the problem with Carroll’s logic is that his definition of modernity is too static. He outlines five different interpretations based on four different ideological persuasions, liberalism, Marxism, social democratic thought, and conservatism.\(^\text{38}\) In an effort to be value-neutral, he attempts to find the lowest common denominator in all of them and comes to the conclusion that modernity ought to be measured only in terms of political capability and the capacity of the state within a given territory,

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\(^{36}\) Ibid., p.233  
\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp.366-370
The following characteristics distinguish the capacity of a modern state from that of a pre-modern state. The former can deal simultaneously with a variety of complex tasks; it can regularize and routinize the performance of these tasks; and it can carry out these tasks on a continuing and long-term basis. He goes on to say,

What things are implied when we say that a state has an extensive capacity? It seems to me that, at a minimum, such a state must have well-developed capabilities in the areas of communication, coercion, legitimation, planning, and policy implementation. Also, secularism is again taken only to mean the existence of a secular state. In other words, secularism in the minds of the people or in the strength or weakness of religious parties or even the influence (or lack thereof) of religious leaders is completely dismissed.

To summarize, secularization theory is used to categorize and delineate the various levels at which secularism can occur in society. Smith’s categorizations in particular are quite useful in delineating some of the various ways in which secularization can occur. Aspects of modernization theory can also be used for the same purpose, but as various critics have shown, the theory is insufficient in explaining precisely which of those aspects are relevant in adding to, or detracting from, secularization. Let us now take a closer look at the case of Iran from a historical perspective.

III. Background Information

The Formation of Persian Identity

A common misconception about Iran is that the Islamic revolution of 1979 overthrew a Western system and replaced it with an indigenous one. In fact, it is quite the opposite. The theocracy that replaced the monarchy that year cannot be called an indigenous institution.
because it has no precedent in Iranian history. Although the theocracy in its present form has no precedent, Islam and Shiism have been important political forces since the Arab conquest of Persia in the 7th century CE in the case of the former, and the Safavid conversion to Shiism in the 16th century in the case of the latter, particularly in those monarchs who derived their legitimacy from the divine.

The Persian Empire was founded around 550 BCE by Cyrus the Great in Persepolis (near the city of Shiraz). He was the first of the Achaemenid rulers of Iran, whose dynasty lasted until 330 BCE and is considered to be the founding dynasty of the Iranian monarchy. The religion of the Achaemenids was Zoroastrianism, one of the first monotheistic religions in the world, founded sometime in the second millennium BCE by the Prophet Zoroaster in the north-western mountains of Iran. Tablets left by Cyrus often refer to Zoroastrianism, claiming that Cyrus was its protector and that the legitimacy of his rule would be by divine right. In fact, there is much evidence to support the notion that the Persian state and the lives of its Persian subjects (there were 72 different peoples under the rule of the Persian Empire at the time) were governed by the tenets, symbols and principles of Zoroastrianism. ‘Good words, good thoughts, good deeds’ is the motto of that faith and it is still practiced today by an ever contracting population in Iran, India, and in certain parts of the Western world. Cyrus’ empire, however, was a multi-cultural one where his conquered peoples had the liberty to maintain their own linguistic, religious, and cultural autonomy.41 Cyrus was also the first ruler to issue a declaration of human rights,42 over a thousand years before the Magna Carta.43

After the Achaemenids (550 BCE-330 BCE) came the Seleucids (330 BCE-247 BCE), the Parthians (247 BCE-224 CE) and the Sasanian (224 CE-651 CE) dynasties, all of which

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42 The original is in a British Museum and a copy is in the United Nations.
would use Zoroastrianism as their state religion and the basis for their divine rule. During these dynasties, the Persians would consolidate and expand their empire, the most difficult battles being fought against the Greeks and the Roman Empire.

The Islamic Conquest of Persia

In the 7th century CE, tribes in the Arabian Peninsula united under the leadership of the followers of the Prophet Mohammad and attacked the Persian Empire that had previously never seen the Arab tribes as a threat. While the claim by many Persian historians and even Persian supremacists (such as those in the Iranian National Socialist Party still in existence today) who like to portray the Islamic conquest of Persia as a forced rape and pillage of Zoroastrian Persia is to a large extent true, there is also evidence that at least some of the conversion took place willingly. Some Zoroastrian Persians had grown weary and disillusioned by the growing corruption and oppression that had overtaken the royal court. Much like the current situation, the king who ruled in the name of Zoroastrianism had discredited that ancient religion through his own rule and had made the nation ripe for conversion to a new faith that professed piety and humanism. The powerful dynasty of the Achaemenids had long since been extinguished and the conflicts with the various empires to the west of Persia had drained the nation economically, militarily, and spiritually. On the one hand, Aryan supremacists portray this event as a rape partly to show that the pure Aryan race of the Persians (including the blond hair, blue eyes, and strong jaw) was altered by the black haired, brown eyed Arabs, and partly to say that Islam is a foreign religion imposed on the “helpless Iranian”. On the other hand, some, like those at the

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44 For more on the Iranian Nazi Party see their website at www.sumka.org.
45 I have anecdotally encountered many instances of Iranian youth who have embraced other religions or forms of spirituality because of their disillusionment with Islam for example, Buddhism, mysticism, and even spiritual variations of yoga. The punishment for conversion from Islam to anything else is of course death, which is why much of this occurs in private and in secret.
head of the Islamic Republic today, portray it as a triumph of the word of Islam over the pagan, irrespective of ethnic considerations, and as the power of persuasion of the word of God.

Abbas Milani, while by no means an Aryan supremacist, discusses the issue in the following way:

Muslim historians, both Arab and Iranian, have long offered the idea that Iran, on the verge of the Arab invasion, was a society in decline and decay and thus it embraced the invading Arab armies with open arms. Mohammad Mohammadi Malayeri’s erudite four-volume study of the question of the nature of Iranian society’s response to the Arab invasion uses mostly Arab sources to show clearly, and convincingly, that contrary to the claims of the Muslim apologists, Iranians in fact fought long and hard against the invading Arabs. Moreover, once the Persians accepted political defeat, they began to engage in a culture war of resistance and succeeded in forcing their own ways on the victorious Arabs. See Mohammad Mohammadi Malayeri, *Tarikh-e Farhang-e Iran* [Iran’s Cultural History], four volumes, Tehran, 1982 [citation is in original].

The answer therefore, is likely somewhere in between, whereby some were converted forcibly and some were converted willingly, but what is clear is that this conversion was much more violent than the conversions that occurred in Southeast Asia later on. The legacy of the Islamic conquest of Persia has always been that the nature of Persian identity was turned into a dualistic one.

After the 7th century Arab conquest of Persia, two centuries would pass before local Persian kings would once again rule Iran. At around the turn of the millennium, a Persian poet named Ferdowsi wrote an epic tale of pre-Islamic and mythical kings of ancient Iran called the *Shahnameh* (book of Kings) with almost no use of Arabic vocabulary. Although Ferdowsi was

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46 Milani, 2004, p.15/ft
47 Ferdowsi was the pen name of Abdul Qasim Mansur, born in 935 near Mashhad in the north-east of Iran. His name means ‘from Paradise’ in Persian. The English word ‘Paradise’ comes from the Persian ‘Pardis’. Since the Arabic language does not contain the letter ‘P’, *Pardisi* became Ferdowski. Also, the Iranian province called Fars and the name of the language ‘Farsi’ were both originally called Pars and Parsi in Old Persian. Hence the names Persia and Persian.
48 Technically, the word ‘Shah’ in Persian means ‘Emperor’ in English, and the word ‘Malek’ is used to denote ‘King’, much like ‘Kaiser’ (Emperor) and ‘König’ (King) in German, but the terms are used interchangeably in history books about Iran, so they will be used interchangeably in this paper.
Iranian, Arabic had by this time permeated the Pahlavi (Middle Persian) language and had produced what is now known as modern Persian. Ferdowsi resented Arab influence in Iran and sought to distinguish Persian from Islamic identity. The following are two quotes from Ferdowsi’s writings that represent his views on Arabs in the 10th century:

O, Iran! Where have all those kings, who adorned you
With justice, equity, and munificence, who decorated
You with pomp and splendour gone?
From that date when the barbarian, savage, coarse
Bedouin Arabs sold your king’s daughter in the street
And cattle market, you have not seen a bright day, and
Have lain hid in darkness.

Damn on this World, Damn on this Time, Damn on Fate,
That uncivilized Arabs have come to force me to be Muslim.  

The book took him thirty years to write and is a central text used to highlight a distinct Persian identity by its modern proponents.

It is also around this time that Persians who refused to convert to Islam would be severely persecuted. Valuing their Persian religion over the right to live in their homeland, many Zoroastrians decided to flee their Arab conquerors by travelling to the East, thus forming the Parsi community in India.

The Persian dynasties that ruled from the collapse of the Arab Abbasid caliphate in 820 CE to the rise of the Turkic dynasties beginning with the Ghaznavids in 962 CE were admittedly weak but oversaw a resurgence of Persian identity. The significance of the Turkic dynasties that ruled from 962 CE until the Mongol invasions led by Genghis Khan in 1220 CE was that they were the first non-Persian leaders of Persia who would rule as Persians (not in the ethnic sense, but rather in the geographical sense that they considered Persia to be a multi-ethnic land that they could claim was their home also). This would play an important role in shaping the identity of

Iran's large Azerbaijani and Turkmen populations to this day, in that they would reject pan-Turkism and embrace the notion that Iran has always been a multi-ethnic land whose achievements and history would be shared by Persian and Turkic ethno-linguistic groups.

In 1092, a man named Nizam al-Mulk rose to the position of prime minister of Malik Shah of the Seljuq dynasty. Nizam al-Mulk wrote the *Siyasatnameh*, The Book of Government and Politics. He argued for the regulation of court procedures, a systematic decision-making process and the restriction of arbitrary rule. He also established the *Nizamieh* schools in the major cities under Seljuq rule. They became the leading institutions of higher learning in the Islamic world.

The Mongol era (from 1220 CE to 1501 CE) would prove to be a difficult time because of the brutal nature of the Mongol attack. The Persian monarchy can be said to have been disrupted during both the Mongol and Arab conquests, but since both groups of invaders used a type of monarchy to rule over Persia, the institution itself was not abolished in the minds of the people and the Persian identity also survived. It is during this period that the great poet Hafez wrote his famous Divan about wine, love, beauty and devotion to God.

**The Persianization of Islam**

Following the disintegration of the Mongol empire, another Turkic Shah rose to power with the backing of Turkic tribes in Northwestern Iran. Shah Ismail I became the first Safavid king and would choose Tabriz as his capital. Tabriz is the largest and most important city of Iranian Azerbaijan (at this point what is now the Republic of Azerbaijan was also part of the

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50 Hafez was from the city of Shiraz, in the heart of Persia where the greatest of Persian wine grapes was cultivated. Legend has it that during the 13th century Crusades a French knight called Gaspard de Sterimberg discovered wonderful grapes near Shiraz in Persia. He took some cuttings to plant back home at his Hermitage (farm) in the Rhone Valley. The first cuttings of Shiraz made it to Australia, probably with James Busby in 1832 and were incorrectly labelled Scyras which is a popular northern Rhone Valley variety. Hence Shiraz wine from Australia. The consumption and possession of alcohol is forbidden in the Islamic Republic, except within the Armenian, Zoroastrian, and Jewish communities.
Persian Empire). Being a Shiite, he declared Shiism as the state religion and converted virtually all of Persia and some surrounding areas under his control from Sunnism to Shiism. Shiism became a medium for the Persians to differentiate themselves from the rest of the Islamic world, in particular from the Sunni Ottomans who threatened them from the west. In order to ensure its continuation as the state religion, the Safavid kings supported the growth and expansion of the Shiite clergy and considered themselves to be the divine protectors of Shiism and of Persia. They thus decided to alter the identity of the people in order to help them distinguish their Islamic identity from that of the Arab conquerors who had brought the religion to them. In a way, while the Arabs attempted to Arabize Persia, the Safavids later chose to Persianize Islam. The greatest of the Safavid rulers, Shah Abbas decided to move the capital of his empire to Esfahan because he thought Tabriz was too vulnerable to Ottoman attack from the west. He had a keen interest in architecture and built most of the famous mosques and bridges of Esfahan. Overall, the Safavid period marked a reconciliation of Persia and Islam through Shiism and Shiite institutions such as the mosque and clergy were encouraged and helped to flourish. It is during this era, when the role of religious jurisdiction was on the rise, that polity-expansion secularization was diminished. Polity-separation secularization, or the separation of religion and state on an institutional basis had never existed in Iran and would not begin until the Pahlavi dynasty in the 20th century. Furthermore, political-process secularization, which measures the political saliency of religious leaders, was greatly diminished during the Safavid era. Political-culture secularization and other forms of normative and cognitive secularism are virtually impossible to judge given the lack of data.

The collapse of the Safavid dynasty came at the hands of Afghan invaders led by Mahmoud Khan in 1722. He sacked Esfahan and ruled Persia until the rise of Nader Shah Afshar...
in 1729 who not only ousted the Afghans, but also expanded the reaches of his empire to India, capturing two of the world's greatest diamonds, the Sea of Light (currently in Iran) and the Mountain of Light (now part of the British Crown Jewels). Nader Shah died on one of his expeditions in 1747 and was succeeded by another ruler whose dynasty would not outlast his own life, Karim Khan Zand. Karim Khan was a compassionate ruler who refused to assume the title of Shah and referred to himself as the Representative of the People. He was a Persian from Shiraz and was eventually ousted by the Azerbaijani Aga Mohammad Khan Qajar in 1779.

The Qajar dynasty is considered to be one of the most disastrous dynasties of Iranian history because of the territorial losses that occurred during its reign. They lost both their Caucasus and Central Asian territories to the Russians; they lost Afghanistan to the British and were subject to much manipulation by these two powers in their governance of the country. The one silver lining of the Qajar dynasty (1779-1925) was the rise of the reform-minded Prime Minister Amir Kabir in the middle of the 19th century.

Government expenditure was slashed, and a distinction was made between the privy and public purses. The instruments of central administration were overhauled, and the Amir assumed responsibility for all areas of the bureaucracy. Foreign interference in Iran's domestic affairs was curtailed, and foreign trade was encouraged. Public works such as the bazaar in Tehran were undertaken. A new secular college, the Dar al-Fonoun (The Skills House), was established for training a new cadre of administrators and acquainting them with modern techniques. Among his other accomplishments was the foundation of a newspaper called "Vaqaye Etefaqieh" (The Happened Events).51

Amir Kabir was so radical and had garnered so much support that the Shah felt threatened and had him executed. Amir Kabir’s rule seems to represent a surge in rational governance and disengagement with the Islamist policies of the Safavids. His tenure however, was short-lived, though his myth has inspired many would-be modernizers since then.

51 Iran Chamber Society, http://www.iranchamber.com/history/amir_kabir/amir_kabir.php
The important thing to note about the pre-Islamic dynasties is that they are to this day used as a symbol of a strictly Persian identity that comprises half of a dichotomous identity in the minds of modern Iranians. Because of the linkages made by the Pahlavi Shahs of their dynasty to the Achaemenid dynasty (as evidenced by the 2,500 year anniversary festival thrown by Mohammad Reza Shah in 1971 in honour of the birth of the Persian Empire), some of the revolutionaries who overthrew the Shah in 1979 were fed up with the exclusive focus on Persian identity and sought to relieve political oppression by embracing the Islamic half of their identity. Since then, however, the reverse has happened. With two-thirds of the population being under the age of 30, most Iranians have no memory of the Shah and of pre-revolutionary Iran. This has led to the association of not only political, but also social, repression and economic stagnation with the clerical class and to some extent with Islam itself. When Ayatollah Taheri resigned his post as leader of Friday prayers of Esfahan in July 2002, in his resignation letter he noted that political repression by clerics in Iran had tarnished the clerical class and faith in Islam itself in the minds of the youth. As happened following the Arab conquests of the 7th century, association with Persian identity has steadily increased since the revolution.

By far the most significant development in terms of the formation of contemporary Iranian identity in the post-Islamic dynasties was the conversion of Shah Ismail I to Shiism. This has made it much easier for Islamists and revolutionaries in the 20th and 21st centuries to argue that their form of religious nationalism retains its distinction from Arab culture, history, and nationalism and is distinctly Persian in nature. Nevertheless, many of Iran’s youth question why the lion and sun of the pre-revolutionary national flag that can also be seen on Achaemenid markings in the ruins of Persepolis has been replaced by an “Allah” in the centre and inscriptions

of “Allah-o-Akbar” (God is great) in the green and red sections of the flag in Arabic, which is not
the official language.

Finally, an important precedent set by Nizam al-Mulk, Karim Khan Zand, and Amir
Kabir was the concept of the limitation of the power of the monarch and the empowerment of a
strong prime minister (although Karim Khan was in effect king, he refused to use the title and
thus acted as a prime minister) whose legitimacy was not necessarily derived from the people,
but was not quite divine either. History has judged these leaders of the 11th, 18th, and 19th
centuries kindly, as it would their 20th century intellectual heir, Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh.

Withstanding Imperialism: The Early 20th Century

By the beginning of the 20th century, Persia had withstood invasions and wars with the
Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, and Afghans. In many ways, these experiences can be
seen to have formed a common identity among Persians in that they represented the force of an
outsider that would unite the people under the guidance of their Shah. The monarch therefore,
was not only a symbol of unity and defence of the homeland; he was also a symbol of ethnic
diversity and divine legitimacy for himself and, according to him, for the nation. It fell upon the
monarch to defend the nation against foreigners and in effect protect the nation and its identity.
Perhaps it was partly because the indigenous monarchical system resembled to a great extent the
systems in their own countries that the British and Russians did not attempt to remove it and
colonize the country outright. It is more likely, however, that they saw the unity and control that
the Shah had over his people as a situation that could be less costly to manipulate than to attack
directly. Such cost-effective programmes of indirect rule were a common method used in
controlling many non-Western societies by the imperial powers. Also, a balance of power was
certainly present between the British and Russians that prevented either one from dominating. In
the end, the Shahs were able to ensure that their power was balanced and the country was saved from the humiliation of direct colonization.

With hindsight, however, the manipulation of the monarchy can be said to have nevertheless produced a disastrous outcome. In 1906, when the British bribed the Qajars to sell valuable tobacco concessions to them, there was massive popular discontent which led to a popular uprising. Mozzafar-e-din Shah was forced to enact a constitution based on the constitution of Belgium that would limit his powers and effectively turn him into a constitutional monarch. After he died, his son, Mohammad Ali Shah, attempted to rescind the constitution with the help and encouragement of the Russians and restore the absolute monarchy. He was promptly ousted and exiled to Russia. His son, Ahmad Shah, would be overthrown by Reza Khan, an officer in the Cossack Brigade formed by Russia. This time, it was the British who helped Reza Khan come to power and overthrow the Shah.

The events that led up to the 20th century were crucial in determining the dualistic nature of Persian identity and, as we shall see in the following section, would be precursors to periods of forced secularism, balanced secularism, and finally, forced sacralization.

IV. Iran 1925 – 1997

1925 – 1941 Occupation and Coup d'État: *Inter Arma Silent Leges*

"In time of war, the law is silent"

--Winston Churchill, *Justifying the occupation of Iran*\(^5^3\)

In 1925, Reza Khan looked to the example of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who had formed a staunchly secular republic in the aftermath of the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in the First

World War. Reza Khan wanted to establish a republic, but the by now rather vocal clergy ironically insisted that he crown himself Shah because of the fact that they believed this would not only give them greater room to manoeuvre politically, but would also signify the continuation of nearly 2,500 years of monarchy that they thought was an important part of Iranian identity. Reza Khan ordered that all hereditary titles be abolished and all subjects choose a first and last name. He himself chose Pahlavi as his last name, the name of the Middle Persian language. From then on he would be called Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Although the British had helped Reza Shah come to power, they soon found that he was quite nationalistic and independent in his decision-making. Domestically, Reza Shah embarked upon a rapid modernization, urbanization, and secularization programme, all the while maintaining an iron grip on the political landscape of the nation. As in Kemalist Turkey, the secularization aspect of this was forced and would leave long-lasting effects that could be called a religious backlash. His policies amount to what Donald Smith would categorize as polity-dominance secularization, where (as was outlined earlier) a radical programme of secularization is embarked upon by some form of revolutionary regime which in effect recognizes no area of religious autonomy.

Germany had had fairly basic relations with Persia up until the rise of Reza Shah. It had at times provided Persian tribes with token military help in attempts to stave off British influence there in the 19th century. But in the 1930’s, Reza Shah saw Germany as a potentially powerful friend to help fend off Britain, which had originally helped bring him to power. He was an admirer of the nationalist and rapid industrialization policies of Adolf Hitler, but did not share his anti-Semitism. In fact, his government helped many Jews escape the Holocaust by giving

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About 1,000 Jewish children reached Palestine via Iran, in February 1943, as part of a group of 24,000 soldiers and refugees who were allowed to go to Tehran from Soviet territory. The children had been cared for in an orphanage, provided by the Tehran Jewish community, until entry permits to Palestine could be obtained from the British authorities in Palestine.56

He admired the glorification of the Aryan race and exhibited this admiration most famously by changing the name of Persia to Iran, which means “land of the Aryans,” in 1935.57

Reza Shah sympathized with the Germans, but decided to remain neutral during the war. After Hitler’s invasion of Russia, the British decided to attack and occupy neutral Iran on August 25, 1941 when Reza Shah refused to give them access to Iranian territory for the transport of supplies from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Union. Reza Shah’s unwillingness to cooperate with the British and the Russians forced them to divide Iran into northern and southern military zones, and demand the abdication of the Shah in favour of his 22-year old son, the last reigning monarch of Iran, Mohammad Reza Shah.58

1941 – 1953 Strangling Democracy: Mossadegh

Mohammad Reza Shah came to power in 1941 very much aware that he was on shaky ground. He was 22 years old when he became Shah of Iran. After the war, being suspicious of the British, he enlisted the help of America in convincing the Soviet Union to leave the country (Stalin had refused to leave and this would be the one and only time he would give up land that he had conquered during World War II). He thought that since America had itself once been a

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57 The name ‘Iran’ was used by many indigenous writers and poets in reference to their own country and that name is said to be the ancient pre-Achaemenid name of the land. ‘Persia’ was the name used by the ancient Greeks because it was the name of the tribe that had united the land under one empire.
58 Daniel, p.141
colony of Great Britain, that having the US as an ally would not provoke discontent among his
people. Stephen Kinzer describes the view of post-World War Iranians in the following way:

Britain and Russia had trampled on Iranian sovereignty for more than a century, and many
Iranians naturally came to detest them both. For the United States, however, most felt only admiration. The few Americans they had come to know were generous and self-sacrificing, interested not in wealth or power but in helping Iran.  

The USSR eventually withdrew, but the experience would leave a lasting paranoia of Communist revolution and Soviet interference in the mind of the Shah. In the immediate post-war period, the young Shah allowed democratic debate to flourish, especially within the Majles (Iranian Parliament).

During the period from 1945 to 1953, Iran had become a burgeoning constitutional monarchy where there were virtually no limits on the press or on the personal and political freedoms of the people. There was, however, widespread resentment over the unfair oil concessions given to the British in the form of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1908. While the resentment had always been present, it escalated as the British attempted to increase their share of the profits over the years, and demands grew from the Iranians to increase their share of the profits up from the initial concession of 16% in an agreement in 1901 with an individual (William Knox D’Arcy) whose company was later taken over by the British government, as the demand for oil escalated in the early part of the century.

It is in this atmosphere that a fiery lawyer who was eloquently and passionately embarrassing the Shah-appointed government by accusing it of selling the country’s resources to the British, became prime minister. In 1951, the Shah was forced to appoint this French- and

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Swiss-educated Qajar Prince named Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh as Prime Minister of Iran. He swiftly nationalized the country’s oil and closed the British embassy for fear that the British would attempt to overthrow him. Winston Churchill was the British Prime Minister at the time and he tried to use his influence with President Truman to convince him to overthrow Mossadegh in the second half of 1952, using the American embassy as a base of operations. Truman refused to intervene, but his successor, President Eisenhower’s fear of communists proved to be invaluable to Churchill’s interests. Kinzer writes,

Britain now had no intelligence agents in Iran [October 1952]... and the Truman administration remained implacably against the idea of intervention. Plans for a coup were at a standstill. That was fine with Truman, who believed that the British were at least as much to blame for the “awful situation” as was Mossadegh. “We tried,” he lamented in a handwritten letter to Henry Grady, his former ambassador in Tehran, “to get the block-headed British to have their oil company make a fair deal with Iran. No, no, they could not do that. They knew all about how to handle it – we didn’t according to them.”

British leaders might have despaired at this point, but they saw a bright glimmer of hope on the horizon. A presidential election was forthcoming in the United States, and Truman was not running for re-election. The Republican candidate to replace him, Dwight Eisenhower, was running on a vigorously anticommunist platform. Eisenhower’s rhetoric greatly encouraged Churchill and [British Foreign Secretary] Eden. The moment he was elected, they called off their effort to influence Truman and shifted their focus to the incoming team.\textsuperscript{61}

Churchill made Mossadegh out to be a communist sympathizer, and his nationalization of Iranian oil was all the evidence that was needed. Iran did indeed have an active communist party at the time, the \textit{Tudeh}, but Mossadegh was certainly not a member, nor was he a sympathizer. Nationalization of the oil had been the cornerstone of his popularity, and he refused to back away from it. With the Eisenhower administration’s approval, the CIA was able to overthrow

\textsuperscript{61} Kinzer, pp.147-148
Mossadegh in August 1953 and restore the Shah to his throne in what would be the “first American coup” in a foreign country. It was called Operation Ajax.62

This marked the beginning of anti-Americanism in Iran, since the CIA ousted a highly popular Prime Minister and stunted the growth of a healthy parliamentary system by restoring a new politically repressive dictator. It is also interesting to note the means with which the Americans brought about this coup, using oil and the media. The Western world, led by America, imposed an embargo on Iranian oil that crippled the Prime Minister’s ability to run a country that relies heavily on this resource for revenue.

In 2000, the New York Times was able to uncover much of what happened in terms of the manipulation of the Iranian media in declassified CIA documents,

... [CIA] officers orchestrating the Iran coup worked directly with royalist Iranian military officers, handpicked the Prime Minister’s replacement, sent a stream of envoys to bolster the Shah’s courage, directed a campaign of bombings by Iranians posing as members of the Communist Party and planted articles and editorial cartoons in newspapers.

The Times goes on to say,

In one instance... the CIA was apparently able to use contacts at the Associated Press to put on the news wire a statement from Tehran about royal decrees that the CIA itself had written. But mostly, the agency relied on less direct means to exploit the media.

The article was one of several planted press reports that, when reprinted in Tehran fed the ‘war of nerves’ against Iran’s Prime Minister, Mohammad Mossadegh.

On the morning of August 19 [1953], several Tehran papers published the long-awaited decrees, and soon pro-Shah crowds were building in the streets.63

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62 For an excellent account of the rule and overthrow of Dr. Mossadegh, see All the Shah’s Men, by New York Times journalist Stephen Kinzer.

63 New York Times, 2000
The crowds that were forming were the result of the CIA paying off some factory owners to order their workers into the streets. The pro-Shah placards and leaflets that they held were created by the CIA.

An interesting twist to this story is the fact that the leading cleric at the time, Ayatollah Kashani, initially supported Mossadegh, but later became one of the staunchest supporters of the reinstatement of the Shah. Kermit Roosevelt, the CIA agent entrusted with engineering the coup against the Prime Minister had sent the Ayatollah $10,000 the day before the coup. With regards to the religious sectors of society, the clerical class followed Kashani and threw its full support behind the Shah.

Mossadegh, however, was never a republican in the sense that he never sought to abolish the monarchy and institute a republic. A quote from Stephen Kinzer’s book illustrates this well,

[At the height of his power,] Mossadegh’s support was now so broad and fervent that he could probably have dismissed the Shah, proclaimed the end of the Pahlavi dynasty, and established a republic with himself as president if he had wished. Instead he sent the Shah a peace offering. It was a copy of the Koran with a handwritten inscription: “Consider me an enemy of the Koran if I take any action against the constitution, or if I accept the presidency in case others nullify the constitution and change the form of our country’s government.”

After an assassination attempt on the Shah’s life, his fear of opposition grew rapidly. He crushed both the liberal opposition and the communist Tudeh party. He was grateful to the Americans for the help and would from then on cling to them as his greatest ally. Anti-Shah sentiment, borne out of political repression on his part, would from then on be linked to anti-Americanism, culminating in the hostage taking at the US embassy in 1979.

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64 Kinzer, p.178
65 Ibid., p.141
1953 – 1979 A Modernizing Absolute Monarchy

After the fall of Mossadegh and another assassination attempt on his life, Mohammad Reza Shah began to rule with much more of an iron fist, creating an internal intelligence agency (SAVAK) and frequently jailing or sending into exile political opponents. His interests, however, lay in bringing Iran closer to the West, both technologically and culturally. He often gave scholarships to students to study abroad, particularly in London, Paris and in the United States. His admiration of France was quite obvious, as it was commonly known that he was more comfortable speaking in French than in Persian.66 France therefore became the preferred destination for Iranian intelligentsia, both the groups in exile and those who were encouraged to go abroad by the Shah. Most famously, the intellectual anti-Shah revolutionary, Ali Shariati, studied in France and was influenced by French Marxism and socialism as well as by the Algerian revolution. Ironically, he was able to do so through a scholarship given to him by the Shah, though he would later be one of the intellectuals who would passionately fight for the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of a clerical regime.67

The Shah, like his father before him, then embarked on a second modernization campaign. It eventually became evident to all but the Shah himself that the drastic changes that were taking place in Iranian society were too rapid for the population to absorb. His land reform programme, called the ‘White Revolution’, infuriated the aristocratic and the clerical classes because it meant that their lands would be redistributed. The modernization and liberalization of the country also angered the clerics and religious peasantry because it meant an influx of Western culture. The ‘White Revolution’ meant that women would be allowed to vote and hold jobs, big cities would be built, and a more secular society would be created. Leftists were

67 Daniel, p.163
outraged at the level of persecution the Shah had inflicted upon them. Students, intellectuals and benefactors of his modernization programme craved the democratization that they thought ought to have accompanied economic development.

The parallel between this period of modernization in Iran and Samuel P. Huntington's examinations of modernization theory are remarkable. Huntington posits that rapid modernization may lead to political decay if there is a lack of a strong institutional foundation. While the modernization programme of the Shah had a strong institution in the monarchy, all other institutions were weakened between the overthrow of Mossadegh in 1953 and the revolution in 1979. The judiciary, the Parliament, and even the executive in the form of the Prime Minister and his cabinet were all subject to the dictates of the Shah himself. Many analysts point to the abolition of the party system in 1975 in favour of a one-party state under the banner of the Rastakhiz (Revival) Party as the single largest mistake made by the Shah. The reason for this is that that particular move made it extremely difficult for intellectuals such as Prime Minister Hoveyda to continue to defend the modernization programme of the regime. As Huntington predicted, rapid modernization coupled with a weakening of institutions resulted in political decay.

In the end, they all united with the single objective of overthrowing him. They had very different goals and hopes for the outcome of the revolution, as can be seen from the purges that took place in the aftermath of the revolution of all but the conservative and religious activists. Mohammad Reza Shah's rule was not, however, marked by the polity-dominance secularization that his father had vigorously enacted. His reign was tolerant with regard to religion in that it did not force the veil on anyone, nor did it persecute members of the clergy, and in return they did not advocate overthrowing him. Although those who did advocate his overthrow, such as

68 Ibid., p.158
Ayatollah Khomeini, were either sent into exile or imprisoned. Political Islamists were as free and as oppressed as other political organizations, except for the communist Tudeh, which the Shah would treat much more violently since he regarded the communists as a real threat to his regime.

The Shah’s emphasis on Persian identity and dismissal of Islamic tendencies was a result of the fact that he personally believed that Islamism was fundamentally incompatible with modernity. Had Dr. Mossadegh been able to remain in power longer and assert himself, he would have returned the country to a constitutional monarchy that would have been more likely to be able to withstand the pressures of modernization by allowing Islamist leaders to run for office and then be thrown out electorally if and when they were shown to be incompetent. Had Churchill and Eisenhower not intervened, Iran could have been part of the wave of countries that would embrace democracy in the early post-war period, although the possibility of a military coup was also strong. Had the British and Russians not interfered earlier in the century, Iran would likely either have remained a constitutional monarchy under the Qajars or could have become a free republic under President Reza Khan. Foreign interference therefore played an important role in precipitating the advent of the theocracy long before the revolution occurred because of the destabilizing effect that it had on both the indigenous monarchy and the burgeoning democratic movements of the 1900’s and the 1950’s.

In 1978, the media again emerged as a revolutionary force in Iran. After the coup in 1953, the Shah decided never to allow such a thing to happen again. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was the leader of the movement to overthrow the Shah, but he was not alone. The communist factions, Islamic communists, as well as secular republicans who claimed to be Mossadegh’s ideological heirs, collaborated with Khomeini in bringing down the Shah. One of
Mohammad Reza Shah’s most famous quotes was: “In 10-12 years we shall reach the quality of
life enjoyed by you Europeans.” The Shah of Iran, egged on by American pressure, feared the
communist forces in his country far more than the religious ones. After all, at the time, there was
no precedent in the world of Islamic theocracy and he thought that the clerics were harmless. He
ruthlessly crushed the communists who had organized themselves with the backing of the Soviet
Union. The clerics, fearing an assassination of Khomeini by the Shah’s intelligence unit,
SAVAK, promoted him to the level of Ayatollah, making it virtually politically impossible to kill
him. The Shah then forced Khomeini into exile, first to Turkey, then to Iraq.

Ironically, from Iraq he began using the modern technique of a media blitz against the
modernizing Shah. He would record audio cassettes that were smuggled to mosques all over Iran
by pilgrims who were visiting the Shiite holy sites in Najaf and Karbala (98% of Iranian
Muslims are Shiite). Secular republican groups within the country began their anti-Shah
campaign by passing leaflets in the streets. Graffiti and anti-Shah posters began popping up in
every city, especially in the capital. Khomeini began calling for demonstrations and strikes
coinciding with holy Islamic days through his audio cassettes and radio station from Iraq.

From the time of Khomeini’s exile... not only did preaching, publishing and other
activities increase. Vividly coloured posters, many centering on images of
Khomeini, circulated from 1977 on. There was also a stream of tape-recorded
messages, short missives and longer tracts that trickled and then flowed into Iran
from Khomeini, and then burgeoned inside Iran, until an avalanche of these small
media helped to push the Shah away.  

During the Shah’s era, the TV was state controlled (only 3 or 4 channels), but it would
show foreign movies and programmes, as long as they were not political. Iran did not have a TV

69 Arabshahi, Payam, “THE IRANIAN: Revolution, chronology of events” February 11, 2001 from Iranian.com,
“The Shah, in roundtable discussion with French TV”
70 Sreberni-Mohammadi, Annabelle, Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture and the Iranian
Revolution, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994, p.90
culture at the time, people thought of it more as a source of entertainment, not news. The radio was by far more important in terms of political activity. The Soviet Union had set up a communist radio station in Azerbaijan called “Sedaye Melli Iran” (The voice of the people of Iran). BBC radio from London was the fairest out of the radio broadcasts and was widely listened to as the domestic radio was state owned and only broadcast government propaganda. Magazines and newspapers were relatively free, *Time Magazine* and *Newsweek* were readily available even at times of crisis. The internal radio stations were heavily fortified and under constant SAVAK surveillance. All radio staff had to be cleared through SAVAK before they would be able to work. The Shah had learned in 1953 that if there were ever any sort of coup or revolution against him, the radio stations would be the first thing that would be taken. The riots and demonstrations in Iran in the late 1970’s were broadcast on BBC radio as well as on Sedaye Melli Iran and this had the effect of amplifying the unrest. People began to realize what was happening through the foreign media and poured into the streets to vent their anger at the Shah’s regime. Elton Daniel describes those final days in late 1978 in the following way:

> The oil industry, and consequently government revenues, had been completely disrupted by strikes. The main bazaar of Tehran was closed for over a month. Electric service was often blacked out by strikes. Air and rail transport were undependable. Imported goods were left waiting at the borders when customs officials refused to work... Army troops began to defect in large numbers, others refused orders to fire on demonstrators, and some turned their weapons on their own officers and royalists. The loss of confidence by foreign countries in the Shah’s survival was palpable, and even American officials had begun to rationalize why his fall might not be such a calamity after all. It was no longer a question of if the Shah would go, but when and how.  

> As was shown earlier, although the movement against the Shah was united as to its goal of overthrowing the monarchy, it was disparate in what type of society it wanted in a post-monarchical era. Many people represented by the various liberal and leftist factions that had

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71 Monsef, John, Personal interview with the author, March 30, 2002  
72 Daniel, p.172
supported the overthrow of the Shah thought that the result of the revolution would be a republic that would allow political pluralism and freedom. Sandra Mackey describes the scene:

To the pious, Khomeini was [1st Imam and son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad] Ali. To the secularists, he was Mossadegh. The same imagery extended to the goals each group sought in political revolt. The secularists saw an end to Pahlavi kingship and national subjugation as constituting the revolution. But the pious regarded the abolition of kingship and the Western presence in Iran as only the beginning of the revolution of Islam.73

The Shah reacted to the riots by forcing Saddam Hussein to expel Khomeini from Iraq. He then relocated to Paris. In Paris, Khomeini was at the epicentre of Western media, and the coverage that he received made matters within Iran much worse. In the end, the Shah fled his homeland and died in Cairo in 1980. History will look at him as a man that sought to modernize and secularize his country, not in the way that Atatürk did in Turkey, or as his father did earlier on, by aggressively seeking to wipe Islam out of the country. Rather, he sought to base his secular and modern society on rationalism and let religion fade into the background on its own by exposing the people to Western culture. His political repression was out of fear of communist revolution and in the end he did not order his mighty army to crush the uprisings that sought to overthrow him. Instead, he chose to flee rather than spill his compatriots' blood.74

Farmanfarmaian describes the Shah's decision in the following way:

“It is useless to fight,” said [General] Azhari. “Though a few well-trained men could have stemmed the disturbances in the past, the Shah has forbidden the police and army to interfere. It is now too late, and hour by hour the rioters are taking over.”75

The Shah’s high command... was still behind him. In an effort to find a solution the military’s top generals – Kamal Habibollahi, Gholam Ali Oveysi, Nader Jehanbani, and others – went to the Shah and proposed that he retire to Kish

73 Mackey, p.282
74 For information about the Shah’s personal life and time in exile, see An Enduring Love: My Life with the Shah: A Memoir, by Farah Pahlavi, New York: Miramax Books, 2004. Farah Pahlavi is the former Empress of Iran and Mohammad Reza Shah’s third wife. She is also the mother of the Crown Prince, Reza Pahlavi.
75 Farmanfarmaian, p.448
Island and let them handle the situation. They suggested strong military action: a clampdown on all the uprisings — to hell with the blatter from Washington — and a complete cleanup of the streets. They even suggested bombing [the Holy city of] Qom — a plan that may, in fact, have worked. The Shah shuddered and turned them down. In his heart of hearts he was not a fighter.76

Abbas Milani also alludes to this,77

The most persistent advocate of an ironfisted policy, however, was Parviz Sabeti. He consistently suggested that the government should first confront and suppress the demonstrations, and then gradually allow a loyal and serious opposition to have an open hand in criticizing the system and members of the royal family. In April 1978, using [former Prime Minister] Hoveyda as his emissary, Sabeti asked the Shah to give his office free reign to quell the rebellion. The Shah had been interested enough to ask for a specific proposal. Sabeti had helped prepare a list of fifteen hundred people whose arrest, he believed, would put a quick end to the disturbances. The list was sent to the Shah, who brooded over it for a day and then ordered that only those whose names he had marked should be arrested. By the time the list came back, there were only about three hundred names on it.78

In the memoirs that the Shah wrote before his death in exile, Answer to History, the Shah himself discusses his dilemma by writing,

My generals urged me often enough to use force to re-establish law and order in the streets. I know today that had I then ordered my troops to shoot, the price in blood would have been a hundred times less severe than that which my people have paid since the establishment of the so-called Islamic Republic. But even that fact does not resolve my fundamental dilemma — a sovereign may not save his throne by shedding his countrymen’s blood.79

Elton Daniel examines the Shah’s behaviour in his final days,

Like many of the Shah’s other actions throughout the crisis, those in November 1978 were difficult to comprehend and virtually irrelevant. His constant mixing of the iron fist with the velvet glove approach communicated weakness and confusion as well as insincerity. His shuffling of personnel and arrest of longtime

76 Ibid., p.451
77 I have chosen to use two different authors for quotes to support the claim that the Shah chose not to crush his own people because of the backgrounds of the two authors. Farmanfarmaian was appointed as Iran’s ambassador to Venezuela by the Shah and although he was a Qajar prince, he may be biased in favour of the Shah. Milani, on the other hand, was a member of the communist Tudeh party and had been arrested by the Shah’s intelligence service, SAVAK. He therefore has a more critical view of the Shah which is apparent throughout his biography of Prime Minister Hoveyda. He has since renounced communism and speaks frequently to the opposition media in exile as a historian and an analyst.
78 Milani, 2001, p.291
supporters and associates was matched by the release of hundreds of political prisoners, including prominent clerical opponents like Ayatollah Taleqani. Thus people who might have helped the Shah languished in jail, where they would fall easy victims to retaliation after the revolution, while enemies were turned loose to fan the flames of the insurrection. Astonishingly, such obvious measures as stopping the salaries of bureaucrats, state employees, and workers in the national oil company, whose strikes were paralyzing the government and crippling the economy, were not taken. All in all, it was a remarkable lesson in how not to deal with mass political protest.

Many explanations for the Shah’s puzzling behaviour have since been offered, apart from the usual assortment of conspiracy theories. It eventually became known that he was suffering from a terminal cancer, so depression or medication may have clouded his judgment. It is possible that his subordinates concealed the truth about the full magnitude of the disorders from him.80

Aftermath of the Revolution

“When the demon departs, the angel shall arrive”

—Hafez, 14th Century Persian Poet81

When Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran in February of 1979, he was heralded by nearly all factions of society as the man who overthrew the dictatorship. However, he quickly set about purging the country of those who did not seek to establish the rule of Islam as the sovereign law in Iran. Former revolutionaries now refer to those purges as the moment when the revolution was hijacked.

...The forces of change had only one thing in common – destruction of the Pahlavi dynasty. Beyond that, no two groups agreed on the very source of government – legitimacy and authority. The extreme left of the political spectrum wanted communism, the Khomeini right wanted Islamic government. The rest of Iranians more or less cut the umbilical cord to their monarchical history without contemplating its replacement.82

Immediately following the revolution, many of the leftists and intellectuals realized that they had replaced a modernizing dictator common in developing nations in the mid-20th century

80 Daniel, pp.170-171
81 The line following the quote from Hafez in Sandra Mackey’s book is “But few asked what the angel would bring.” Mackey, p.284
82 Ibid., p.284
with a medieval religious one. Many fled, many remained and were killed or thrown in prison. As the saying goes, revolutions devour their children. The last prime minister the Shah appointed was a difficult appointment because the man had fought the Shah on every front for the previous decade. Shahpour Bakhtiar was no monarchist and his appointment was the Shah’s way of attempting to appease the people. Bakhtiar attempted to embrace the revolutionary demands of Khomeini, but the latter refused even to meet with him. Bakhtiar resigned, clandestinely fled to France and had his head sliced off with a knife and placed on a table in his office in Paris in 1991.\(^{83}\)

Khomeini then appointed his own prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, who filled the cabinet with such members of the Iran Freedom Movement (which will be discussed later) as Ebrahim Yazdi (the first foreign minister of the Islamic Republic), members of the National Front (Dr. Mossadegh’s old party, of which Bakhtiar was also a member) and Darioush Forouhar (the first minister of labour of the Islamic Republic). Yazdi is today still in Iran, though his party has been outlawed, he is frequently thrown in prison and released and most recently faced charges of threatening national security and possessing illegal arms.\(^{84}\) Forouhar and his wife were found dead in his home on November 22, 1998, “…having been stabbed repeatedly and according to several reports left in pools of blood with daggers in their hearts and the bodies facing Mecca.”\(^{85}\) As for Bazargan, he died of old age in January 1995, but in one of his last statements, he “spoke of the suppression of political freedom and of ‘widespread, corruption into the very heart of the judiciary.’ He noted in an interview published in the West, ‘they never allowed this nation to

\(^{83}\) Daniel, pp.182-183, 233
\(^{84}\) BBC News, “Top Iran Dissident Returns Home” April 20, 2002
\(^{85}\) Daniel, p.242
breathe. All efforts to restore some liberty were crushed at the inception'. Next was the first
President of the Islamic Republic, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, and his foreign minister, Sadeq
Ghotbzadeh. Bani-Sadr was forced to flee Iran in July 1981 for France because he was branded
as being too liberal. He still lives in a Paris suburb and has heavy security around his home.
Ghotbzadeh was convicted of working against Khomeini in 1982 and executed.

These were all mildly Islamist revolutionaries who suffered in the prisons of the Shah.
They had fought for decades to destroy the monarchy and were all in the end destroyed by the
revolution. What is important is that they were the predecessors of the current reform movement.
Aside from Bakhtiar, none of them were liberals. The liberals were executed or exiled
immediately following the revolution. These were people who believed in the Islamic Republic,
as do today's embattled reformists. The communists and Islamist-communists also met the same
fate as the liberals. The main communist Tudeh party, which had been struggling against the
monarchy for nearly a century, was completely wiped out. After an initial honeymoon, the
Islamist-Communist People's Mujahideen also fell out of favour with Khomeini and its members
were either executed or exiled to Iraq, where from they would stage military attacks on Iran until
the recent US invasion of that country. What was left out of the wide-ranging spectrum of
political actors who had united to overthrow the Shah after the purges of the early 1980's was the
Islamist right, the conservative orthodoxy surrounding Ayatollah Khomeini. Just before the
revolution, there were monarchists, liberals, communists, Islamist-communists, moderate
Islamists, and hardline Islamists. All but the last were decimated.

As for the newly created state, again Sandra Mackey summarizes the situation succinctly:

Acknowledging the Iranians' twentieth-century expectation of constitutional
government, Khomeini postulated that Islamic government is constitutional. But

86 Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights Developments, Iran" 1995
http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/WR96/MIDEAST-03.htm
rather than legislating laws according to the will of the majority of the electorate, Islamic government adheres to the standards and demands specified in the Koran and in the traditions of the Prophet. Because of its divine nature, the mandate of Islamic government exceeds that of secular government. Thus the clerical guardians of the community in Khomeini’s Islamic government are responsible for the whole society, in contradiction to secular governments, which the ayatollah held are concerned only with the social order. According to Khomeini, secular government leaves an individual alone as long as he is socially harmless. “What he wants to do in the privacy of his home, drinking wine, …gambling, or other such dirty deeds, the government has nothing to do with him. Only if he comes out screaming, then he would be prosecuted, because that disturbs the peace… Islam and divine governments are not like that. These [governments] have commandments for everybody, everywhere, at any place, in any condition. If a person were to commit an immoral dirty deed right next to his house, Islamic governments have business with him.”

The promises made by Khomeini are in effect the reversal of all the functional differentiation that had been achieved by the two Pahlavi kings. The earlier section of the quote that pertains to the source of legitimacy and authority of the government is the opposite of what Glasner called ‘desacralization’ and rationalism, where science replaces religion as the basis for explanation. Furthermore, efforts were made in the aftermath of the revolution to destroy the pre-Islamic Persian half of Iranian identity that had been so dear to the Shah.

In a reversal of the Pahlavis, the new regime tried to eradicate vestiges of Iran’s pre-Islamic culture. Ayatollah Khomeini attacked Ferdowsi, discouraged the use of Persian first names [in favour of Islamic ones], and hinted at an end to the observance of No Ruz by expressing the hope that in the future the only holiday celebrated would be the Prophet’s birthday. Others took aim at the physical symbols of Persia. In Shiraz, zealots set out on the back of bulldozers intent on knocking down the Persian ruins at Persepolis. That group was dissuaded by historical preservationists, but others damaged a wall of the Apadana etched with the image of Ahura Mazda. The large Sasanian reliefs at Biston carved in 250 B.C. survived only because an ingenious guard convinced the crowd that one of

87 Mackey, pp.286-287
88 Many Persian first names are taken from Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh and are names of characters or kings in his mythical Persian stories. Some are names of pre-Islamic Persian historical figures such as Cyrus or Darius. Islamic names are those that are common in other Islamic countries and are usually connected to some prominent figure in Islam, such as Mohammad, or Ali.
89 The ancient Persian New Year is celebrated during the spring equinox. Although it was not completely outlawed, parts of it, such as the fire festival were banned until recently.
90 Ahura Mazda is the name of God, according to the Zoroastrian religion. Apadana is the name of the great hall in ancient Persian palaces.
the figures in stone represented the man who married the daughter of [3rd Imam] Hussein.  

1980 – 1988 Iran-Iraq War

The Road to Algiers

During the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Shah of Iran accompanied his modernization programme with a vast campaign of industrialization and militarization that made Iran, if not hegemonic, then definitely a major power in the region. During the same period, Iraq suffered from coups and counter coups that left the country politically in disarray and economically unproductive (though compared to today, Iraq was quite wealthy at the time). It was in this context that the Shah decided in April, 1969 to demand new negotiations over control of the vital Arvand River. When Iraq refused, Iran abrogated the treaty of 1937. Announcing this in the Iranian Parliament, Iran's deputy minister of foreign affairs declared: “On the basis of established international principles, the 1937 Frontier Treaty is considered null and void ... the Imperial Government does not recognize, along the entire length of Shatt al-Arab any principle except the established principle of international law, i.e. the median of base line....”

Iran decided to increase the pressure on the Iraqi government by helping Kurdish guerrilla fighters in Northern Iraq in uprisings that would drain Iraq both militarily and economically. Since sporadic border clashes had occurred, Iraq decided to take its case to the UN Security Council. The Security Council helped to broker what became the 1975 Algiers agreement.

On March 6, 1975, Saddam Hussein (he was Vice Chairman of the Revolution Command Council at the time) and the Shah met to discuss the ensuing treaty. The terms that resulted from

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91 Mackey, pp.298-299
92 The Persians call it the Arvand Rud (Arvand River); the Arabs call it the Shatt al Arab. It is 130 miles wide, where the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun rivers meet and flow into the Persian Gulf. It is an important port of trade for both countries and marks the southern boundary between Iraq and Iran.
the treaty were: first, Iran would cease its support for the Kurdish rebellion; second, the frontier between Iraq and Iran would be adjusted, including the following of the thalweg along the entire length of the Shatt al Arab; third, the propaganda war between the two countries would cease, along with Iraq’s active opposition to Iran’s occupation of three islands (Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunbs) and any interference in each other’s internal affairs. This pressure was also the basis on which Saddam Hussein would make the decision to expel Khomeini to France.

**Pointless War**

Pouncing on the disarray within the military caused by the revolution, on September 17, 1980 Iraq abrogated the treaty, claiming that Iran had refused to abide by the stipulations of the Algiers Treaty, that the Shatt al Arab river had been Arab throughout history, as were the three islands held by Iran and that the Iraqi authority over the river should be restored. Five days later, the Iraqi army crossed the border.

In making his normative claims, Saddam Hussein emphasized the Arabic nature of Islam in his propaganda campaign and called for a second Qadisiya, which was the battle in 637 CE where the Zoroastrian Sasanian Persians were defeated by the Muslim Arabs. Oddly, the Islamic government in Iran also laid claim to that battle, saying that it represented the victory of Muslims involved in a jihad or holy war (represented by the Islamic Republic) against infidels (represented by the secular Iraqi regime).

Iraq gained a sizeable swath of Iranian territory during the first couple of years of the war. The purges of the revolution coupled with the lack of American spare parts had considerably weakened the Iranian armed forces. Vital intelligence was provided by the Americans about the locations of Iranian airbases and command centers. By 1982, the Iranians were able to regroup, resist, and were finally able to force Saddam to withdraw his troops from
Iranian territory. He then offered a ceasefire which Ayatollah Khomeini rejected, claiming that Iran would not stop fighting until Saddam Hussein’s regime was toppled (this, of course, would not be the last time Saddam would be the target of regime change). Iran then went on the offensive, attacking Iraq all along the border. The international community feared a total victory for Iran would mean the spread of fundamentalism throughout the Muslim world and therefore came to the aid of Saddam Hussein, providing him with chemical weapons and other hardware that would help him fend off the Iranian invasion. The chemicals were used on soldiers and civilians alike. On the Iranian side, human waves of five to fifteen year old boys were used to clear mine fields for tanks and more useful military units. Iran captured the oil-rich Majnoon islands in 1984 and the Faw peninsula in 1986. Both sides began regular bombing of the other’s capital in 1985. Iraq repelled the Iranian attacks and finally forced Iran to accept a UN-mandated ceasefire in July, 1988. Throughout the war, Iran was supplied by Syria, Libya, North Korea, China, as well as by covert arms deals with the U.S. and Israel. Iraq was supported openly by the Soviet Union, the United States, most of the Western world, as well as the rest of the Arab world.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, he sent a message to Iran that he would accept the terms of the 1975 Algiers agreement. To reiterate, in the end no changes occurred in the border demarcations and over a million people died.

1988 – 1997

The war with Iraq had a net de-secularizing effect because of the indoctrination of the various military units formed after the revolution. The extent of the ideological units encompassed in the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij voluntary militia eclipsed even the regular army. In the face of nightly bombing raids on residential areas many people sought solace in Islam. After the war, veterans became stalwarts of the regime and would be promoted
to high posts in government. The de-secularization, however, was personal, not political. People became more religious in their personal lives, but this did not necessarily mean that their support for political Islam had increased.

Nationalist fervour in the traditional sense did not increase as a result of the war. On the Iranian side, the war was fought to defend Islam against the “infidel” regime of Saddam Hussein, not to defend the Iranian nation against the Arab aggressor. In this sense, those who fought on the frontlines became supporters of the regime (of course there are exceptions to this, but as can be seen by the involvement of veterans in the regime, they are for the most part loyal to its ideology). Some high-ranking military officers who had managed to escape Iran in the turmoil of the revolution initially set up bases in Turkey where they attempted to assemble loyalist soldiers and could then attack the country in order to oust the clerics. The onset of the war with Iraq appealed to their patriotic and nationalist senses and they decided that they could not attack their country while it was at war with its neighbour.

In 1989, after the war with Iraq, Khomeini died and was replaced by Hojatoleslam (mid-ranking cleric) Khamenei (he was promoted at that time to Ayatollah), who had replaced Bani-Sadr as president. The next president was Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was a social conservative, but a pragmatist on the economic and diplomatic fronts. He sought to open up the economy by privatizing some of the industries that the state had seized at the time of the revolution. He also attempted to remove some of the regulations that hindered economic growth and forge new ties with European nations, most notably, Germany. When his second term ended in 1997, he used his influence on the Council of Guardians94 to persuade them to allow another

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94 The Council of Guardians acts as an upper house that vets and has veto power over all legislation passed by the Parliament. It also has the power to disallow any candidates running for the Parliament or the Presidency. Its duty is to ensure that all legislation and all candidates are in accordance with Islam and the principles of the revolution as well as to the Supreme Leader.
mid-ranking cleric/librarian named Mohammad Khatami to run for President. He did this
because he had longstanding problems with the conservative candidate endorsed by the Supreme
Leader, who was the Speaker of the Parliament at the time, Ali-Akbar Nateq-Nouri. Khatami
was allowed to run and campaigned on the insistence that he would ensure that all branches of
government would adhere to the rule of law. He never promised to alter the Islamic Republic
into a more secular state, nor would he attempt to alter the powers of the dictatorial Supreme
Leader in any way.95 He was very articulate, and ran a Western-style campaign, complete with
concerts, rallies and stump speeches. Nateq-Nouri looked stiff and highly conservative.

We have thus far seen that the 20th century brought with it Reza Shah’s compulsory
secularization programme, his son’s moderate secularism and dismissal of the threat of the
clergy, and the reversal of all the secularizing achievements of the past in the aftermath of the
revolution. Although the pre-revolutionary programmes of secularization were primarily
institutional in nature, we shall now turn to the agents and manifestations of secularization that
have occurred in other levels of society since the revolution.

95 The Supreme Leader has the following powers (only Khomeini and Khamenei have held the position):
• Deciding the overall policies of the country after consultation with the Council for Determination of
  Exigencies - the leader has the final say;
• Overseeing proper enforcement of policies; Ordering referenda;
• Appointing, dismissing or accepting the resignation of Islamic canonist members of the Guardian Council,
  head of the judiciary, director of the Radio and Television Organisation, chief of army general staff, the
  commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and the commanders of the armed and security forces;
• General command of the armed forces;
• Declaring war and peace and ordering mobilisation of forces;
• Resolving disputes between the heads of the three branches of the state and regulating the relationship
  between them;
• Signing the decree endorsing the president on his election;
• Dismissing the president in the national interest, should a ruling of the Supreme Court find him in breach
  of his duties, or a vote of Majles disqualify him;
• Solving those problems which cannot be solved by ordinary means, through the Council for Determination
  of Exigencies.

Source: Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Canada, “Leadership in the I.R. of Iran,”
http://www.salamiran.org/IranInfo/State/Leadership/leadership.html
V. Iran 1997 – Present

Rather than use a chronological approach, this section will look at the various agents of secularization and the government’s reactions to them. The first part will be about the reformists and Shirin Ebadi, followed by the opposition forces, religious minorities, the media, political unrest in recent years, the parliamentary elections of 2004, the human rights situation in Iran, and economic modernization. The issues discussed in this section are relevant to the theoretical aspects of secularization examined earlier in that they are manifestations of a deep-rooted demand for secularism on a political level expressed in the form of dissent. These particular issues have been selected for analysis because they provide insight into the state of affairs concerning the agents who are acting out this demand for political secularism.

As for the supporters of the conservative factions led by the Supreme Leader, they can be found in the ranks of the Revolutionary Guards, the volunteer Basij paramilitary forces, the bazaaris (bazaar merchants), and all those who have a vested economic interest in sustaining the status quo, including the wealthy extended families of the clerics themselves. The bazaaris are part of the traditional middle class that has always maintained ties to the clergy. Their vested interest in the revolution stems from the status that they had lost under the modernization programme of the Shah. They believed, at the time of the revolution, “that a revolutionary government influenced by the clergy would restore the traditional economy and the bazaaris’ place in it.”96 The clerics, however, are not exactly a monolithic group either. A ‘tongue in cheek’ expression among Iranians, which may not necessarily be accurate, is that it is those clerics who have been snubbed out of the spoils of wealth and power who make up the ranks of the reformists.

96 Mackey, p.281
The Reformists

At the time of the revolution, there was widespread support for the overthrow of the monarchy. While it is debatable whether the majority of the people desired the establishment of an Islamic republic, that they were united behind the cause of a revolution is indisputable. Intellectuals, students, journalists, liberals, radicals, Marxists and Islamists alike joined together in an unprecedented coalition against the Shah. The people celebrated his downfall in an atmosphere of jubilation, thinking that they had done away with dictatorship. Although the 98% approval rate in the referendum on the new constitution is likely exaggerated, there was widespread support for a change from the old system. Incidentally, the referendum was set up in such a way as to limit the options of those who participated. The question on the ballot was, “should an Islamic republic be established? Yes, or no?” Many people were under the impression that answering ‘no’ would have meant that the monarchy would be re-established. Khomeini interpreted the resounding success of the referendum and the jubilation of the people as a mandate to establish an Islamic state. Given the false dilemma presented in the referendum and the divisions apparent in the revolutionary forces as represented by all the parties involved, that the masses wanted the clergies themselves to run the government in a state founded on the enforcement of literally interpreted Islamic laws may not necessarily be true. The following quotes suggest that there was some resistance to the Islamic state that Khomeini was trying to create:

In August 1979, the liberals and the leftists chose to stand and fight rather than abandon their place in Iran’s new order. Ten thousand protestors massed at the gates of the University of Tehran to protest new restrictions on the press that essentially ended the Prague Spring of the Iranian Revolution. The mullahs’ street toughs dispersed them and Khomeini issued a stark warning to his challengers: “When we want we can throw you into the dustbin of death.” Thus as the summer of 1979 ended, Khomeini’s version of the revolution took shape.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.292}
Among six grand ayatollahs, not one totally concurred with Khomeini on the key issues of Islamic government, including the whole theory of the supreme spiritual guide. Opposition within the clergy, centering around the concern over the corrupting effect of political power, dug so deep and sparked so much emotion that followers of rival ayatollahs clashed with supporters of Khomeini in December 1979 and January 1980.98

During the 1981 power struggle between the leftist President Bani-Sadr and the right wing clergy,

...The President called for a national referendum to decide the issue of who controlled the government. That constituted Bani-Sadr’s final act. In a contest between a Paris-educated intellectual and the clergy, Khomeini would decide the outcome. Responding to a June rally that sent two hundred thousand secularists into Tehran’s streets, and other demonstrations in Qom, Tabriz, Shiraz, Ahvaz, and Bandar Abbas, Khomeini, the fāqih [Supreme Leader], thundere (the day I feel danger to the Islamic Republic, I will cut everybody’s hand off. I will do to you what I did to Mohammad Reza [Shah].” Then he stripped Bani-Sadr of the title of commander in chief.99

Members of the Tudeh and Mujahideen parties (Marxist and Islamist-Marxist, respectively) were rounded up and executed. Liberals and intellectuals were crushed, universities were closed for two years, and the press was completely Islamized. Virtually all opposition to the Islamic regime was decimated. Even some of the Islamists of those days were horrified. It is those people who make up today’s reformists. They are Islamists who have become distraught with the excesses of the regime. Some are alumni of the group of students that took American hostages at the US embassy in the aftermath of the revolution. Others are people who were given low-ranking posts early on. What they share is commitment to the Islamic regime in Iran. They differ with the hardliners in that they are opposed to administering the Islamic Republic on an ad hoc basis. They prefer the continuation of the Islamic Republic within the framework of Islamic law.

98 Ibid., p.296
99 Ibid., p.300
This begs the question, if there is widespread discontent within the populace, why then did people vote resoundingly for reformists in presidential and parliamentary elections in 1997, 2000 and 2001? The answer can be found among an often used theory in political science and in economics: rational choice. Since the Council of Guardians screens candidates before elections based on their Islamic credentials, no liberals or secularists are ever allowed to run. The reformists want society to be based on law and order and they are Islamists, therefore the Council of Guardians allows them to run. The people of Iran realized that by electing the reformists, they may be able to do away with unelected bodies such as the Council of Guardians, thereby clearing the path for liberals and secularists to run. Some even hoped that the reformists themselves may fight the conservative establishment to give greater freedom to the people. They suggested that Khatami may be an Iranian Gorbachev. This turned out not to be the case.

Today, the reformists have lost the support of the people. The electorate has realized that the system cannot be reformed. There is clear evidence for this. In 1999, President Khatami ordered the first local city council elections to take place since the Islamic revolution. The reformists won a resounding victory and the voter turnout was extremely high. In 2002, local city council elections were held again and voter turnout plummeted to somewhere between 20% and 30%, marking their first ever electoral defeat. This suggests that Iranian voters have given up hope on the reformists. The other interesting piece of evidence of disillusionment is the fact that slogans in demonstrations now target Khatami as well as prominent hardliners. The following is an excerpt from a BBC report on the student protests in the summer of 2003:

Security forces and hardline supporters of Iran's conservative leadership have clashed with large crowds in the capital Tehran who were protesting against clerical rule.

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100 BBC News, “Iran Reformers suffer Electoral Blow” March 2, 2003
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2812005.stm
Tear gas, clubs, and iron bars were used to disperse the protesters. Hardline vigilantes were seen pulling people from cars and beating them. Gunfire was also heard. Saturday morning's demonstrations were the fourth consecutive night of protests about the slow pace of reform in the country. The Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had warned demonstrators they would be shown no pity if they continued their protests... Stones were thrown and chants wishing death on Ayatollah Khamenei were heard. Such condemnation of the supreme leader is said by correspondents to be unprecedented in Iran... During clashes with police on Thursday night, 40 students were injured and 10 arrested. The unrest, which began with protests at plans to privatise the university, has grown into open condemnation of both Ayatollah Khamenei and President Mohammad Khatami, who was elected on a reformist platform. Students have been heard chanting "freedom" and "democracy" and calling for Ayatollah Khamenei to be hanged... About 70% of Iran's 65 million population is under 30, and has little or no memory of the late Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic revolution.101

In its report, "The World in 2004," The Economist has predicted that,

After several years of painful decline, Iran's reform movement will stretch out to die in 2004. Iranians will be convinced of their inability to influence the decisions that are taken in their name, and their semi-democracy will more closely resemble the authoritarian regimes that proliferate elsewhere in the Middle East.102

Under Khatami's presidency, reformist newspapers, satellite dishes and internet cafes flourished and were then shut down. In 2001, CNN wrote, "The capital city of Tehran boasts more than 1500 internet cafes, with more in other large metropolitan areas. The businesses are favourite hangouts for the mostly young population of Iran."103 Naturally, this was met with a conservative backlash, supported by the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei,

Last month, authorities closed down more than 400 cyber shops in Tehran, demanding owners obtain licenses to remain open... the alleged new guidelines also required ISP's to restrict access to online information deemed immoral or threats to national security, including the websites of opposition groups.104

On satellite dishes, "...there is a renewed campaign to confiscate unauthorised satellite dishes which enable people here to see anti-regime broadcasts from abroad."\(^{105}\)

In addition to promising the people reforms at home, the reformists also embarked upon a charm offensive abroad. President Khatami's promulgation of a "Dialogue among Civilization" garnered acclaim from friend and foe alike. European leaders began making trips to Tehran and proclaimed that the era of Iranian isolation had ended. Even the Clinton administration was encouraged by the advent of the reformists in Iran, making conciliatory gestures to the government. The reformists also attempted to portray the Islamic Republic as a more humane society by altering foreign policy in such a way as to decrease isolation, thus giving the Europeans an opportunity to increase trade ties.

**Shirin Ebadi: Revolutionary, Reformist, or American Stooge?**

One would think that when Shirin Ebadi was chosen to be the Nobel Peace Prize recipient in October of this year, the reform-minded President would have been ecstatic. The reformist press should have been proud that a woman who espouses similar interests had won such a prestigious honour. Shirin Ebadi, however, is no reformist. She was a high-ranking judge during the last years of the monarchy. She refused to wear a headscarf in Paris and later in Oslo, even after receiving large numbers of death threats against her and her family. This was the reformists' response:

In his first comment since the award was announced last Friday, Mr Khatami said he hoped Mrs Ebadi would pay attention to the interests of the Islamic world and Iran and "not let her achievement be misused at all".

At the same time, the president played down the significance of the award, saying it was "not very important" and was awarded on the basis of "totally political criteria"…

\(^{105}\) BBC News, "Iranian riots: Not just about football" October 26, 2001  
http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/middle_east/newsid_1622000/1622312.stm
There was little initial coverage of the award in the conservative-dominated Iranian state media, and Mr Khatami’s comments have come in response to a question by an Iranian reporter who wanted to know why he had not officially congratulated Mrs Ebadi...

Our correspondent says Mrs Ebadi’s success has continued to stir controversy in Iran itself, with right-wingers portraying her as a product of the former regime of the Shah and the prize as an attempt to exert political pressure on the Islamic Republic.\(^{106}\)

Ebadi, for her part, concluded her acceptance speech in the following way,

In the introduction to my speech, I spoke of human rights as a guarantor of freedom, justice and peace. If human rights fail to be manifested in codified laws or put into effect by states, then, as rendered in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human beings will be left with no choice other than staging a “rebellion against tyranny and oppression”. A human being divested of all dignity, a human being deprived of human rights, a human being gripped by starvation, a human being beaten by famine, war and illness, a humiliated human being and a plundered human being is not in any position or state to recover the rights he or she has lost.

If the 21st century wishes to free itself from the cycle of violence, acts of terror and war, and avoid repetition of the experience of the 20th century - that most disaster-ridden century of humankind, there is no other way except by understanding and putting into practice every human right for all mankind, irrespective of race, gender, faith, nationality or social status.

In anticipation of that day.
With much gratitude
Shirin Ebadi\(^{107}\)

Hardline reaction was as follows,

Jomhuri-ye Eslami [hardline newspaper]... said it was "noteworthy" that Ms Ebadi "had a file in Iranian courts", adding: "She is an ex-convict."

“It has been said that the aforementioned person has maintained contacts with organisations outside the country under the pretext of supporting human rights and children's rights. She has been involved in activities against the Islamic republican state of Iran under the pretext of the aforementioned activities," it commented.

\(^{106}\) BBC News, “Khatami advice to Nobel laureate” October 14, 2003
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3190536.stm

\(^{107}\) Iranmania.com, “Shirin Ebadi's Nobel Peace Prize Speech” December 11, 2003
The editor of the conservative newspaper Entekhab, cleric Taha Hashemi, suggested that the committee had an ulterior motive in awarding the prize to Ms Ebadi.

In an interview with the Iranian Students News Agency ISNA he said: "Unfortunately, we can see that certain currents of opinion, as well as those who have ulterior political motives, are trying to impose their views even on institutions which should not be politicised at all."

"The prize would never have been given to Ebadi without taking into consideration the views of Americans and their express wishes," he continued.

State-owned Iranian television did not cover the award until its early evening news bulletin on Friday - more than six hours after the news was announced. And then the report consisted of only two sentences and was buried in the 'News in Brief' section.

Iranian radio broadcast similarly short, factual reports.

By Saturday, the award appeared to have dropped off the broadcast news agenda completely.108

I have chosen to include this section on Shirin Ebadi not to highlight the domestic human rights abuses prevalent in the Islamic Republic (that will be discussed later), but rather as a way of demonstrating the reactions of the different factions to what she represents. She was wildly popular in Iran, as was demonstrated by the thousands of Iranians who greeted her at the airport when she returned from Paris in October.109 She seemed to be the one who truly represented law and order in Iran. Some of her popularity, however, has waned since the days immediately following her being awarded the Nobel Prize. The reason for this is that she has made several statements regarding the compatibility of Islam and democracy and implying her support of the current system that were not very well received by her supporters. Also, many hoped that with the virtual immunity that would accompany the reception of a Nobel Prize, she would be a more


forceful advocate of change. She has thus far been very cautious. The question on people’s minds is whether she is doing this because she truly believes in the system, or because she wants to be allowed to work within the system in order to bring about change. Regardless of her intentions, the reaction from both reformists and conservatives demonstrates the extent to which they have become out of touch with the will of the people.

Contemporary Opposition

The situation today is very different from what it was in the late 1970’s. Since the revolution, the population has more than doubled from 30 million to nearly 70 million. With the end of the war with Iraq came the death of Khomeini and a replacement, Ayatollah Khamenei. Under both Khomeini and Khamenei, opposition groups were persecuted with more ferocity than under the Shah.

The Islamist-communists comprise several groups, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, MKO (the people’s holy warriors) which was the largest faction, and the Fedaieen (those who wish to be sacrificed). The MKO and Fedaieen have banded together with some smaller left-wing groups to form the National Council of Resistance (NCR). The NCR is supposedly a government-in-exile complete with cabinet portfolios and President. Many of its fighters are currently still in Iraq (though many have spread to Europe following the American invasion in 2003), but has lost virtually all of its popular support it fought alongside the Iraqis during the 1980-88 war. It has offices in Los Angeles (the home of the largest Iranian community outside of Iran), in Europe and it claims to have operatives within Iran. Its cult-like image and terrorist tactics makes it

110 She is also currently representing the family of slain Canadian journalist Zahra Kazemi in the trial of low-ranking intelligence officials accused of striking a blow to her head causing death. Ebadi has accused the government of orchestrating a conspiracy to protect higher ranking intelligence officials.
112 For more on the Mujahideen, see their main website at www.mujahideen.org. There are summaries of their leader, Maryam Rajavi’s biography and vision for Iran on that site.
even less popular and it is currently on the US State Department list of terrorist organizations.

Inside Iran, if an individual is found guilty of being a ‘mojahed’, as they are called, he or she is executed. They are widely distrusted and have very little, if any popular support, but they are the only armed opposition group to the Islamic Republic.

There are three other opposition groups that are relevant. The first is the republican faction. One is prominent within Iran and the other’s main presence is in the West. These are two allied groups, the ‘Jebhe Melli’ (National Front) which claims to represent Mossadegh’s heirs, and the ‘Nehzate Azadi’ (Iran Freedom Movement) which is republican, but not necessarily secular. The Jebhe Melli advocates a secular republic and has offices in California, Washington D.C. and in Iran.\footnote{Their website is www.jebhemelli.org and has sections on their ideology, a calendar of events, articles, news, how to join, a guestbook and a section with their email and address.} Nehzate Azadi, or IFM does not advocate an end to the Islamic Republic, but looks simply to remove the system of the Guardianship of the Cleric, which would mean that there would be free and fair elections open to everyone, rather than only to Islamists. It does not advocate an end to Islamic law; rather it sees it as the democratic choice of the people. This is because of the fact that were it to advocate an end to the Islamic Republic, members would be imprisoned, executed or exiled. It is the most liberal group allowed to operate within Iran, but none of its candidates have ever made it through the vetting of the Council of Guardians to run in an Iranian election. Its support is tarnished by the fact that it allied itself with Khomeini during the revolution.

The second important opposition group in Iran is the monarchist movement. This movement is led by the son of the late Shah, Reza Pahlavi II. He does not advocate a return to monarchy. Instead, he sees the question of monarchy versus republic as a premature one, and advocates a free and fair referendum over the future of the Islamic Republic. He dismisses
outright any suggestion of a return to a dictatorial monarchy. The Crown Prince also sees the monarch as a unifying figure who would be able to prevent separatist movements from gaining strength in the future. His vision of the head of state of Iran is one of apolitical unity that would strengthen the country, not divide it. He also states that if the country would decide in an internationally observed referendum that they wanted a democratic, secular republic instead of a democratic, secular constitutional monarchy, that he would accept that and assume his position as a loyal citizen. He lives in Washington D.C. and has supporters around the world. His image, as with all other opposition groups, is tarnished. Whereas most republicans and reformists are tarnished by their collaboration with Khomeini, he is tarnished by the fact that some people see him as an extension of his father and fear he would become a dictator like the last Shah of Iran. Time is working in his favour though, since the memory of his father is more and more focused on his achievements rather than his failings, while the memory of Khomeini is more and more linked to discontent with the current rulers.\textsuperscript{114} His main base of support is the Constitutionalist Party of Iran. It advocates a constitutional monarchy and has links on its site to the former Imperial army, navy and air force sites, as well as to the Pahlavi site and to the site of his mother, Empress Farah Pahlavi. \textsuperscript{115} KRSI radio is broadcast from Los Angeles and is sent to Iran for two hours a day. The radio is heavily constitutional monarchist and frequently brings Pahlavi as a guest speaker. It is widely listened to in Iran along with Voice of Israel, Voice of America and the BBC. There are also about a dozen television stations based in Los Angeles that are beamed into Iran, most of which are also monarchist.

\textsuperscript{114} Reza Pahlavi's personal website is www.rezapahlavi.org and he has sections in it on news about Iran, his goals, other revolutionary movements in the world, a short biography, a mailing list, an audio/video section, and a section about his new book about his visions for Iran.

\textsuperscript{115} The site of the Constitutionalist Party of Iran is www.irancpi.org and on it they have a membership section, press releases, a shop, links and information on how to contact them.
The last movement is the student's movement. It has ties to Pahlavi, but is simply seeking a secular democracy, whatever form it may take.\textsuperscript{116} It has wide support inside and outside Iran as they are at the forefront of the resistance against the Islamic Republic. University students are one of the most respected segments of Iranian society as they have always stood for freedom and democracy. After the revolution, the clerics closed the universities for a period of two years, stating reasons of national security as justification. Leaders of the student movement have been jailed, put on trial behind closed doors, tortured and forced to make confessions in prison.

On the question of whether the resistance is plausible, the resistance has made itself more plausible than ever thanks to modern media. A BBC report after the soccer riots in 2001 shows this eloquently,

Witnesses said youths began protesting against the Iranian leadership, chanting 'death to the Mullahs'... the French news agency AFP reported. Leaflets criticising the government were also said to have been distributed... then police used tear gas to break up a crowd of 20,000 fans who had gathered in Western Tehran...

...opposition groups based abroad had used their television and radio stations to call on Iranians to come out in their millions to demonstrate their hostility to the clerical regime. With their enemies abroad, openly inciting people to revolt, the authorities have the problem of trying to distinguish between good-natured celebration, football hooliganism and hard-core opposition. And the more harshly they react, the more resentment and grudges they are bound to create.

In some places the crowds chanted anti-regime slogans, including some insulting the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, and others supporting the monarchy which the Islamic revolution ousted in 1979. This touches a raw nerve as far as the authorities are concerned. Each of the recent events has been preceded by a barrage of propaganda from television, radio stations and internet websites operated from abroad by Iranian opposition groups. They have openly incited people to go out en masse and demonstrate their hostility to the Islamic regime. That is enough to ensure a heavy security presence and little tolerance,

\textsuperscript{116} The students' site is at www.daneshjoo.org. They have sections on news, fax, photos, email, audio/video, a support book, who to contact, links, feedback, and a schedule of demonstrations.
even for harmless high-spirited assemblies, let alone for people attacking public buildings or chanting slogans deriding the leader.\footnote{\textit{BBC News, “Iran: The Struggle For Change” Oct 26, 2001} \url{http://news6.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/middle_east/2000/iran_elections/iran_struggle_for_change/changing_face/media.stm}}

**Religious Minorities**

Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews are overrepresented in Parliament and are acknowledged as legal minorities under the constitution of the Islamic Republic. They are allowed to have unmarried men and women together at gatherings, to listen to music and even drink alcohol, as long as they do not invite Muslims. As opposed to linguistic minorities, religious minorities were not discriminated against during the Pahlavi regime. The Islamic Republic, on the other hand, simply by referring to itself as an “Islamic republic,” implies that they are not true citizens of the country. Many minorities fled the country following the revolution and are thus overrepresented in expatriate communities.

The Bahais under the Islamic Republic are the most persecuted group of individuals ever in Iranian history. Because they believe that a prophet named Baha’ullah was revealed after the Prophet Mohammad, the regime considers them to be heretics. The theocratic regime interprets Islam as saying that the Prophet Mohammad was the last prophet and that no other could come after him. This is the rationale used for executing them. Many Bahai youths in the expatriate community in Canada try to assimilate completely into Canadian society and sever links to their Iranian heritage by refusing to speak Persian and not socializing with other Iranians. Perhaps this is because their experience with the Islamic Republic has been so violent and tragic that it has...
overshadowed the identification with Iran that other ethno-linguistic and religious minorities still retain.\(^{118}\)

With regards to Iranian Jews, when one looks at the historical friendship between Iran and Israel, or Persia and the Jewish community, one can see that the construction of the historical homeland cherished by the state of Israel was in many ways helped by a Persian king, namely Cyrus the Great. Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in the 6\(^{th}\) century BCE and freed 40,000 Jews held captive there, allowing them to return to Jerusalem to build their homeland. Granted, at the time, he probably did that not on humanitarian grounds, but on strategic ones, to place an ally forever indebted to him on the periphery of his empire. It would be interesting to attempt to calculate the number of Jews that would not exist today had he not saved them (though the number held captive could be exaggerated).

The Israelis did, however, return the favour, and ironically for strategic reasons as well. Israel’s 1981 attack of the Osiraq reactor in Iraq could potentially have saved millions of Iranian lives. Had Saddam Hussein achieved nuclear weapons capability, he may not have hesitated in using them (using chemical weapons against his own people in Halabja and on advancing Iranian soldiers being the precedents) against Iran.

Finally, there are large, vibrant Jewish communities that have integrated with and lived alongside Muslims in Iran for centuries. The Jewish communities before the Islamic revolution lived without any state persecution. There are also vibrant Iranian communities in Israel and powerful Jewish Iranian leaders there such as Moshe Katsav, the President of Israel\(^{119}\) and Israeli


\(^{119}\) Ironically, both the current Iranian and Israeli presidents were born in the province of Yazd in Iran.
Defence Minister, Shaul Mofaz. Instead of these people being used as bridges between the two nations, the Islamic Republic is hostile towards Israel at the best of times.

It is unfortunate that religious minorities are not more numerous in Iran in that if they were, perhaps either the ‘common ground approach’ or the ‘independent political ethic approach’ that Charles Taylor used to describe the ways in which secularism was achieved in the West (as a mechanism to resolve the difficulties that had arisen between the Protestant and Catholic denominations) could be employed. The Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and Bahais are too few to necessitate a re-evaluation of the Islamic state resulting in secularization on the basis of equality and inclusiveness.\(^{120}\)

**The Media**

The role of the media in Iran has several dimensions. The secular democratic movement as a whole use the radio and television in the same way that Khomeini did with audio cassettes and radio in the 1970’s to join with the student movement within Iran in overthrowing the Islamic regime. The students use leaflets, posters and graffiti in much the same way that intellectuals did in the 1950’s and again in the 1970’s.

The internet plays a similar role to that which mosques did for Khomeini in the 1970’s. The emergence of a vast network of cyber cafés substitutes in a way for the mosques in reaching those that are at the forefront of the unrest. The reason why the internet is such an important factor in a developing country such as Iran that has such a vast digital divide is that it is precisely the dissenters that have access to the internet.

Even after the crackdowns, according to the BBC:

> It's estimated that some seven million Iranians now have access to the internet. That's one in 10 people, and twice as many as two years ago. An hour online costs

\(^{120}\) All four groups total approximately 1% to 2% of the population, depending on the source used.
the equivalent of around 60 cents - which is well within the reach of the average person.

In a country where the media is still strictly controlled, the internet offers a unique window on the world. It’s a safe and easy way for young people to make new friends, to keep in touch with each other, and to find out what’s going on both at home and abroad.\footnote{BBC News, “Postcards from Iran: Surfing the Net” February 13, 2004 http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3486923.stm}

In addition, the students in Tehran are able to coordinate their activities with student organizations in other cities simply by sending emails or text messages. Also, foreign reports of the internal events fuel unrest by showing the people the magnitude of events. Thus far, efforts at blocking news and political websites have proven to be futile.

The media are a crucial component of the demand for secularization in two respects. First, they provide a window to the world for the youth in Iran who cannot remember the secular monarchy that preceded them. Second, members of the media themselves both domestically and externally are agents of dissent insofar as they advocate secularism modestly within Iran and overtly from Los Angeles.

\textbf{Iran Today: Political Unrest}

Political unrest in Iran in the last few years suggests that change is inevitable. The youth of Iran constitute a majority of the population (75% are under 30 years old)\footnote{BBC News, “Iran: The pressure for change” July 29, 2002 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2002/islamic_world/2159316.stm} and nationwide student protests have shaken the foundations of the regime and chants of “Death to the Taliban, in Kabul and Tehran”\footnote{Iranmania.com, “Iran political protests harden and hit the streets” November 23, 2002} have begun to worry the ruling clerics.

In the late 1990’s, reform-minded newspapers sprang up, having been allowed to print what they liked by Khatami’s reformist Minister of the Interior, Ataollah Mohajerani, who would later be impeached for precisely this reason (Ataollah is his first name, not a title). One of these
was the daily *Salam*, which was shut down in the summer of 1999 for criticizing the regime.

When it was shut down, a small group of students in Tehran University decided to stage a protest rally. Their numbers were few, but the attention they received was widespread because of the number of reformist newspapers that covered the story. That night, a band of militant Islamist thugs named *Ansar-e-Hezbollah* raided the students’ dormitory and beat up several of the students, throwing one straight through a window onto the concrete road, some three stories down. The fall caused his death. This infuriated the students and led to riots for the following six days that spread to nearly all of the major cities in the country. Three people were killed and over 200 were injured. Khatami did not comment on the uprisings until the fourth day and this is an excerpt of what the BBC wrote about it:

> The president turned against the protesting students, and denounced the riots. "They were against the interest of the nation, and against the policies of the government. This event is just the opposite of the political development advocated by the government," he said.\(^{124}\)

Since then, riots have occurred on many occasions and have spread to other segments of society. Teachers, factory workers and women have also staged demonstrations of their own, calling for a just society. For the people, this was the first time that they were able to see where Khatami’s loyalties lie. It would not be the last.

In July 2002,

> Several thousand people have taken to the streets of the Iranian capital, Tehran, to mark the anniversary of violent street protests three years ago... In several major squares, the demonstrators clashed with security forces, police and right-wing vigilantes. And, in some places, police fired teargas to disperse the protesters... Many of those taking part in the commemoration were not young students, but middle-aged and even elderly people, some of them wearing ties to symbolise their attachment to the era before the Islamic Revolution... Many students and other backers of the reform movement are deeply frustrated at the lack of progress since they helped elect President Mohammed Khatami five years ago.\(^{125}\)


In June 2003,

The demonstrations started after students from Tehran University staged a protest on their dormitory campus against privatisation plans. They were joined on the street by hundreds of people. Windows of nearby shops were broken and a few motorcycles were burnt. Witnesses said the protests began with just a few hundred students, but swelled to more than a thousand as people heard the noise or heeded calls to participate from US-based TV channels. For more than four hours the night was filled with bursts of noise as people set off firecrackers or sounded the horns from their cars. Many of those gathered shouted slogans against the regime, calling for political prisoners to be freed and for President Khatami to resign.126

Regarding the same event, Supreme Leader Khamenei's reaction was as follows:

The ayatollah said: "Leaders do not have the right to have any pity whatsoever for the mercenaries of the enemy." His speech was broadcast hours after the end of a demonstration in Teheran which turned violent after vigilante groups clashed with protesters.

According to reports, clashes erupted between rival groups, with both sides throwing stones at each other. Militant groups also arrived on motorbikes, wielding chains and batons, and hundreds of riot police were called in to try to disperse the demonstrators into the surrounding streets. They shouted slogans against the clerical authorities, including "Death to Khamenei!", and for President Khatami to resign. Others shouted slogans such as: "Tanks, artillery and guns no longer have any power."127

This last slogan was one that was frequently used by revolutionaries in the late 1970's.

According to Amnesty International, 4000 students were arrested following the riots of June 2003.128 Out of the dozens of reformist newspapers that arrived on the scene since Khatami's first term, the last two were shut down on February 20, 2004 for publishing a letter from the banned reformist candidates criticizing the Supreme Leader.

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128 Amnesty.org, "Iran: Student activists and demonstrators must be treated in accordance with international human rights standards" July 9, 2003 http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE130192003?open&of=ENG-IRN
Several items in these quotes are noteworthy, first that the people dared to insult Ayatollah Khamenei. In Shiite Islam, criticizing an Ayatollah is interpreted as a major violation of Islamic tenets, let alone calling for his death. Good, pious Muslims would not criticize him, regardless of what he was doing. This in itself is a major sign of political process secularization, as stated by Donald Smith, i.e. a decline in the political saliency of religious leaders. Secondly, much of the unrest has been instigated by opposition forces in the U.S., which are mainly monarchist. This shows the expansion of mass media and of the influence that exiled forces now command within the country. Finally, the fact that Khatami has also been called upon to resign suggests that the people have begun to give up on reformation of the Islamic state.

**2004 Parliamentary Elections**

In the run-up to the February 20, 2004 parliamentary elections, over 2,400 candidates out of nearly 9,000 were barred from standing by the Council of Guardians, including some 80 sitting MPs. The main reformist party, the Participation Front, led by Mohammad Reza Khatami (the President’s younger brother, who was also barred from running) decided to call for a boycott of the elections. Exiled radio and television stations had been calling for a boycott for months, but the reformists jumped on the bandwagon only when they saw that they would not be allowed to run. With a high unemployment rate, many voters feel they have to get the stamp on their national ID cards that proves that they’ve voted in order to be able to get any sort of job. High school and university students cannot receive their diplomas and degrees without that stamp. Other tactics such as bussing people into cities and paying/feeding them to vote are also widely used. In the end, the turnout was low and the conservatives won control of Parliament.  

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129 There were allegations of vote rigging, but the final turnout reported was just over 50% nationwide (the lowest since the revolution in 1979)  
Source: BBC News, “Row erupts over Iran poll turnout” February 23, 2004  
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3514045.stm
The statement by a senior cleric, that “the missing Imam”, a messianic figure in Shiite Islam who has been absent for 1,063 years, had personally signed off on the last parliamentary election ballot serves as a good example of the opposite of what Glasner calls ‘desacralization’, where society moves towards science as the basis of explanation and away from religion.

It is clear that the reformists, including President Khatami were given a chance to align the regime with their desires for a greater adherence to the rule of law and personal freedom. Hamid Reza Jalaiepour, a reformist journalist who has been at the head of several newspapers that were shut down and has walked through the revolving door of Iran’s political prisons so many times that he claims to carry his toothbrush with him wherever he goes was quoted by the Christian Science Monitor as saying,

For years, they tried to push the religious stuff down [students’] throats, and it caused a reaction," says the revolutionary, noting a recent poll that reportedly found 45 percent had negative feelings toward religion. "Twenty years ago, is that reaction the leaders of Iran wanted? They wanted to train soldiers for Islam, and got exactly the opposite."

In the New York Times, he is described in the following way,

Hamid-Reza Jalaiepour, a 46-year-old sociologist and former newspaper publisher, is emblematic of those who fought for the revolution, served in the early years of the Islamic Republic, and now regard Islamic rule as a failure. Though he still struggles to build democracy, he said he would not want to go through a second revolution. "They used to say that the shah wanted to make society secular," he said in an interview. "Twenty-five years later the society is much more secular. The mosques are empty."

As for the standoff in the election, Mr. Jalaiepour, who published a newspaper until the government banned it, said the effort to bar reformist candidates was part

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of a long-term strategy by hard-liners to change Iran from a republic to "a kind of fundamentalist Islamic monarchy."\textsuperscript{132}

The phenomenon that Mr. Jalaiepour is referring to in the first part of his statement is an example of political-process secularization as outlined by Donald Smith in that it is a weakening of religious identity in the minds of the people.

When looking at Iran today, one must bear in mind that the political spectrum is still quite narrow inside the country. Reformists and hardliners alike believe in the concept of theocracy and Islamic law, the only difference between them is that the reformists prefer a more humane theocracy, where the rule of law is adhered to. Liberals, secular republicans, communists, Islamist-communists, absolute monarchists, and constitutional monarchists are still all in exile. The so-called "internal opposition" is not secularist at all. The people have shown that they have given up on them through the low voter turnout in the 2002 local elections and through their calls for reformists to resign. Another change that shows disenchantment among the people with regard to the reformists is the fact that although the people have come out to demonstrate and riot for a variety of different reasons, there was not one single demonstration or protest by the people in support of the reformists that were disqualified from running in parliamentary elections. An interesting question is that now that all legal channels for change have been crushed, how will the demand for secularization manifest itself extra-legally?

\textbf{Human Rights Violations in the Islamic Republic}

Part of the \textit{raison d'être} of the revolution was to stem the human rights violations of the Shah's regime. The fact that SAVAK, the Shah's main intelligence agency would imprison and torture political personalities that displeased the Shah is virtually undisputed. Jimmy Carter even made a point of throwing the spotlight on the human rights situation in Iran so as to encourage

\textsuperscript{132} New York Times, "In Iran, a Quiet but Fierce Struggle for Change" February 15, 2004
reform. For the purposes of this paper, I will briefly look at what human rights violations have occurred against three important segments of society in the Islamic Republic: students, journalists and women.

The students were the bedrock of the 1979 revolution. They were the ones who demonstrated against the Shah at every place he stopped, they were the ones who bled for the revolution and they were the ones that died for the nation during the eight year war with Iraq. They were in effect the loudest voice demanding human rights from the Shah. Their cries were the ones that would hurt his ears. Today, the next generation of students has begun to demand what was granted to the people by Cyrus the Great 2,500 years earlier, “The Charter of Cyrus is drawn up by King Cyrus the Great of Persia for the people of his kingdom, recognizing rights to liberty, security, recognizing freedom of movement, right of property, and some economic and social rights.”

According to Amnesty International, in the year 2001,

Scores of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, were arrested and others continued to be held in prolonged detention without trial or following unfair trials. Some had no access to lawyers or family. In a continuing clampdown on freedom of expression and association, led by the judiciary, scores of students, journalists and intellectuals were detained. At least 139 people, including one minor, were executed and 285 flogged, many in public.

A student who appeared on the cover of The Economist in July 1999 suffered a particularly cruel punishment:

Ahmad Batebi, a student of film production attached to Tehran University, was 21 years old when he was arrested in July 1999 during clashes between students and the security forces in central Tehran. From the end of June 1999 until the day of his arrest Ahmad Batebi was, with the authorization of his university, producing a documentary about the dangers of drug addiction and social problems. When he heard about the student dormitory disturbances, he went to cover the incident and

was subsequently arrested by a plainclothes militiaman who was present at the student demonstration. Ahmad Batebi has been in prison since then and was sentenced to death after a secret trial by the Revolutionary Court; his sentence was later reportedly commuted to 15 years' imprisonment by the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In March 2000, he wrote an open letter from prison to the Head of the Judiciary describing his treatment in detention... The following brief account of what happened to him during his interrogation and trial is according to his own testimony in the open letter. Ahmad Batebi said in the open letter that soldiers bound his hands and secured them to plumbing pipes. They beat his head and abdominal area with soldiers' shoes. They insisted that he sign a confession of the accusations made against him. The next day, he was thrown onto the floor, they stood on his neck and cut off all his hair and parts of his scalp causing it to bleed. They beat him so severely with their heavy shoes that he lost consciousness, and when he regained consciousness, they started their actions again, ordering him to write and sign a "confession". When he refused, they took him to another room, blindfolded him and secured his bound hands to the window bars. During his interrogations, they threatened several times to execute Ahmad Batebi and to torture and rape his family members as well as imprison them for long terms. The investigators ordered him to confess to false allegations and under extreme duress, he signed a "confession" fearing that they would carry out their threats to him and his family.

As far as Amnesty International is aware, no official investigation has been undertaken to examine the above allegations of torture made by Ahmad Batebi.\(^{135}\)

Unfortunately, Batebi is not the only one who received this kind of torture. His particular case was highly publicized because of the efforts of *The Economist*. Batebi's case, along with many other student leaders, journalists, and intellectuals violate article 5 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."\(^{136}\) It is interesting to note that there is an article in the constitution of the Islamic Republic that addresses this issue:

**Article 38 [Torture]**

All forms of torture for the purpose of extracting confession or acquiring information are forbidden. Compulsion of individuals to testify, confess, or take an oath is not permissible; and any testimony, confession, or oath obtained under duress is devoid of value and credence. Violation of this article is liable to punishment in accordance with the law.\(^{137}\)

\(^{135}\) Amnesty International, "Iran: Stop Torture"

\(^{136}\) UN.org, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," Adopted December 10, 1948

\(^{137}\) Universität Bern - Institut für öffentliches Recht, "Iran – Constitution," Effective December 3, 1979
Journalists and intellectuals have not had an easy time recently either:

In an unprecedented clampdown on freedom of expression and association, at least 34 journalists, writers and human rights defenders were questioned, detained and tried; some were tortured. At least 12 were imprisoned, usually after unfair trials. These and other people were tried on the basis of vaguely worded laws before Revolutionary Courts and the Special Court for the Clergy, where procedures often fall far short of international standards for fair trial. They were prisoners of conscience. At least 30 publications, the majority supportive of reformist groups, were closed or suspended by judicial order.\(^\text{138}\)

Although the number of publications shut down has now increased, it is unclear as to the number of journalists who are still in prison today. The case of history professor Hashem Aghajari who lost a leg and a brother in the Iran-Iraq war is also noteworthy:

Professor Hashem Aghajari, the Iranian academic sentenced to death for apostasy... [he] enraged conservatives in an address in June in which he said that Muslims should not uncritically follow the line laid down by Islamic clerics "like monkeys". He questioned why clerics alone had the right to interpret Islam.\(^\text{139}\)

His sentence reignited student demonstrations that had become dormant since the last hardline crackdown. In July 2004, he stated, "I consider the (12 Shiite) Imams, the Koran and Prophet to be sacred, but the clergy are not sacred. And I only criticised the clerics, not insulted them. I am a believer in the Islamic Republic of Iran. I am a religious intellectual, and what I am saying is that modern Islam is at risk from the fundamentalism we see in the Taliban and Osama bin Laden," he asserted, adding nevertheless that "I never said fundamentalists are in the (Iranian) system." He also challenged the judge to “bring me any ayatollah, and I will have a face to face discussion with them on Islam.” Herein lies the contradiction that is at the heart of the Islamic Republic. Without functional differentiation, as defined by Glasner and Dobbelae, a critic of a politician also inevitably becomes a critic of a cleric. Since penalties in Islam are severe for

\(^{139}\) BBC News, “Iran: The pressure for change” July 29, 2002
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/world/2002/islamic_world/2159316.stm
criticizing either the religion or its interpreters on Earth, the same penalties will apply for criticism of political leaders. The line that Aghajari has crossed has put him in the awkward situation of insulting Islam for criticizing the rulers of the land.

The judiciary has since allowed a public hearing and has dropped all charges that could lead to the death penalty. Aghajari has been sentenced to five years in jail on charges of insulting religious sanctities, propagating against the regime and spreading false information to disturb the public mind.

Two years of Aghajari's prison sentence were suspended, meaning that, after accounting for the two years he has already spent in jail, the effective jail term was just one more year, he said. The court also banned Aghajari from holding public office or taking part in any activity requiring state permission, such as teaching, for five years after his prison term is completed.  

The issue of human rights for women in the Islamic Republic is a rather tricky one. Since much of the way women are treated in Iran is legitimized by the ruling clerics' interpretations of Islam, the developed world finds it more difficult to criticize violations of human rights. Article 2 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states that, “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” Article 3 states that, “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”

Since the Islamic revolution, women have become second class citizens:

- Women are stoned to death for engaging in voluntary sexual relations.
- Women do not have the right to choose their clothing. “Hejab”, is mandatory in all public places for all women, regardless of citizenship, religion or choice. Those in contravention of the dress code are subject to punishment including lashes.
- Women are segregated from men in every aspect of public life.

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140 Reuters.com “Iran Academic Aghajari Handed 5-Year Jail Term,” July 20, 2004
141 UN.org, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” Adopted December 10, 1948
• Women are barred from taking employment in a large number of occupations simply because these jobs would compromise their chastity. A married woman can only be employed if she has the consent of her husband.
• Women are not free to choose their own academic or vocational field of study. In all, 169 fields of study are prohibited to women.
• The legal age of marriage for girls is 9 years old.
• Women do not have equal rights to divorce. Only under extreme conditions, such as insanity of their spouse, can they file for divorce. In the event of divorce, the father has legal custody of boys after the age of two and girls after the age of seven. The mother loses this minimum right as soon as she remarries.
• Women do not have the right to acquire a passport and travel without the written permission of their husbands/fathers\(^\text{142}\)

Once again, without differentiation that would separate the roles of religion and law in society, Islam is the ultimate arbitrator of justice and rights. When the people demand changes to these laws, they are in effect demanding that Islam no longer be used in such a fashion. In other words, dissent is the visible expression of the demand for secularism.

**Demographics and Economics**

Literacy has risen from 50% in 1980 to 76% in 2000.\(^\text{143}\) Male literacy in 1980 was 60.9% while female literacy was 38.2%. In 2000, male literacy was 83% while female literacy was 68.9%.\(^\text{144}\) Today, life expectancy for men is 68.9 years and 71.9 years for women.\(^\text{145}\) Since the revolution, unemployment, nepotism, cronyism, and corruption have become rampant,

...this low-level corruption goes hand-in-hand with an even bigger problem: the corruption that exists at the very top. Occasionally cases come to court which throw light on a system of patronage and nepotism which means everyone who is anyone in Iranian society has some kind of connection to the ruling mullahs.\(^\text{146}\)

\(^{142}\) WomensNet.org “International Campaign for Defense of Women’s Rights in Iran”


\(^{144}\) Ibid.


Despite the millions being made, it's striking that business in Iran remains in the hands of a relatively small elite. Almost all the people running the country and running the economy are related to each other either by blood or marriage.

Ordinary Iranians complain that without contacts inside the system, it's impossible to get top jobs, or to be successful in business. Unemployment is now far higher than it was in the Shah's time, and 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. For young people struggling to make ends meet, it's one more reason to resent the mullahs and their regime.¹⁴⁷

The following are several graphs from the BBC website showing various economic and demographic indicators that show trends in demographics, the economic disposition of the populace, and access to modern communications:¹⁴⁸

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3487105.stm

What we have seen thus far in this section are the agents and manifestations of secularization in Iran that have expressed the demand for secularization on a political level. It is time to use the theories that were outlined in earlier sections in attempt to better understand this phenomenon.

VI. Analysis

The Trend Towards Secularization

Where, as Glasner and Dobbelaere pointed out, there must be functional differentiation between religion and society, the trend in the Islamic Republic is towards functional amalgamation and not differentiation. In other words, as many aspects of society as possible have been taken over and are now run by the clergy. The most relevant one in corroborating the main argument of this paper is the political level, where clerics are present at all levels, whether they are local, provincial, or national. To be sure, religion, as represented by the clerics, is also present in subsystems such as the economy. Sandra Mackey makes note of this as well.

Some of the largess falling to the clerical alliance comes from the foundations. After the government-owned oil industry, they are the largest manufacturers, traders, and real estate developers in the country. At the same time, they reap huge subsidies from government. The bloated giant of the bonyads [foundations] is the Mostazafin Foundation, the Foundation of the Oppressed, that swept up the confiscated property of the Pahlavis and other wealthy families in the early days.
of the revolution. The roughly seven hundred companies now under its control make cars and pharmaceuticals, import steel and chicken, and operate most of Iran’s hotels. It even owns property on Fifth Avenue in New York. In 1995, the foundation’s assets were estimated at twelve billion dollars, with yearly earnings of perhaps one hundred million. The Mostazafin Foundation and most of the other so-called charity organizations are accountable neither to shareholders nor to the government, but only to the man who sits at its head, or to the faqih [Supreme Leader], Ali Khamenei.149

In a footnote attached to the paragraph above, Mackey notes,

The President of Bonyad Mostazafin is Mohsen Rafighdoost. He moved out of his father’s fruit shop in the bazaar to become Ayatollah Khomeini’s chauffeur and bodyguard. On the imam’s orders, he founded the Revolutionary Guard. That put him in position to build the assets of the Foundation of the Oppressed.150

Religion is also present in the educational subsystem in the form of the new curricula presented in the years after the revolution where both history and political science were reinterpreted in religious terms from elementary school through university. With the victory of the revolution, world history classes were replaced by Islamic history and religious education classes. In discussions with students whose primary and secondary education was in Iran during the 1980’s and 1990’s, I have learned that Iranian history taught to them about the period from 1925 to 1979 focuses primarily on the lives of the clerics who struggled against the Shah and on the mistakes made by his and his father’s regimes. Even Dr. Mossadegh, the now virtually deified hero of Iranian nationalism and democracy, is scarcely mentioned. His contemporary, Ayatollah Kashani, on the other hand, is celebrated as the man who was able to force the Shah to leave the country in the 1950’s.

Dobbelaere also mentions science and family as areas where functional differentiation must occur in order to present a growth of secularism. As we have seen in the section regarding the status of women in Iran, a woman’s rights within the family are dictated by the interpretation

149 Mackey, p.370
150 Ibid., p.370fn
of Islam put forward by the clerics in the form of the law of the land. Laws concerning divorce, inheritance, child custody, polygamy, and, for a certain time, contraception are all dictated by Islamic law. In fact, the demographic youth of the state are due to Khomeini’s personal interpretation of contraception within Islam that was later retracted.

With regards to the subsystem of science, one example of where religion has replaced rationalism is that the teaching of evolution has been replaced by creationism in secondary schools as well as at the university level.

When one adds the observation that secularism as functional differentiation between religion and society as delineated by Glasner and Dobbelaere has been abolished to the widespread discontent, dissent, and repression that was noted in the previous section, then the outcome points to a demand for differentiation. The unrest, the rise and fall of the reformists, the voting patterns, and the growth of the opposition in exile are all examples of discontent and dissent against the established amalgamation of religion and society. The riots and demonstrations are not for atheism, or against Islam, they are against the system that has given the clerics and their interpretations of Islam access to every aspect of the people’s lives. In addition, the repression against religious minorities and the human rights violations have compounded and added to this discontent. Dobbelaere and Glasner’s differentiation also ties in well with Smith’s polity-expansion secularization.

If we look at Donald Smith’s model of modernization, we see that differentiation in terms of governmental structures has increased since the revolution in that there are many different branches of government that perform different tasks. The problem is that there are so many that nothing can get done. The following table illustrates the basic divisions of government in Iran.¹⁵¹

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/03/iran_power/html/default.stm
Whereas prior to the revolution there was a parliament, a senate, a cabinet and an Emperor, now there is a parliament, a Guardian Council, a cabinet, an Assembly of Experts, an Expediency Council, and a Supreme Leader. Final authority then rested in the hands of the Shah, today it rests in the hands of the Supreme Leader. Therefore, I believe it is safe to say that if differentiation is unqualified and amounts to a simple increase in bureaucracy, then Iran has modernized in this respect in the last 25 years. If, however, Smith’s intention was that differentiation be viewed as a dispersal of power, then the fact that there is a body that does the bidding of the Supreme Leader by proxy (the Guardian Council), changes nothing. President Khatami today is just as powerless compared to the Supreme Leader as Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda compared to the Shah (Hoveyda, incidentally was executed after a kangaroo court trial immediately following the revolution).  

Since the people’s representatives in Parliament and the President have virtually no power in legislating according to the wishes of the populace, economic power is the only indicator that can be used to gauge any capacity to bring about socioeconomic change. The capacity to bring about socioeconomic change in an individual can be expressed either through political power (which Iranians do not have), or through their individual economic power.

Although the political power of the regime trumps any economic power that the people may

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have, this is to be used in this case simply as a measurement of how little power the people have, even on an economic level, not as a way of identifying where power in Iran lies. If the economic power of individuals is high, then they may have greater influence on the socioeconomic conditions of the country than if their power was low. The figures on unemployment and inflation however, show that the average Iranian is poorer now than he or she was before the revolution.

One of the achievements of the revolution listed by many historians is the breadth of education. Literacy rates and university enrolment have largely increased since the revolution, which means that while the people are on average poor, they are nevertheless educated.

According to Huntington’s model, we see that rationalization in terms of its meritocratic and universalistic attributes have definitely decreased. For example, Hoveyda, the Shah’s Prime Minister from 1965 to 1977, came from relatively humble beginnings.\textsuperscript{153} Nepotism was certainly widespread in the Pahlavi period, but it was possible for an individual to rise to power from outside the inner circle of elite. Today, it is absolutely impossible. As was stated in the earlier BBC report, almost all of the people running the country’s government and economy are related to one another in some way, and they all come from the new upper class formed after the revolution.

On Huntington’s second point, that modernization entails national integration, ethnic groups are about as integrated as they were in the Pahlavi period, which is to say that they are quiet, relative to minorities in surrounding countries such as Turkey and Iraq. Religious minorities are also about as free as they were then; Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians are allowed to have parties and drink alcohol, as long as no Muslims are allowed to attend. The exception are the Bahais. On balance though, national integration has remained stagnant.

\textsuperscript{153} Milani, 2001
Third, Huntington suggests that some democratization ought to occur as a sign of modernization. Because of the vetting and vetoing powers of the Guardian Council and the Supreme Leader, the Islamic Republic is no more democratic than was the kingdom of Iran. Moreover, Shiism has fundamental philosophical issues that are contradictory to the basic tenets of democratization, as is demonstrated by Abbas Milani:

[In Shiite theology] a proposition is “true” simply because of the sanctity, the divine inspiration, of its source. The Prophet and the Imams have become privy to parts of the infinite wisdom of the Lord. The best that the mortal, finite mind of humans can do is to unquestioningly submit to this revealed truth.

This truth is “decreed” and “revealed,” not “discovered” or “created” (as in modern science and art). Thus, all the cardinal questions of philosophy – from the meanings of truth, justice, happiness and freedom to questions about the methods for defining or discovering each – are reduced to a literal and limited exegesis of one or a few antiquarian texts.  

If we accept the notion that rationalism is a cardinal element of modernity; if we agree that skepticism, along with a Sisyphean, individualized quest for an ephemeral truth, is an inseparable part of modernity’s epistemology or theory of knowledge; and finally, if we concur that the modern notion of progress posits that happiness, and the knowledge necessary to actualize it, are functions of our own actions and not fate... then it becomes evident why Shiite Fundamentalism and the certitude it promises can appear as a critical response to, or a remedy for, the anxious certitude of modernity.  

Such insistence on divine legitimacy, and its incumbent dismissal of all other sources of authority, can be seen as an important source of the dynamic tension between the Shiite vision and political modernity, a vision that accepts only the “social contract” and the will of the people as the source of legitimacy. Shared and common belief about a community of interests between the state and the masses, between “we” and “they,” is essential for the creation of civil society and democracy. Shiites, on the other hand, claim that such a community of interest exists only with the Imam as the sole legitimate ruler.

Finally, as was alluded to earlier, mobilization and participation, like politicization have increased. When they choose to do so, the people vote, protest, demonstrate, go on strike, and

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154 Milani, 2004, p.27
155 Ibid., p.28
156 Ibid., p.31
riot just as much as they did in 1978. The reason why crowds of millions have not yet emerged on the streets as they did in the 1970's is that the clerics have had the foresight to create militias of thugs called the Basij (initially formed as a volunteer corps in the war against Iraq) to beat potential protestors and youth into conforming with the law. All Iranians know that the clerics will have no mercy on them. As Ayatollah Khamenei said himself, "Leaders do not have the right to have any pity whatsoever for the mercenaries of the enemy."\(^{157}\) Once again, we see that modernization has advanced on some fronts, while retreating on others.

C.E. Black's four phases of modernization are: the challenge of modernity, the consolidation of modernizing leadership, economic and social transformation, and the integration of society. As we saw from the statistics on access to televisions and the internet, the people's exposure to modernity has greatly increased since the revolution. Moreover, the increasing size of diasporas of Iranians in exile means that more Iranians than ever are receiving first-hand experience of modern, democratic, and secular societies. When they return home every year to visit friends and family, they bring with them an accumulation of experiences that helps foment a desire for modernization, democracy, and secularism in the minds of those who remain behind.

If there is one word that can best describe the late Shah of Iran, it is 'modernizing.' One of his most famous quotes was the following: "In 10-12 years we shall reach the quality of life enjoyed by you Europeans."\(^{158}\) The clerics in power today have no desire for economic growth beyond their own personal wealth. The article in *Forbes* Magazine, entitled "Millionaire Mullahs" was dedicated to exposing the fact that the Mullahs who run Iran, who are supposed to be pious, spiritual people, are becoming millionaires on the backs of the Iranian people.\(^{159}\) Their


isolationist policies have stymied trade and foreign investment and cannot be called modernizing in the economic sense.

Economic and social transformation and the integration of society have also been reversed. The booming economy of the 1970’s has been torn apart by the war with Iraq and isolation from the international community. The advances that women made in integrating themselves into the economic, political, and even military spheres in the Pahlavi period have all been reversed. This means that by my adaptation of Black’s phases, modernization has been reversed in all phases except the challenge of modernity.

Some other aspects of modernization that have not yet been mentioned are the expansion of education and the mass media, which as we have seen have grown significantly in Iran. Although education relies heavily on Islamist doctrine and the mass media inside Iran is tightly controlled, the number of students in secondary and tertiary education has increased dramatically, as has the number of universities (though some argue that their quality has also significantly dropped). Also, whereas the domestic mass media is virtually all propaganda (except for the short-lived reformist newspapers), a large number of households have satellite dishes and therefore access to foreign media. Efforts to control the internet have failed and radio is also beamed in from neighbouring countries. The mass media should thus be construed as the access that the people have to reliable information, and not what the state provides for them.

Returning to Smith’s breakdown of secularism, those categories of secularization that are institutional have all been reversed, i.e. polity-separation, polity-expansion, and polity-dominance secularization. Those that have to do with the hearts and minds of the people, however, have flourished immensely, i.e. political-cultural and political process secularization.
The clerics' influence over the people has decreased dramatically as has religious identity (particularly among the youth). The transformation of values has also thrived.

Evidence to support this can be found in "The Worldviews of Islamic Publics: The Cases of Egypt, Iran, and Jordan," which is an article in Human Values and Social Change: Findings from the Values Surveys edited by Ronald Inglehart. It shows that of those surveyed in Iran, 59% expressed very great trust in the Mosque, 10% expressed very great trust in the press, 16% expressed very great trust in the television, and 22% expressed very great trust in the government. Let us bear in mind that the press and television are state controlled. 82% of respondents described themselves as "A religious person" and 79% thought religion is very important in life. When age is taken into account, the figures show that the 18-25 year old category is less religious and trusts the government less than any other category (20% expressed very great trust in government). In their conclusions, the authors state that,

In Iran, the younger and more educated respondents appeared to be more nationalistic, more secular, and less religious...furthermore, while the level of education was inversely related to trust in mosque and trust in government...this pattern meant more secularism and less religiosity.

When these figures are set alongside the rioting, general discontent, unrest, and voting patterns that were demonstrated earlier, it is clear that the thesis of this paper is sound, that while Iranians remain religious, the demand for secularization is high and increasing over time.

In answering one of the original questions of this paper, whether Iran fits the way in which modernization theory explains secularization, I believe the answer is that it does because

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160 It is based on national representative surveys of 3000 Egyptians, 2532 Iranians, and 1222 Jordanians carried out in 2000-2001 as part of the World Values Surveys.
162 Ibid., p.75
163 Ibid., p.71
164 Ibid., p.85
165 Ibid., p.89
of the various indicators of modernization that have gone forward, such as education and access to mass media. Nevertheless, some aspects of modernization, such as rationalism as the basis of explanation in society, have been reversed, which is an extremely rare process. In a way, I believe that the reversal of those aspects have also contributed to the secularization of society in the form of a backlash against forced sacralization.

However, reversal should not be confused with 'a lack of-'. Reversal of modernization means that people have had something and lost it within one generation. This suggests that a reversal does not necessarily produce a negative outcome in terms of secularization, whereas a lack of modernity may mean a decreased demand for secularism. In other words, the relationship between a pre-modern society and secularization is not necessarily the same as that between a society that has lost its modernity and secularization. A pre-modern society may have no desire to separate religion from the state, but a society that once had, and has since lost aspects of its modernity, such as contemporary Iran, may have residual or even resulting demand for secularism on a political level.

The case of Iran in light of the theory that modernization leads to secularization shows that the theory also contains deficiencies, because distinctions must be made first in what aspects of society are being secularized (institutional or cultural) and second, what aspects of modernization are at play. More research ought to be done by comparative political scientists to determine precisely which aspects of modernization affect secularization. Also, more research needs to be done on the behaviour of the regime in question. With regards to Iran, the more extreme and repressive the government becomes (as it likely will, following the recent parliamentary elections and the presidential elections next year, which will probably be won by a conservative), the more rapid the pace of cultural secularization becomes. Perhaps repression is
as important a consideration as modernization in determining the direction and strength of secularization, both in the case of the Islamic government of Iran, which pushes its people towards secularization, and in the case of other Muslim countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, which inadvertently push their people away from it. Either way, according to the findings of this paper, the demand for secularization in Iran will continue to grow. The Islamic regime will gradually near the threshold of collapse and be forced to change. The question remains, however, how and when will the change occur?

**Problems with the Existing Theory**

Five major issues arise out of the works of the modernization theorists examined in this paper. The first is that some of them tend to view modernization as “systemic” i.e. that all aspects of it move in the same direction at the same time, which is obviously false. As was stated earlier, particularly in undemocratic regimes such as those in the Arab world, modernization unfolds in uneven ways, regardless of which definition of modernization one is inclined to take.

The second issue that arises is that some authors treat secularism as though it were a unified concept. In other words, either a state is secular, or it is not. A brief glance at contemporary Iran and Turkey would dispel this myth efficiently. The Islamic state in Iran is the precise opposite of secular. It derives its legitimacy only from God and rules on that basis. As we have seen, in Iran popular unrest and widespread discontent with theocracy has been proven through voting patterns and riots on the street among other things. However, the Turkish state was founded on the principle of secularism and is staunchly protective of its irreligious character. In Turkey, Islamist parties have on several occasions been brought to power by the will of the people, only to be thrown out by the avowedly secular military establishment. Furthermore, the current ruling party in Turkey has Islamist roots, but secular policies, and has thus far been
tolerated by the military. Granted, these analogies are somewhat simplistic, but they serve to show that as Smith points out, secularism can occur at many different levels. Likewise, Carroll claims that “For our purposes, secularization will be taken to mean any diminution in the scope of human life that is governed by religious laws, religious values, or religious authorities.”

The third issue is whether modernization ought to be perceived as a static, dichotomous phenomenon; whether it is a continuous, linear process; or whether it is teleological, but not necessarily linear. One thing is for certain, the case of the Iranian revolution shows that it is definitely not irreversible. Viewing modernization as static and dichotomous where countries are either traditional or modern does not help in finding any causal relationship between it and secularism. While a dynamic linear process is not as much of an oversimplification as a static model, it too cannot adequately explain secularization. The problem here is that secularism is seen by some as being a constitutive part of modernization, which means that it cannot simultaneously be a result of it if the model is linear. While teleological explanations may be more difficult to refute, their ambiguity also makes it difficult to use such an explanation in some worthwhile empirical sense. In other words, if a country seems to be trending towards modernity in some ways, but not in others, and if there are intervening periods of religious revival, then it may or may not be secularizing and/or modernizing. This would amount to a lack of clarity and logical function.

The fourth problem with modernization theory as a whole has to do with the question of time. Many theorists seem to treat modernization as though it had short causes and short results. When they wonder why Algerians are so supportive of their Islamist groups, after being in such close contact with Europe, they are assuming that forty two years of independence are enough cause for modernization. Paul Pierson rightly argues that long views of such processes ought to

166 Carroll, p.364
be taken.¹⁶⁷ After all, it took Europe hundreds of years to emerge from traditional, religious societies into modern, secular ones. If we are conscious of the short time frames that Pierson criticizes, and decide to look at these countries over a long period of time, then do we have to wait several centuries before engaging in meaningful analysis? The answer is no, even Huntington acknowledges that modernization has accelerated and will take much less time for developing nations to undergo it because of the pre-existence of the European model.¹⁶⁸

Finally, the fifth problem with the “state of the field” on modernization theory is that it does not account for exogenous factors. Although the colonial experience is long over, much of the rise of Islamism in the Muslim world can be attributed to warped nationalism. Palestinian Islamist groups are obviously attractive because of their staunch and unwavering resistance to Israel; similarly, Pakistani Islamists are partly popular because of their staunch commitment to regaining Muslim Kashmir; Iranian Islamist revolutionaries were fed up with American involvement in their politics (never forgetting the 1953 coup that brought down Dr. Mossadegh); Egyptian, Jordanian and Turkish Islamists are all fed up with their countries’ ties and alliances with perceived Western neo-imperialists; and some Southeast Asian Islamists have grown out of ethnic rivalries.

There are some endogenous factors that are missed by modernization theorists as well. For example, many Islamist parties appeal to the masses on the basis that their secular leaders are simply corrupt dictators. Being pious people, it is assumed that given the chance, they would not succumb to corruption and ruthless tyranny. In short, Islamism is a form of dissent.

Modernization theory is silent on these issues, issues that do not necessarily affect political-

culture secularization, but they certainly have an impact on political process secularization, i.e. the political saliency of religious leaders and parties.

In sum, the theories that are currently used to explain secularization are inadequate, but useful in pointing to various indicators that may help scholars better understand the process that is occurring in Iran. A closer look at some other countries in the area will help in understanding why Iran is in fact a deviant case.

VII. Conclusion

A Comparative Perspective

In drawing comparisons to other countries, excerpts from the findings of the survey entitled “The Worldviews of Islamic Publics: A case study of Egypt, Iran, and Jordan” suggest that Iran represents a deviant case.

We find several distinctive characteristics in the worldviews and value orientations of the publics of Egypt, Jordan, and Iran. We focused on such values as religious beliefs, religiosity, national identity, and attitude toward Western culture, gender relationship, marriage, ideal number of children, politics, and some of the major social institutions...High percentages of the respondents in all three countries considered religion to be very important in their life.

But in other aspects of their worldviews, we find interesting cross-national variations. Egyptians and Jordanians appeared to be considerably more religious than Iranians in terms of such measures as participation in religious services and religion versus nationalism forming individual identity. Furthermore, the Jordanians appeared to be most concerned, followed by the Egyptians, and then the Iranians about Western cultural invasion...Although an in depth analysis of the data is necessary to make a more definitive conclusion, based on these measures we may tentatively conclude that Iranians appeared to be less traditional (and more modern based on Western standards) than either Egyptians or Jordanians.

In Iran, where the society has been dominated by a religious fundamentalist regime, the public appeared to be less religious, less anti-West, more secular, and
more pro-modernist values than the public in either Egypt or Jordan, where the state is secular and decidedly pro-West.\textsuperscript{169}

The identity crisis that Egypt has been facing over the last 50 years is arguably the most severe one of the Arab world. Egypt is a rarity in the Arab world in that it is not simply a “tribe with a flag,” and has an ancient history and a clear national identity. The problem is that Egypt is struggling to figure out some way to take the difficult step of modernizing itself without compromising its culture. Egyptians have always been at the intellectual and religious head of the Islamic world, often giving birth to widespread movements and ideologies. The dilemma is that many Egyptians see McDonald’s and Coca-Cola in Egypt as a cultural invasion of the West and have bound modernization to that perceived invasion. Traditionalists and Islamists in Egypt prefer to shut the door on both the West and modernity simultaneously.

The way that the state has decided to handle this Islamist backlash is through a carrot-and-stick policy. The state has systematically combated Islamists through detentions, torture, imprisonment and execution, especially since the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat by Islamist extremists. The carrot part of the strategy has been to appease some of the Islamist forces by allowing them to ban certain books and harass secular intellectuals. Since September 11, 2001, the Egyptian government has used the state of emergency that the country has been under since the Sadat assassination to crackdown on Islamist groups.

When the state allows itself to disregard human rights and basic decency, it loses the moral high-ground over both opposition and extremist groups. Moreover, when the state causes physical pain and even death to individuals, those individuals (or their friends and family if the person died) then become much more radicalized and will be more likely to look towards political Islamists for guidance. If President Mubarak and his Arab counterparts were to begin

\textsuperscript{169} Azadarmaki, Taqhi and Mansoor Moaddel, pp.88-89
allowing democratic institutions and processes to take hold in their countries then the people's grievances over lack of development, hunger, poverty, lack of education etc. could be expressed through legal opposition groups rather than being funneled into extremist Islamist groups that threaten to destabilize them. The situation in many Arab countries is similarly opposite to that of Iran. The Arabs persecute their Islamists, the Iranians persecute their liberals. In both cases, the net effect is to bolster the opposition. Only in Turkey, and only there in the last few years, has a state been able to accommodate an opposition party that is able to seize power democratically. So far, the experiment seems to be working. The Islamist Justice and Development Party has (as in most democracies) moderated its policies upon coming to power. The Turkish case presents a good example of a way for the Islamic regime to survive in Iran. This was experimented with the advent of Khatami, who was relatively more liberal than his conservative predecessors. As we saw earlier, the conservatives in Iran seem to have come to the conclusion that the experiment has run its course and that it is time to return to conservative rule.

The brief comparisons with other Islamic countries and the historical background provided (from 500 BCE to 1997) provide insight into why Iran is a deviant case. The historical experience of countries like Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey have all been different from that of Iran in the sense that the latter had extensive experience with the amalgamation of religion and state from the era of the Achaemenids, to the Arab conquests, to the Safavid dynasty, and finally to the Islamic Republic. The Turkish experience is shaped by the fact that instead of breaking from the Islamic caliphate, as the Safavids did, they seized it and took control of it. The similarity between the Turkish experience and that of Iran can be found in the radical secularization programmes of Atatürk and Reza Shah, but even there the institution of the monarchy in Iran and the power of the military in Turkey set those experiences apart. Like Iran, Egypt has an ancient
pre-Islamic past, and had a thriving civilization when the forces of Islam first crossed the Sinai Peninsula. But unlike Iran, pre-Islamic Egyptian language and identity did not survive the contact with Islam. Jordan is probably the least similar to Iran because of its lack of nationhood prior to the twentieth century. But in more recent times, King Hussein of Jordan faced difficulties similar to those of the Shah of Iran in facing the dual threats of communism and Islamism. While in all three cases there are similarities in terms of historical experience, the differences are enough to be able to say that Iran is a deviant case.

If the histories of these countries are set aside and they are viewed purely on the basis of events in the last decade or so, then the case for examining Iran as ‘deviant’ is even clearer. The trend in all of these countries seems to be towards Islamism in the sense that there is a demand for allowing religion and the clerics to have a greater voice in expressing their views on the day-to-day actions of government, if not as a direct participant, as in Turkey, then at least as a voice of opposition. The generalization that Lijphart refers to as the point of reference for a ‘deviant case’ is that people in Islamic countries seem to be demanding less secularism. Iran is deviant in that the people are demanding the opposite.

As an interpretive case study, where theories are used to gain a greater understanding of the country in question, the conclusions that have been drawn in this paper are that the dissent and unrest that the country has experienced are symptoms of a growing demand for the withdrawal of religion from society; this demand, in turn, is a result of the advancement of modernization in certain key areas, such as education and the media, and its reversal in other areas, such as rationalism and religious, reach into economic, legal, family, and scientific subsystems. This has been further exasperated by repression and heavy-handed crackdowns on the agents of change – namely journalists, students, women, and intellectuals.
Looking into the Future

There are three different scenarios that could occur in the future. The first is further reform, the second is holding a referendum, and the third is revolution. The problem with further reform is that it is difficult to continue reforming the state within the parameters of an Islamic state to a point where it would satisfy the people, particularly the youth. In order for it to avoid becoming an oxymoron, the Islamic Republic must retain some sense of Islamic rule to survive. Islamic rule means that the clerics in particular will have to retain a large degree of power over the legislation that passes through Parliament. The fact is that promotion within the clergy requires that the candidate be male, most are old, and none are elected (the discussion here is with regards to the clergy itself, not the Parliament or Presidency). The ranks that they are given are decided by other clergymen, not by the people. The consequence of this is that the ways in which they interpret Islam will not be reflective of the will of the people, nor will the interpreters themselves be an accurate representation of them. Therefore, no matter how far the path of reform goes, if a freely elected Parliament were to grant full rights to women, for example, the old men who make up the top clergy and therefore the top interpreters of Islam would veto it. If they were not given veto power, then the nature of the republic could no longer be considered to be Islamic in the sense that it is based on Islamic law. This is the likely outcome if the Parliament and President were able to wrest power away from the unelected Council of Guardians and the Supreme Leader, though the recent parliamentary elections and most likely the upcoming presidential elections in 2005 will have nullified such a scenario for the time being.

The only way that reform would work would be if reform were to occur within the clergy and the religion itself, à la Protestant Reformation. Only when Islamic law itself is altered by someone like Martin Luther, in order to make it compatible with liberal democracy would there
be a possibility of having a true Islamic democracy. Islam, though, is not well positioned for reform in that new ideas are quickly denounced as heresy. Outbidding and competition within the religious establishment force opinions to become more traditional, as opposed to more modern. The clerics are constantly trying to outdo one another by having more and more conservative views. The reason for this is that power currently rests in the most conservative hands and advancement in the Islamic Republic can only be procured by appearing pious. Merit is judged by devotion to Islam and the most obvious example of this is the way in which the Council of Guardians vets candidates for Parliament and the Presidency, based on their Islamic credentials.

Holding a referendum is a lofty idea and is shared by both exiled opposition and domestic opposition (not the reformists) alike. The problem however, is that there is no vehicle for bringing about such an ideal outcome. Strikes and civil disobedience cannot occur on a massive scale because people cannot afford to lose their jobs in case they are unsuccessful. Also, since the revolution was able to persecute or exile most of the business elite, a new elite emerged at the heads of factories, corporations and government-sponsored foundations that were loyal to the regime. These are the people who are paid to send their workers to anti-American rallies and to voting booths to boost turnout, and they have no interest in allowing any type of civil disobedience to occur in their companies. Without some form of peaceful protest that paralyzes the state, there is no incentive for the ruling clerics to allow a referendum to take place. Furthermore, there are many problems with holding referenda *per se* in that they are easily manipulated and, as with the referendum in 1979, can present the people with a false dilemma. There are also no indications from students demanding a referendum, or monarchists in exile, or even the Crown Prince himself (who is the most ardent advocate of holding a referendum as a
peaceful means of removing the current system) as to the content or wording of a referendum. Would it again ask whether the people are for or against the continuation of an Islamic republic? Would it allow people to choose between an Islamic republic, a secular republic, and a secular constitutional monarchy? These questions have yet to be answered.

This leaves us with one final path – revolution. If nothing changes and the state continues on the path that it is on now, with the reform movement that was placating the people effectively shut down, the outcome could be great bloodshed. For now, it seems as though the students and journalists have lost the battle and have become apathetic. Considering that two-thirds of the population are under thirty, educated, and have access to the world via satellite suggests that demographics will eventually win the day, one way or another.
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Appendix A

Timeline of Historical Events

ca. 4000 BCE Bronze Age settlements (Sialk, Hasanlu, Hissar)
ca. 2000-1000 BCE Prophet Zoroaster founds Zoroastrianism
2700-1600 BCE Elamite Kingdom
ca. 728 BCE Deioces founds Median Kingdom
ca. 550 BCE Cyrus the Great defeats Median king, founds Persian Empire
522-486 BCE Darius the Great
331 BCE Alexander the Great defeats Darius III
224 CE Ardashir founds Sasanian dynasty
260 Shapur I captures Roman emperor Valerian
ca. 570 Birth of the Prophet Mohammad
608-622 The “Great War” between Sasanians and Byzantium
637 Battle of Qadisiya; Arabs defeat Persians
642 Battle of Nehavand; Iran under Islamic rule
651 Murder of last Sasanian king
747 Abbasid Revolution in Khorasan
819-1005 Samanid dynasty in eastern Iran
ca. 980 Ferdowsi writes the epic *Shahnameh*
1092 Assassination of Nizam al-Mulk
1219 Beginning of Mongol invasion
1320-1390 Life of poet Hafez
1380-1393 Conquests of Timur (Tamerlane)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1501</td>
<td>Shah Ismail I founds Safavid dynasty</td>
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<td>1514</td>
<td>Ottomans defeat Safavids at Chaldiran</td>
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<tr>
<td>1587-1629</td>
<td>Shah Abbas the Great</td>
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<tr>
<td>1722</td>
<td>Afghan invasion and siege of Esfahan</td>
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<td>1736-1747</td>
<td>Nader Shah Afshar</td>
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<td>1750-1779</td>
<td>Karim Khan Zand</td>
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<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Establishment of Qajar dynasty</td>
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<tr>
<td>1804-1813</td>
<td>First Russo-Persian war</td>
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<td>1826-1828</td>
<td>Second Russo-Persian war</td>
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<td>1813</td>
<td>Treaty of Golestan</td>
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<td>1828</td>
<td>Treaty of Turkmenchai</td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Appointment of Amir Kabir as prime minister</td>
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<td>1851</td>
<td>Dar al-Fonoun college founded in Tehran</td>
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<td>1852</td>
<td>Murder of Amir Kabir</td>
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<tr>
<td>1856-1857</td>
<td>Anglo-Persian war</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>The Tobacco Protest</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Assassination of Naser al-Din Shah</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>D'Arcy Concession for petroleum and gas</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Beginning of Constitutional Revolution</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>Anglo-Russian Convention on Iran</td>
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<td>1908</td>
<td>Mohammad Ali Shah declares martial law and suspends first Majles</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Formation of Anglo-Persian Oil Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Russian ultimatum and intervention; collapse of second Majles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>Abortive Anglo-Persian Agreement</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>Coup d’état by Reza Khan</td>
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<td>1925</td>
<td>Constituent Assembly votes to establish monarchy under Reza Shah</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Name of country changed from ‘Persia’ to ‘Iran’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>Veiling of women outlawed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Completion of Trans-Iranian Railway</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Allied occupation; abdication of Reza Shah</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Mossadegh becomes Prime Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Mossadegh overthrown in CIA-backed Coup d’état</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Iran joins Baghdad Pact (CENTO)</td>
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<td>1959</td>
<td>Defence agreement with the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Inauguration of the “White Revolution”</td>
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<td>1963</td>
<td>Religious protests; Ayatollah Khomeini exiled</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Coronation ceremony of Mohammad Reza Shah</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Celebration at Persepolis of 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Mohammad Reza Shah announces steep increases in price of oil</td>
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<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Riots and demonstrations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>Mohammad Reza Shah leaves Iran; Khomeini returns; beginning of hostage crisis; Constitution of Islamic Republic adopted</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Bani-Sadr elected president; beginning of Iran-Iraq war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>American Embassy hostages released; Khomeini removes Bani-Sadr from office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>Tudeh</em> (Communist) Party banned; consolidation of clerical power completed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Khomeini accepts cease-fire in Iran-Iraq war</td>
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1989  Death of Khomeini
1993  Re-election of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani as president
1997  Election of Mohammad Khatami as president
1999  Student demonstrations and mass protests nationwide
2000  Elections for new Majles result in victory for reformists
2002  First local city council elections held, victory for reformists
2004  Parliamentary elections held, reformists barred from running, conservative victory

Source: Daniel, Elton L., The History of Iran, Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2001, pp.xiii-xvi (This source was used for information up to 2001, the rest was added by the author)
Appendix B

Map of Iran

Source: Nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions