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## IDEOLOGY AS EPISODIC DISCOURSE: THE CASE OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION\*

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*Sociological research on ideology and revolution has been guided by three models: the subjectivist model, which proposes that ideology re-orientes disoriented and discontented individuals in situations of social strain; the organizational model, which analyzes ideology in terms of organized contention for power and emphasizes the organizational context in which ideological producers respond to challenges to their authority; and the Marxian model, which attributes causal primacy to class conflict in its analysis of ideological dynamics. I argue for a fourth model, one that treats ideology as an episodic discourse, consisting of a general principles, concepts, symbols, and rituals that shape human actions in a particular historical period, and considers revolutionary phenomenon as a particular mode of historical action constituted by revolutionary ideology. The Iranian Revolution is examined to demonstrate the fruitfulness of the episodic discourse model.*

Characterizing Iran as “an Island of peace and tranquility,” the Shah had every reason to believe in the political stability of his kingdom. Except for the religious disturbances of 1963, the country’s political climate had remained exceptionally calm since the early 1950s. The quadrupling of oil prices in 1974 had substantially increased the state’s revenues, enabling the state to finance its ambitious modernization program and military growth. But the Shah was wrong. Minor and isolated antigovernment demonstrations in 1977 soon developed into mass mobilization against the Shah. By the end of 1978, virtually all political experts on Iran felt that the Shah’s downfall was imminent. The revolution proceeded so quickly that it took foreign observers and even the revolutionaries themselves by surprise.

For students of revolution, the Iranian Revolution is a particularly interesting case. The rapidity with which the revolutionary movement proceeded, the unanimity of the public demand for

the overthrow of the Shah through mass demonstrations that crippled one of the strongest repressive regimes in the Third World, the decline of secular politics, and the increasing importance of religious ideology in the revolutionary movement — all become particularly intriguing given that Iran had not experienced a major economic or political crisis. Many scholars have interpreted this revolution in terms of the major current theoretical perspectives. I discuss the shortcomings inherent in these approaches and develop an alternative approach, one that focuses on ideology and changes in the nature of *discourse* before, during, and after the Revolution. I then extend the lessons of the empirical case of the Iranian Revolution to theories of revolution in general.

The distinctive feature of the Iranian Revolution was the all-encompassing role played by the imageries and symbolism of Shi’i Islam<sup>1</sup> in initiating and sustaining the revolutionary movement. The importance of Shi’i Islam brings ideology to the center of debates on theories of revolution. To incorporate ideology into the explanation of

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<sup>1</sup> Shi’ism is a religious sect in Islam, predominant by the Twelver Shi’i, which recognizes twelve religious leaders (*Imam*), after Prophet Mohammad. The first is Imam Ali Ebn-i Abi Talib, the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law, who is believed to be the true successor of Mohammad, and the last is Imam Mohammad al-Mehdi, the messiah, who is believed to be in Occultation, absented from physical plane but will reappear someday to solve the humanity’s problems. In this paper, revolutionary Shi’ism and revolutionary Islam are used interchangeably.

the causes and processes of revolution, I make an analytical distinction between revolution as a *content* — a series of specific institutional changes in a relatively short period of time — and revolution as a particular *mode* of historical action shaped by revolutionary ideology (Furet 1981). In a revolution, ideology takes over politics, transcends social differences among participants, moving them in a communitarian relation and orienting them to act directly against the state. It is ideology that distinguishes revolution from routine contentions for power.

### THEORIES OF REVOLUTION AND THE IRANIAN CASE

Despite recent advances in sociological theories of revolution, the status of ideology in these theories remains obscure. In these theories, ideology is either reduced to its psychological function in re-orienting disoriented individuals, to the dynamic of organized contentions for power, or class conflict. Current theories also tend to over-emphasize the notion that human action is guided by abstract values or rational interests. Finally, existing theories fail to capture the revolutionary phenomenon in its entirety — as a mode of action, not simply a content produced by contention for power or class conflict. In this paper, I re-examine the role of culture in guiding human action, reformulate the concept of revolution, and develop a nonreductionist conception of ideology by viewing ideology as episodic discourse.

#### *Subjectivist Models*

The connection between individual psychology and the outbreak of revolution is most explicitly modelled in social psychological and structural-functional theories of revolution, which treat revolution and rebellion as “an individual act intimately dependent on a certain attitude — rebellious attitude — toward some or all authorities” (Tilly 1975, p. 487). According to this view, revolutions occur when rapid structural changes build up unresolved tensions that burst into disorder if restraints are weak. Tensions are produced in several ways: (1) by a disequibrated system that produces disoriented individuals whose social ties are broken (Johnson 1964, 1966); (2) by the breakdown of intermediate social and political organizations which produces a mass society (Arendt 1958, Kornhauser 1959); (3) by the gap between rising expectations and needs gratification (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970); and (4) by rapid moderniza-

tion that outpaces institutionalization (Huntington 1968).

Disorientation and discontent alone cannot cause individual revolutionary action. They are aspects of “critical situations” furnishing the psychological predispositions “that make individuals suggestible” (Cantril 1941, p. 64; Toch 1965, p. 12) and “vulnerable to the appeal of mass movement” (Kornhauser 1959, p. 112). Individuals begin to act when an ideology is available that offers an alternative value structure (Johnson 1966, pp. 82–83), explains the loss of community, politicizes some of their most basic needs — “identity, belonging, worthiness, efficacy” (Schwartz 1971, p. 123) — and presents “a ‘cafeteria’ of appeals, catering to a diversity of needs” (Toch 1965, p. 17). Ideology is portrayed as a hierarchy of values and beliefs whose effectiveness in guiding human action is contingent on the degree to which it is internalized by individuals. Concepts such as “generalized beliefs” (Smelser 1963, pp. 79–84), “framework of consciousness” (Apter 1964), and “cultural and mental complex” (Dion 1959, p. 49) are suggested to explain how ideology functions to bind the community together, define ultimate purpose, and ensure social consensus (Dion 1959, p. 52; Apter 1964, p. 18).

The connecting link between ideology and human action in subjectivist models is fundamentally psychological. This poses a serious problem for testing its validity because the subjectivist link is difficult to operationalize using historical materials (Wuthnow 1985, p. 816). Scholars in this tradition never directly measure individual psychological conditions, or demonstrate how ideology shapes the mental conditions of individuals. Their methodology generally involves demonstrating that certain proxy measures of independent variables (such as systemic disequilibrium, relative deprivation, critical situations, unbearable and dead-end situations, social isolation, or socioeconomic crisis) precede the occurrence of protest movements or revolution (Cantril 1941; Davies 1962; Kornhauser 1959; Toch 1965). For example, Johnson (1966, pp. 119–34) used rising suicide rates, heightened ideological activity, rising military participation, and increased rates of crime, especially political crime, as indicators of the normative disturbances produced by social change.

Various scholars have applied subjectivist interpretations to the role of religion in Iranian politics. If ideology is seen as a hierarchy of values, then the argument that Shi’i opposition to the

state is rooted in its political theory falls within the subjectivist model. For example, Algar (1969, p. 2), following Watt (1960), derived the oppositional role of Shi'ism from its political theory and primordial political values. Shi'ism believes in the *Imamate*, a succession of charismatic figures who are believed to be the dispensers of true guidance after the death of Prophet Mohammad. Since the twelfth *Imam* is in occultation, no worldly legitimate authority remains on earth. Similarly, Savory (1979) claimed that "there is no theological basis in Twelver Shi'i state for an accommodation between the *mujtahids* . . . and any form of polity" (p. 10). This ideological precedent, which renders all temporal rulers illegitimate, is alleged to underlie the oppositional role of Shi'ism in Iran's politics. This interpretation, however, is not supported by historical facts. The Shi'i movement in Iran has always been diverse and the ulama (theologians) have been politically heterogeneous. On many historically significant issues in Iranian politics in the last 200 years, one group of the ulama has tended to support the monarchy while another has supported the opposition. It is difficult to explain such a politically diverse movement by a constant of Shi'i political theory. Ulama political unity against the state was a post-1963 phenomenon (Moaddel 1986). Furthermore, ulama unity against the late Shah does not adequately explain the popularization and politicization of religion in the post-coup (1953) period. Lay intellectuals played a crucial role in advancing the Islamic alternative to the Pahlavi monarchy.

Another way of framing the problem of a subjectivist interpretation is to argue that the 1960s and 1970s rapid economic growth was followed by an economic crisis intensive enough to produce a mental state among the people that made them highly susceptible to Khomeini's fundamentalist appeal. But this argument is also problematic: Although Iran's prerevolutionary economic growth was unprecedented, the economic problems of the late 1970s can hardly be labelled a crisis. Some economic difficulties existed, such as infrastructural bottlenecks (Graham 1979), inflation and scarcity of basic necessities (Brun and Dumont 1978), and a budget deficit caused by a sudden drop in international demand for Iranian oil, but inflation was not severe by Third World standards. Retail prices fluctuated between 11 and 25 percent in the 1973–1977 period, and the drop in the demand for oil was about 11 percent (Bank Markazi Iran 1976). While economic difficulties contributed to general discontent, these

difficulties do not seem to have produced an intolerable gap between expectations and achievement, or had disorienting effects on individual psychology. Thus, this line of reasoning cannot account for the change in people's perceptions about the regime that caused them to follow the religious opposition.

A third, and final, line of defense of the subjectivist interpretation was advanced by Arjomand (1988), who argued that Iran's rapid social change resulted in social dislocation and normative disturbance. With the state's failure to reintegrate dislocated groups and individuals, Shi'i Islam arose as a rival integrative movement (pp. 4–5). Unfortunately, Arjomand brought little empirical data to bear on his thesis: He only provided the example of one particular dislocated group — recent emigrants to towns — who turned to religion because "the Shah did not integrate this group into his political system" (p. 107). However, Arjomand acknowledged that "the extent of participation of recent migrants in the revolutionary movement is not clear" (p. 236, fn. 12). Furthermore, evidence indicates that the urban poor living in shanty towns did not participate in the revolution to any significant degree (Kazemi 1980; Parsa 1989). In fact, an analysis of the occupational background of over 500 people who were arrested or killed in protest demonstrations against the Shah in 1963 indicated that core support for Ayatollah Khomeini came from those with petty bourgeois backgrounds (Moaddel 1986). The available evidence strongly suggests that marginal and isolated individuals and groups played a minor role in the revolutionary movement. Some of Arjomand's historical assertions run contrary to his theoretical claim. For example, although he emphasized the alliance between the ulama and the bazaaris against the state and against foreign penetration (Arjomand 1988, pp. 15, 106), the ulama and the bazaaris were not marginal or isolated groups produced by social change.

Thus Shi'i primordial political values that question the legitimacy of temporal rulers cannot explain the diversity of the Shi'i movement in contemporary Iran. Furthermore, factors like war and social and economic crises, which are often presented in the literature as proximate measures of individual disorientation, were absent in prerevolutionary Iran. Finally, the Iranian case provides little support for the integrative/value-consensus argument because marginal and isolated groups played a minor role in the Revolution.

### *Organizational Models*

What is taken for granted in subjectivist models becomes problematic in organizational theories of revolution: How do dissatisfied individuals accept a revolutionary ideology and organize to act collectively against the state? To play a significant role in revolution, ideology must first be presented to interested audiences. Books and articles must be written, pamphlets and newspapers published, audiences provided, speeches prepared and delivered effectively. In short, ideas must be produced and disseminated, a requirement that is contingent on the availability of resources. Resource mobilization is a collective endeavor that requires organization to coordinate individual dissatisfactions and formulate strategies and tactics in a revolutionary situation. Ideology is therefore modeled in terms of organized contention for political power. Ideas are molded by organized power contenders in order to justify their "exclusive alternative claims to the control over the government" (Tilly 1978, p. 200). Revolutionary ideologies are thus "self-conscious political arguments by identifiable political actors" (Skocpol 1985, p. 91). They provide power contenders with a revolutionary agenda that justifies their presence and mission in society, outlines their responsibilities, and indicates the action necessary for seizure of power.

In the subjectivist model, individual mental states provide the context for the growth of a revolutionary ideology. In the organizational model, ideological change is analyzed in terms of the organizational context within which "ideological producers respond to the problem of contested authority" (Zaret 1989, p. 234). Political groups develop or use a revolutionary ideology when they "lose their position in the polity and . . . are refused access to power" (Tilly 1978, p. 203). The context varies from situation to situation. For example, Fulbrook (1983) analyzed the varying political responses of Puritanism and Pietism to absolutist rule in England, Wurttemberg, and Prussia in terms of the obstacles these movements faced "in pursuit of their specifically religious goals" (p. 16). Similarly, Zaret (1985) explained the significance of the Puritan idea of the heavenly contract in sixteenth and seventeenth century England in terms of "the organizational pressures the Puritan clerics faced in their dual role as ordained ministers and as pastoral leaders of a popular social movement" (p. 5). In these and other studies, e.g., Wuthnow 1985; Stepan 1985; Neuhaus 1989, ideological change is

determined by the interaction between the organizational context of ideological producers and broad environmental conditions.

To support the organizational model, the rise of revolutionary Shi'ism must be explained in terms of the interaction between the organization of Shi'i religion and Iran's prerevolutionary social conditions. Considering the first factor, some analysts have emphasized new developments among the Shi'i ulama that made them autonomous from the state. A leading proponent of this interpretation, Keddie (1972), related the change in Shi'i doctrine in the late eighteenth century — the rise of the *Usuli* school and the decline of the *Akhbari* — to the growth in ulama power. The *Usuli* assigned the ulama the key role in the interpretation of law and demanded that all believers follow a living *mujtahid* and abide by his judgments. The *Akhbari* school, on the other hand, rejected the idea that religious scholars should use their reasons to enact judgment. Keddie stated that *Usuli* doctrine "gave the living mujtahids a power beyond anything claimed by the Sunni ulama, and gave to their rulings a sanction beyond anything merely decreed by the state" (p. 223). *Usuli* doctrine thus eliminated confusion among the ulama regarding their role in society and provided a strong organizational ideology justifying their intervention in politics. The ulama's independent sources of income, derived from religious endowments and religious taxes, furthered their institutional autonomy and political power for they did not have to rely on the state for financial support.

The growth of the Islamic alternative to the Shah's rule is thus explained within the context of the interaction between the ulama and the state. The state's modernization policies in the 1960s and 1970s stripped the ulama of their traditional socioeconomic and political privileges. The rise of Khomeini's political ideology is seen as a response to the state's challenge to ulama authority and justifies ulama participation in the Revolution (Akhavi 1980). In short, ulama institutional autonomy — the organizational context — and the state's modernization policies — the environmental condition — interacted to set in motion the production and growth of the Islamic alternative to the ideology of the monarchy.

This argument, although interesting and plausible, has serious problems. First, the state's anticlerical policies began under Reza Shah (1925–1941), the first Shah of Pahlavi. From virtually every perspective — economic, political, and cultural — the entire ecclesiastical establishment came under Reza Shah's bold attack. The ulama

gradually lost control over educational and judicial institutions and lost their seats in Parliament as well. The importance of Islam was downplayed while the Shah's ideologues glorified pre-Islamic Iranian kingship and culture. While the ulama did not like these policies, they did not unite in opposition. The organizational model also has difficulty with the fact that the grand Ayatollah of the time, Burujirdi, maintained a friendly relationship with the Pahlavis throughout his career. Even after the forced abdication of the Shah by the Allies in 1941 and the emergence of a strong democratic-nationalist movement in the country, ulama orientation toward the state was not oppositional. On the contrary, an ulama-state alignment was forged that lasted until 1959. Ayatollah Burujirdi, in a large conference he organized in Qum in 1949, even prohibited the ulama from joining parties and trafficking in politics (Akhavi 1980, p. 63). Muslim apologists have argued that Burujirdi was attempting to protect the religious establishment by depoliticizing it. But the politics of the ulama in this period run against Tilly's (1978, p. 203) assertion because they show that when power-holders lose their position in the polity they do not necessarily join the opposition. Organizational structure and environmental change, although important, were not sufficient to transform the Shi'i ulama into fulltime revolutionaries.

A second problem pertains to the availability of audiences. A strict organizational analysis cannot explain why a significant number of people would participate in an ulama-led religious opposition movement against the state, for without devout followers any attempt by the ulama to oppose the state would be doomed — as happened when a small faction of the ulama resisted Reza Shah's modernization policies.

### *Marxian Models*

The Marxian model of ideology assigns a central role to audiences. Changes in the economy and the emergence of new class positions are key historical processes that produce revolutionary actors. In a revolutionary situation, class struggle intensifies, the repressive apparatus of the ruling class collapses, the ruling ideological superstructure loses its validity, and the revolutionary consciousness associated with the ascending mode of production negates the existing social order and provides an alternative vision of society. While revolutionary ideology claims to represent the general interests of society, its existence "in a particular period presupposes the existence of a

revolutionary class" (Marx and Engels 1976, p. 60). because "the *'idea'* always disgraced itself insofar as it differed from the *'interest'*" (Marx and Engels 1975, p. 81).

To be sure, the question of what constitutes the central conception of ideology within Marxism has been the subject of debate among Marxists. Ideology first appeared in Marx's works as a negative concept — ideology distorted and misrepresented the contradiction between the forces and relations of production. Later ideology was portrayed as the totality of forms of social consciousness and was expressed by the concept of ideological superstructure. Finally, ideology assumed a positive connotation in the works of Lenin, Lukacs, and Gramsci in which it represented the set of political ideas connected with the interests of a class (Larrain 1983). These theorists underscored the significance of ideology in class mobilization as expressed in Lenin's (1977) famous dictum that "without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (p. 369). Thus, a determinate relationship between ideology and class practice was established (Larrain 1983, p. 22).

Nevertheless, Marxists continue to differ regarding the mechanism connecting ideology to class action. In earlier interpretations, the emphasis was on class consciousness, so that a Marxian conception of ideology was basically a variant of the subjectivist model. In recent decades, Marxists have argued that ideology is a social/material practice institutionalized in apparatuses (Althusser 1971; Therborn 1980). Against the subjectivist conception of political crisis, they have stressed the material-based character of ideologies and the role of organizational structures (Therborn 1980, p. 115). Drawing on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Przeworski (1980) argued that the workers' consent to capitalist relations, rather than reflecting false consciousness, mass delusion, and hoax, is a chosen strategy that has a material basis. Similarly, Burawoy (1980) argued that "consent . . . is not a subjectivist state of mind, but rather is expressed through choosing among alternative activities" (p. 282). Workers consent to their exploitation because the labor process is organized in a way that produces consent. These analyses pointed to the significance of historical conjunctions and contingencies which articulate ideological dynamics with class politics. New subjectivities, new matrices of affirmation/sanction, and a new discursive order emerge as a result of struggles waged by social forces at times of crisis and contradiction. However, "the deci-

sive aspect of these struggles in class societies is class struggle, and the resulting discursive order is class order, articulated with existential- and historical-inclusive discourses" (Therborn 1980, p. 82).

The Iranian experience, however, provides little support for the argument that ideology reflects class consciousness and interests. The connection between capitalist development of the 1960s and 1970s and the growth of revolutionary Islam was too complex to support a simplistic correspondence between revolutionary ideology and the ascending mode of production. Prerevolutionary Iran was based on a capitalist mode of production and the state was the principal agent for capitalist expansion. Nevertheless, the case of Iran does provide some support for a neo-Marxist interpretation. Within Iran's historical context, there has been an enduring articulation between class politics and the oppositional role of Shi'i Islam that may account for the problem of audiences and may also explain the changes and variations in the politics of the ulama. The class politics in question were those of the bazaaris (those engaged in trade and industry in the bazaar, the traditional sector of the economy) and the landed interests. The bazaar was the most important source of support for the religious institutions, and the ulama and bazaaris were often related through family ties (Thaiss 1971, pp. 193–94).

The bazaaris' oppositional activities have typically been a response to foreign economic penetration and the state's failure to protect domestic industrial and commercial interests (Issawi 1971). The merchant-led tobacco protest of 1890–1892 best reflects the connection between the bazaaris' interests and religious opposition and was the first of many such protest activities to occur in the following decades. The movement was a rebellion against a concession granted to a British citizen by the Shah of Qajar in 1890 for a 50-year monopoly of the tobacco trade in the Kingdom of Iran (*Correspondence* 1892, pp. 210–211). In their mobilizing efforts against the Shah and the British company, the merchants used religion effectively and persuaded the ulama to participate in the movement (Adami'yat 1981). Ulama attitudes toward the concession, however, were contradictory — some ulama played an important role in mobilizing the public against the British company, while others refused to join the movement and in some cities even supported the concession (Nateq 1983).

Similarly, Shi'i ideology tended to correlate with class politics in the Constitutional Revolu-

tion of 1905 to 1911. The bazaaris and the religious establishments fought for a strong and well-organized government under the protection of which merchants and craft guilds could run their businesses in peace, domestic industry and trade could be encouraged, and foreign penetrations could be terminated. Again, the ulama were not united. Anti-constitutionalist and royalist ulama were led by Shaykh Fazlullah Nuri, whereas the modernist ulama attempted to reconcile Islam with constitutionalism (Hairi 1977).

The connection between religious opposition and class politics under the Pahlavis provides some support for a Marxian model. Religious opposition to the Reza Shah's early anticlerical policies was quite weak, possibly because his absolutism rested on the bourgeoisie (including large merchants) and a landed aristocracy (Tabari 1977, pp. 70–75; Abrahamian 1982, p. 149). Thus, even though some ulama resisted the Shah's modernization policies, they gained little support from the merchants and landowners. Under the second Shah, however, class politics began to change. The state's economic policies, which favored large, modern commercial and industrial establishments, which were tied to and dominated by international capital, undermined the bazaar. The licensing system, expansion of banks, other state credit institutions, and the growth of a modern commercial sector contributed to the decline of the merchants' economic power (Keddie 1981). Moreover, the Shah even endorsed the physical destruction of the bazaar and the establishment of new shopping centers outside the bazaar (Graham 1979, p. 221). The Shah later admitted his contempt for the bazaaris, stating that they are "a fanatic lot . . . Moving against the bazaar was typical of the political and social risks I had to take in my drive for modernization" (Pahlavi 1980, p. 156). The Shah's land reform and agricultural policies, which favored the unpopular farm corporations and agribusiness, antagonized the landowners. For these reasons, the bazaaris and landowners joined the opposition movement and provided extensive resources as well as audiences for the Islamic alternative to the monarchy. Thus, there was a historical correlation between the dynamic of religious opposition to the state and the dynamic of class politics.

A more powerful explanation of the role of Shi'ism in the Iranian Revolution emerges when the organizational model supplements the Marxian model. Together, these theories would argue that as a result of complex historical factors, the ulama came to enjoy considerable institutional

autonomy. The institutionalization of the *Usuli* doctrine in the early nineteenth century equipped the ulama with a powerful ideological justification for their intervention in worldly affairs and a leadership role in society. However, because of their conflicting interests in society, which arose from their historical relations with the state, landed interests, and the bazaar, the ulama seldom had a unified basis for political action. When the late Shah's economic policies antagonized the bazaaris and landowners, a strong basis for ulama unity against the Shah was created. Therefore, the production of the Islamic alternative was a response to the obstacles faced by the ulama as a result of the Shah's modernization policies, and its growth was made possible by the convergence of the politics of the classes constituting their historical basis against the state.

Still, crucial problems of interpretation remain. Clearly the ulama, the bazaaris, and landowners were antagonized by the Shah's policies and therefore supported the Islamic alternative to his rule. However, the emergence of coordinated action among the members of diverse classes and their fascinating harmony in demanding the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of an Islamic government cannot be adequately explained by class and organizational analyses. The working class was numerically small and organizationally weak, while the bazaaris, who enjoyed some degree of organization, faced a strong centralized state with a proven repressive capacity. The bazaaris were not organized nationally and it was highly unlikely that they could organize without the knowledge of SAVAK, the extensive secret police network. Furthermore, the Marxian and organizational models cannot explain why Shi'ism became the dominant ideology of the Iranian Revolution while other ideologies like Marxism, nationalism, and liberalism failed to arouse more than a minimal interest among the various classes and groups involved in the Revolution. After all, not all of the participating classes and groups had adhered to Islam in past political struggles. Most puzzling is the question of why many secular intellectuals resorted to Islam in their critiques of the post coup (1953) socioeconomic and political order. These intellectuals played a crucial role in the popularization of Islam in society, for without their efforts, Khomeini's political theory was too restrictive to attract educated groups to Islam in the 1960s and 1970s.

An important ingredient was required to transform Iran's economic and political problems into

a revolutionary crisis, to produce coordination among the masses, to establish channels of effective communication between the masses and their leaders in the absence of a strong nationwide organization, and to account for the collapse of the Shah's repressive machine in a non-military confrontation. That ingredient was ideology. A serious remodeling of the role of ideology in revolution is required to capture the ways in which ideology autonomously contributed to the emergence of the revolutionary crisis, the collapse of the state, and the formation of post-revolutionary society.

#### *Revolutionary Ideology as Episodic Discourse*

The above models tend toward reductionism — ideology is reduced to its psychological functions for the disoriented and discontented individuals, to organized contentions for power, or to class conflict. These models, therefore, overlook the autonomy of ideology in the revolutionary process. These models also over-emphasize the notion that people act "piece by piece" according to their interests or values. In reality, action is necessarily integrated into larger assemblages or strategies of action (Marwell and Oliver 1984); ideology plays an independent causal role because it "shapes the capacity from which such strategies of action are constructed" (Swidler 1986, p. 277). Ideology is not simply a set of ideas in people's minds or in an accomplished text. Ideology can be observed in people's attempts to formulate their strategies of action and in the activities and artifacts of its producers (Wuthnow 1989, p. 16). Ideology operates through discursive practices inscribed in matrices of nondiscursive practices (Therborn 1980, p. 81). Therefore, ideology is best conceptualized as a *discourse* consisting of a set of general principles, concepts, symbols, and rituals used by actors to address problems in a particular historical episode.

Discourse is the method by which people construct their strategies of action. It permits certain questions to be raised and others be ignored. It influences what coalitions are permissible and structures the opportunities available for building intellectual justifications for actions. "Discourse subsumes the written as well as the verbal, the formal as well as the informal, the gestural or ritual as well as the conceptual" (Wuthnow 1989, p. 16). The autonomous process of symbolic formulation connects social structure to human action (Geertz 1973, p. 207). Symbolic behavior and ritual performances are phases in



broad social processes that transform the obligatory and constraining into something desirable. "The irksomeness of moral constraint is transformed into the 'love of virtue'" (Turner 1967, p. 30). Rituals, however, do not always play an integrative function. "Ritual's primary purpose is social change in the direction of communitarian relations . . . . The primary motivation behind ritual is the desire to break free temporarily of social structure in order to transcend its existential limitations and reconfigure it along communitarian lines" (Alexander 1991, p. 27).

The construction, maintenance, and domination of a particular ideology must be understood within its specific episodic context. Macro structural changes are treated as a succession of episodes. An episode in the history of a society comprises a sequence of historically significant events that stand out in their relationship with each other as well as their differences with the preceding and following events. The broad socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions that characterize an episode can cause changes in the worldview of ideological producers and determine the domination of a particular discourse in society. Hence, ideology is an episodic discourse.

Finally, the major theories of revolution fail to distinguish between two principal aspects of the revolutionary process. One is revolution as a content, and the other is revolution as a mode (Furet 1981). Emphasis on the content of revolutionary change characterizes virtually all theories of revolution. In Marxism, revolution resolves the contradiction between the forces and relations of production by destroying the bureaucratic and military institutions of the old regime, overthrowing the exploiting classes, and removing all social and cultural obstacles to the objective process of historical development. In organizational theories, revolutionary change begins with multiple sovereignty and ends with the replacement of one group of powerholders by another. Huntington (1968) defined revolution as "the rapid and violent destruction of existing political institutions, the mobilization of new groups into politics, and the creation of new political institutions" (p. 266). Revolutionary change is then explained in terms of the interaction between a set of variables at a particular historical juncture. In Skocpol's (1979) model, for instance, the emergence of a revolutionary situation, the breakdown of state power, and the accomplishments of revolutionary leadership are analyzed in terms of the existing international structure, the exigencies of the world historical development, and class

conflict. Revolution as a distinct historical phenomenon above and beyond a series of institutional changes in a relatively short period of time is not considered the object of explanation.

The content of revolutionary change is important, but what makes revolution a historically distinctive phenomenon is that it "is a specific mode of historical action; it is a dynamic that one may call political, ideological or cultural, for its enhanced power to activate men and women and to shape events arose from the fact that it meant many things to many people" (Furet 1981, p. 22). Revolutionary action is shaped by revolutionary discourse. It differs from ordinary oppositional political discourse in a democratic election in that it negates both the powerholders and the routine means of negation. Revolution therefore denotes "the appearance on the stage of history of a practical and ideological mode of social action totally unrelated to anything that came before" (Furet 1981, p. 23). The notion of discontinuity between revolutionary and routine contentions for power advanced in social psychological and structural-functional theories of revolution is insightful.

A revolutionary situation is not simply a condition of dual sovereignty. It is a dual sovereignty constituted by two mutually negating ideological universes — the state ideology and the ideology of the opposition. Revolutionary discourse contradicts the discourse of the state and advances an alternative way of viewing and solving the problems of social life, an outcome that can be achieved only through direct, unmediated revolutionary actions of the masses. The term "discourse" denotes a back-and-forth argument between two parties. Revolutionary discourse is generated within the context of the interaction and propaganda warfare between the state and its opposition — the state structures the arguments its opponents are likely to advance against it and vice versa. Ideological mobilization does not occur simply through the internalization of the alternative value system by individuals or through the organizational effectiveness of the revolutionary movement, it occurs through the discursive field, i.e., "a symbolic space or structure within the ideology itself" (Wuthnow 1989, p. 13). In Marxist-Leninist terms, it is a "breathing space" that structures discourse by determining what arguments make sense, who may speak, and what issues are relevant. A revolutionary discursive field systematically shrinks the discursive field of the state and narrows its breathing space. In a revolutionary situation, ideology takes precedence, subject-

ing human action to its internal logic and dynamics. It transforms the individual subjectivity of the committed and subordinates their suffering and possible death to a meaning-of-life as defined by the ideology (Therborn 1980, p. 117).

These theoretical considerations determine my strategy for explaining the role of Shi'i Islam in the Iranian Revolution. I begin by describing the episodic context within which Shi'i Islam became the dominant ideology of the opposition. Next, I describe the rise of Islamic discourse in the context of the state versus opposition dialectic. Then, I explain the role of Shi'i discourse in the revolutionary mobilization of 1977 to 1979. Finally, I consider how the internal dynamic of Shi'i discourse contributed to the shaping of post-revolutionary events and structured the opportunities available to power contenders for justifying their interests.

#### EPISODE AND DISCOURSE IN THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

The connection between religion and the political concerns of various groups and social classes in nineteenth and twentieth century Iran has been noted by most historians and area specialists. The bazaaris often used religious rituals and symbols in their mobilization efforts to change or resist unpopular policies initiated by the state. In its turn, the state resorted to religion to justify its actions. On some occasions ulama theological hair-splitting also paralleled mundane political conflicts in society. The rise of Islam as the dominant discourse of the opposition, however, is a phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s. The episodic context commences with the coup of 1953, which resulted in the defeat of the nationalist-democratic movement and the regaining of power by the Shah. The broad environmental conditions causing the growth of revolutionary Islam were characterized by the decline of secular discourse, the ideology of the Pahlavi state, and the antistate alliance between classes constituting the historical bases of the ulama in Iran. On one hand, the decline of international support for liberalism and communism, combined with the Shah's effective repression of these ideological movements, helped channel oppositional activities into the religious medium. On the other hand, the ideology of the state, which glorified Iranian kingship and ancient history while overlooking the Islamic period, helped define the identity of the opposition and promote the rise of revolutionary Islamic discourse.

Of course, ideological discourse in Iran was never separate from discourse in the larger Islamic world. Three major ideological discourses have emerged in the Islamic world in the contemporary period. The first is Islamic modernism, which became dominant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prominent Islamic intellectuals and theologians like Sayyid Jamal ud-Din "al-Afghani," Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad 'Abduh, Amir Ali, and Muhammad Iqbal argued that Islam as a world religion, by reason of its inner spiritual force, could adapt to the changing conditions of every age (Adams 1968; Ahmad 1967). Because law and reason are hallmarks of the perfect Muslim community, Abduh argued that the true rejector of Islam, the true *kafir* (infidel) was one who refused to accept the proof of rational argument. Thus, Muslims could accept the results of scientific and rational inquiry (Turner 1974, p. 147). These intellectuals rejected the claim that the only truth of interest to believers comes from Islamic sources. They considered it appropriate for Muslim scholars to conduct their own investigations using the best available tools, including books written by authors unaware of the Islamic revelation (Butterworth 1982).

In Egypt, Islamic modernism took the form of a movement under the leadership of the Grand Mufti, Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, and was dedicated to an ambitious program of social, religious, and economic reform (Adams 1968, pp. 175–81). During the Constitutional Revolution (1905 to 1911) in Iran, some ulama, deeply influenced by modern liberal thought and constitutional ideas, began to reconcile Shi'i political theory with the idea of constitutional government (Adami'yat 1976). Liberal interpretations of Islam were also common among Muslim activists in India in the period surrounding the formation of the state of Pakistan (Ahmad 1967).

The second relevant discourse is the ebb of Islam and the rise of secular ideologies like nationalism and liberalism in the early to mid-twentieth century. In Egypt, under the impact of the nationalist revolution of 1919–1922, the first modern mass party, the *Wafd*, emerged and the country entered more than two decades of liberal politics (Marsot 1977). Iran's first liberal nationalist experience began with the breakdown of Reza Shah's rule in 1941, but was abruptly ended by the American- and British-backed coup in 1953. Syria also enjoyed short periods of liberal politics (1946 to 1949, 1954 to 1958) as well as a nationalist movement that emerged in opposi-

tion to Ottoman rule and continued against the French mandate between the two World Wars (Rabinovich 1972; Seale 1965)

The third discourse is the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in many Middle Eastern countries. Men like Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb in Egypt, Mustafa as-Siba'i in Syria, Abul Ala Maududi in Pakistan, and Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran insisted on unconditional fealty to Islam and sought to undermine the validity of any learning that was not rooted in Divine Law (Butterworth 1982, p. 87). Clearly ideological movements are transnational phenomena that are not reducible to the interests of any particular group or class and that tend to rise and decline in episodic fashion.

### *The Rise and Decline of Nationalist-Liberal Ideology*

The causal linkage between ideology and its broad episodic context is demonstrated by the rise of the nationalist-liberal discourse in the period ushered in with the Allies' invasion of Iran in 1941 and its decline in the post-coup (1953) period. Following World War II, nationalist-liberal ideology was espoused by the National Front led by a Swiss-educated lawyer, Mohammad Mosaddeq. The main objectives of nationalist groups were democracy and independence for Iran within the framework of the existing semiconstitutional monarchy. The Front's democratic objectives were to check the arbitrary power of the monarch, strengthen the democratic process, and eliminate voting fraud in the country's parliamentary elections (Abrahamian 1982, pp. 251–52). The Front's nationalist objective was to eliminate British control over the Iranian oil industry. Both objectives were achieved with Mosaddeq's election as Prime Minister by a large margin in the spring of 1951.

Several factors account for the rise of nationalist-liberalism to ideological prominence in 1941–1953 period. On the national level, the breakdown of Reza Shah's despotic rule encouraged pluralist politics. Furthermore, the secular trend unleashed by the Constitutional Revolution (1905 to 1911) continued unabated under Reza Shah. The country's leading intellectuals and social critics continued to attack Iran's traditional culture, which rested on various religious practices. Kasravi (1348/1969), a famous Iranian social critic and iconoclastic historian, considered tribal, linguistic, and sectarian divisions as major causes of Iran's backwardness. He was particularly crit-

ical of various religious rituals commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hosein on the grounds that they reflected superstitions and were incompatible with a modern lifestyle. The dominant cultural trend supported the formation of a centralized state with an emphasis on pre-Islamic kingship and culture, expansion of secular education, spread of the Persian language among non-Persians, adoption of Western philosophy and technology, and destruction of clerical power (Abrahamian 1982, pp. 123–27). On the international level, the Allies' military confrontation with fascism and Nazism under the banner of democracy along with the anticolonial and liberal internationalist ideology of the United States, which was well-articulated under the Wilson administration (Levin 1970), further reinforced the rise of democratic ideology in Iran. The popularity of the United States among nationalist-liberal groups was also helped by the favorable posture of America toward Iran at the initial stage of the Iranian-British oil dispute (Moaddel 1989). In fact, the Front's leaders counted heavily on U.S. support for the realization of their democratic and nationalist objectives. The most radical members of the Front even eulogized the U.S. government in characteristically Persian romantic terms:

From the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, from the State of Liberty and the Land of George Washington, these days we hear the message of affection. The United States of America that, with its invaluable material and moral assistance, have saved many nations of the world from death and starvation, and the hungry and destroyed Europe from embracing Communism, today is going to assume a much heavier responsibility.

The United States must help us at the mouth of the volcano [implying the Soviet Union] . . . We do not interpret the United States' assistance but as a reflection of humanitarianism and feeling of love for the humanity. (Cited in Dshwanshir 1980, p. 72)

The 1953 coup, which destroyed the organizational network of the Front and other opposition collectivities including the Tudeh (Communist) party, marked a new episode in Iran's contemporary history. State repression of the National Front, however, was only one factor in the decline of liberal politics. U.S. support of the Shah became a serious anomaly for liberal thinking. Before the coup, the democratic and anticolonial expressions of U.S. politicians reinforced liberal discourse in Iran, whereas in the post coup period, persistent attempts by the Front's leaders to gain U.S. support became counterproductive for attracting po-

litical activists to their ranks (Jazani 1978, pp. 91–92). Likewise, the influence of communist ideology was undermined by the Soviet Union's tacit approval of the Shah's policies as well as by the intensification of Sino-Soviet disputes, which resulted in a split in the Tudeh party in 1965.

### *The Ideology of the State*

The state's ideology broadly set the agenda for the opposition and defined its identity. For the opposition, which aimed to transform the state, any ideology that was the ideology of the state was not right. The state's ideology revolved around a monarchy-centered nationalist discourse. Following the coup, the state's discourse rebutted the ideologies of the opposition — liberalism and communism — and appropriated the ideas of nationalism from the National Front and revolution from communism. But the state's discourse became increasingly anti-Islamic and drifted toward totalitarianism. In response to Mosaddeq's ideology of negative nationalism, the Shah portrayed his nationalism as "positive" and "constructive," whereas Mosaddeq's nationalism was labelled "destructive," and "pro-Communist" (Pahlavi 1961, p. 127). Nevertheless, the idea of "positive nationalism" failed to provide a strong defense of the monarchy vis-à-vis the critiques of the National Front's leaders, the Communists, and the ulama, particularly in light of the fact that the Shah had regained power with foreign assistance. However, land reform and other social policies in the early 1960s changed the course of the ideological struggle to the Shah's advantage. These initiatives placed the Communists and nationalists on the defensive (Halliday 1979, p. 27) and created a strong reaction among the ulama. The Shah, however, portrayed himself as the champion of revolutionary change:

Iran needed a deep and fundamental revolution that could, at the same time, put an end to all the social inequality and all the factors which caused injustice, tyranny and exploitation, and all aspects of reaction which impeded progress and kept our society backward. (Pahlavi 1967, p. 15)

Referring to the ulama-led disturbances against the reforms in 1963, the Shah labelled the ulama the "black reaction" and the Communists the "the red forces of destruction" who combined to paralyze his action (Pahlavi 1967, p. 12). The Shah's ideologues claimed that the ship of state was steering a proper course, navigated by an experienced captain capable of guiding it through the stormy

waters of social change to the threshold of a "Great Civilization" (Zabih 1979, p. 3).

The totalitarian tendency of the state's ideology was further reflected in its attempt to glorify the Iranian kingship and exclude Islam. The Islamic calendar was changed to a civil calendar, and then into a monarchical calendar that began with a vaguely specified date of the establishment of the first monarchy in Iran and in 1971 the Shah celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of continuous monarchy. The importance of religious holidays was played down, while new holidays were added including the Shah's and his son's birthdays and the date of implementation of land reform. The state's discourse became truly totalitarian in 1975 when the Shah abruptly dissolved all "official" political parties and declared a one-party system. The Shah demanded total ideological commitment to his rule:

Iranians had the choice of supporting or rejecting the three basic principles of Monarchy, Constitutionalism, and the White Revolution. Supporters now would join the Rastakhiz party to consolidate and promote these objectives. Opponents could either remain apathetic and be non-participants, (in which case they would be denied the fruits of Iran's prosperity); or if they wished to actively oppose these principles, they would be allowed to leave the country. (Zabih 1979, p. 9)

In crucial respects, the Reza Shah's ideology resembled that of his son, but there was one major difference. The dominant cultural trend in civil society during Reza Shah's time and the Reza Shah's cultural policies belonged, in principle, to the same ideological universe. Reza Shah was successful in daringly outlawing traditional clothes, including the veil that covered women from head to toe, obliging the people to wear Western-style dress, expelling the powerful ulama from the state bureaucracy, and initiating many other secular reforms, not simply because of his leadership ability and military might. Rather, the dominance of secular discourse facilitated Reza Shah's modernization policies, and at the same time made it difficult for conservative groups to develop a strong ideological argument against modernization. The secular discourse was adhered to by members of the polity and by intellectuals who were excluded from the polity. It informed the flatterers of the monarchy as well as its critics. Although the Reza Shah's critics supported these measures, they were ambivalent about his rule. Under his son, however, the ideology of the opposition began to change, and post-

coup social critics and ideologues began to resort to Islam in their attempts to address Iran's problems. The more the Shah insisted on his secular antireligious ideology, the less he was applauded by his critics; the more the Shah's discourse excluded civil society, the more explicit became his regime's domination over society.

### *Revolutionary Islamic Discourse*

Political repression, the economic policies of the state, and a highly uneven distribution of resources were problems facing the Shah's opposition. While revolutionary Islamic ideologues were inspired by these practical problems, they were constrained by Islamic concepts as well as state ideology. Islamic opposition discourse was formed in response to the monarchy-centered nationalist discourse. Although the resulting Islamic movement was heterogeneous, consisting of various Islamic ideologues with diverse backgrounds, interests, and political agendas, it appeared to be a single movement by virtue of its focus on a common enemy, the Shah.

The ulama's call for the overthrow of the Shah emerged gradually. In the early 1970s, only a faction of the ulama, under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, called for the establishment of an Islamic government under the exclusive control of a supreme religious leader. The growth of this ideology among the ulama seems to have been resulted from changes in the triadic relationship between the state, class, and the ulama in the 1960s and 1970s. The state not only broke with the ulama, but also antagonized the bazaaris and landowners, classes with historically close ties with the ulama. In this context, Khomeini's political theory for the establishment of an Islamic government gained increasing attention.

Khomeini's arguments for the establishment of an Islamic government based on *velayat-i faqih* (governance by the jurispudent) were geared toward the antistate and anti-foreign orientation of the bazaaris and landowners. Khomeini presented his view of the crisis and blamed "imperialists" and their "agents" for the imposition of an "unjust economic order" on the Muslim people that divided them "into two groups: oppressors and oppressed" (Khomeini 1981, p. 49). Throughout the world, said Khomeini, "hundreds of millions of Muslims are hungry and deprived of all form of health care and education, while minorities comprised of all the wealthy and powerful live a life of indulgence, licentiousness, and corruption" (p. 49). Khomeini resolved that "it is the

duty of Islamic scholars and all Muslims to put an end to this system of oppression and, for the sake of the well-being of hundreds of millions of human beings, to overthrow these oppressive governments and form an Islamic government" (pp. 50-51).

The ulama are central in Khomeini's political theory because accepting the authority of the ulama was a precondition for being a true Muslim. Khomeini argued that Islam gives, in the Quran and Tradition (*Sunnat*), "all the laws and principles needed by man for his happiness and perfection" (Richard 1981, p. 207). But, "their execution and implementation depend upon the formation of a government" (Khomeini 1981, p. 44). The ulama's governance would be "an institution for ensuring the rigorous application of Shari'a to Muslim society" (Rose 1983, p. 180). Therefore, the jurispudent, i.e., *faqih*, "has the same authority that the Most Noble Messenger and the Imams had," except that his authority does not extend to other jurispudents (Rose 1983, p. 177).

Khomeini's political project, however, was only one version of the discourse of the Islamic opposition. Many secular intellectuals in the post-coup period also resorted to Islamic discourse to address Iran's problems. In particular, two lay intellectuals played prominent roles popularizing revolutionary Islam among the educated people. Jalal Ale-Ahmad (1982), an ex-Communist, re-examined the causes of the defeat of the nationalist and democratic movement and sought to understand the roots of Iran's underdevelopment and its domination by imperialism and to rethink the ideological resolutions offered by Iranian intellectuals. At the outset, he argued that Iranians have been forced to be servile consumers of the products of western industry and to reshape themselves, their government, culture, and everyday lives to resemble a machine (Ale-Ahmad 1982, p. 6). The root of the problem, in his view, lay in the contradiction between Islam and Western culture:

The West, in its dealing with us, not only struggled against . . . Islamic totality . . . , but it also tried to as quickly as possible tear apart that unity which was fragmented from within and which only appeared whole on the surface . . . . The stopping of Ottoman artillery outside of the gates of Vienna in the nineteenth [sic] century was the end of a prolonged event which had begun in 732 in Spain (Andalus). How can we view these twelve centuries of struggle and competition between East and West as anything but a struggle between Islam and Christianity? (Ale-Ahmad 1982, p. 9)

Ale-Ahmad's solution was the emancipation of Iranian culture from Western domination, which involved a relentless attack on intellectuals who were the bearers of Western culture in Iran. Those who translated the French constitution for Iran and those who sacrificed Iran's national interests for the Communist International were equally responsible for the decline of Iran's historical and cultural identity (Ale-Ahmad, n.d., p. 355). Ale-Ahmad argued that the antireligious orientation of Iranian intellectuals was simply an imitation of their European counterparts and was not rooted in Iranian culture or history (pp. 261–72). Since the conflict between Islam and the West constituted the fundamental contradiction, a defense of Islam was the only path to national liberation and development.

Shari'ati began where Ale-Ahmad left off and criticized the intellectuals' critique of religion. He sympathetically quoted 'Abduh who had said, "Europe abandoned religion and made progress, we abandoned religion and went backward" (Shari'ati 1969, p. 23). Shari'ati argued that "the opposition of Iranian intellectuals to religion is rather based on a blind mimicking of the Europeans" (p. 23). For Shari'ati, religion was the most effective weapon against imperialism and Western cultural domination (Shari'ati 1986, p. 19). Islam was also a superior ideology to liberalism and Marxism:

Humanity arrived at liberalism, and took democracy in place of theocracy as its key to liberation. It was snared by a crude capitalism, in which democracy proved as much a delusion as theocracy. . . .

The desire for equality, for liberation from this dizzying whirl of personal avarice, so horrifyingly accelerated by the machine, led humanity into a revolt that resulted in communism. This communism, however, simply represents the same fanatical and frightening power as the Medieval Church, only without God. It has its popes, but they rule not in the name of the Lord but in the name of the proletariat. (Shari'ati 1980, p. 92)

Shari'ati's criticism of Marxism was evidently in line with the Shah's policy of anti-Communism. Between February and March of 1976, the regime began publishing Shari'ati's works on this topic in the daily *Kayhan* in a series of articles entitled "Man, Marxism, and Islam," an act which probably helped the cause of the religious opposition.

Thus, revolutionary Islamic discourse was produced and shaped, as it were, as a result of the propaganda warfare and back-and-forth argument

between the state and the opposition occurring within the changing conditions of the post-coup period. When secular-nationalist discourse was the dominant ideology, Iran's economic problems were attributed to clerical influence, tribalism, communal sectarianism, and the undemocratic nature of the monarchy, and the solution was the separation of religion from politics, the strengthening of democratic institutions, and national integration. Western democracy was envied and emulated. Secular ideology also left its mark on religion, e.g., one group of ulama attempted to reconcile Islam with the idea of constitutionalism during the Constitutional Revolution, and then to depoliticize Islam altogether in the late 1940s. With changes in the socioeconomic and political climates of the post-coup period, revolutionary Islam became the dominant discourse of the opposition, and different themes gained significance: (1) underdevelopment and economic inequality were connected to Western cultural domination; (2) religion and politics were considered inseparable and Islam was a revolutionary and anti-imperialist ideology; (3) the monarchy was an anti-Islamic institution; and (4) the political systems of both West and East were rejected.

#### *The Shi'i Discursive Field and Ideological Mobilization*

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Shah did not need to worry about the possibility of a serious revolutionary challenge to his rule. The Left and the National Front had been undermined, and the religious opposition was unable to organize another massive protest after the suppression of the Khomeini-led rebellion in 1963. It was a period of remarkable economic growth and industrialization with no noticeable economic problems. As a result, the monarchy-centered nationalist ideology had some degree of efficacy. However, when the country began to experience economic difficulty, the association of the monarchy with progress, economic development, and prosperity weakened. The monarchy became ideologically vulnerable, and the state's policies to resolve the economic problems, such as an antiprofitteering campaign and cuts in social spending, backfired and contributed to the general social discontent. The inauguration of the Carter administration and increasing international pressure on the Shah to ease political control led the opposition leadership to believe that the time was ripe for open political activities (Ashraf and Banuazizi 1985).

Although these were problems for the Shah, it cannot be argued that prerevolutionary Iran was experiencing economic and political *crises*. Rather, the Shah's regime was thrown into crisis, and social discontent was transformed into revolutionary movement by and through Islamic discourse. The revolutionary crisis erupted when revolutionary ideology began to take over the protest movements because the monarchy's ideology and that of the Islamic opposition were mutually exclusive. Thus, when the public became dissatisfied with the Shah and gradually joined the Islamic opposition, their dissatisfaction was transcended and expressed in terms of Islamic discourse. Given that revolutionary Islam negated the ideology of the monarchy, the actions of the discontented took a revolutionary direction. By posing the problem in terms of a conflict between Islam and the infidels, Islamic revolutionary discourse transcended class differences and social divisions in a communitarian relation, that is, the *ummat* (Islamic community) was pictured as fighting the *taghut* (boundless tyrant).

The discursive field of revolutionary Islam was expanded and ideological mobilization took place in several ways. First was the transformation of the politics of the clerical establishment and its reconstitution in terms of Islamic revolutionary discourse. This was important because alternative courses of action were available to the ulama in pursuing their occupational and religious goals. The idea of revolutionary overthrow of the state and the establishment of an Islamic government was Khomeini's invention (Rose 1983, p. 188) — there was no ideological precedent to justify ulama direct rule in society. Indeed, many grand ayatollahs disagreed with Khomeini's political views. In particular, Ayatollah Abol-Qasem Kho'i argued that no direct ulama governance existed. Khomeini's first crucial revolutionary task therefore was to convince his colleagues of the necessity of establishing such a rule. In his response to Ayatollah Kho'i, Khomeini instructed his followers:

Present Islam to the people in its true form so that our youth do not picture the *akhunds* as sitting in some corner in Najaf or Qum, studying the questions of menstruation and parturition instead of concerning themselves with politics, and draw the conclusion that religion must be separate from politics. This slogan of the separation of religion and politics and the demand that Islamic scholars not intervene in social and political affairs have been formulated and propagated by the Imperialist; it is only the irreligious who repeats them. (Khomeini 1981, p. 44)

Even in the initial stage of the revolution, the first priority for Khomeini and his followers was the radicalization of the ulama, pressuring them to take an active part in the revolution (Ashraf and Banuazizi 1985, pp. 26–28).

Second, the discursive field generated by revolutionary Islam — its symbolic structure, religious rituals, calendar, and theme of martyrdom — began to provide an effective channel of communication between the leaders and the led, and to maintain a continuity in the people's mobilization against the Shah. The chain of events that triggered and perpetuated the revolutionary crisis began when the Shah ordered publication of an article in a daily newspaper, *Ittila'at* (17 Dey 1356/1978, p. 7), that accused Khomeini of being a foreign agent. In response, several thousand followers of Khomeini staged antigovernment demonstrations in Qum on January 9, 1978, and clashed with police. Several people were killed and many more injured. The article and the violent repression of Khomeini's supporters provided an occasion around which various religious and secular opposition groups mobilized against the Shah. The leading ulama in Tehran and other major cities expressed outrage at the regime's violent behavior as did the Society of Merchants and Guild of Tehran Bazaar, the Isfahani and Tabrizi bazaaris in Tehran, the National Front, the Toilers' party, and the Left. Just as the ideology of the monarchy shaped the ideology of the opposition, the state's repressive policy helped make Khomeini the leader of the Revolution.

This event strengthened the alliance between secular and religious opposition forces and helped Khomeini and his followers establish hegemony over the movement. Secular groups, including the Left, had often used religious tactics to mobilize the people against the Shah. One example of the ideological compromise made by many secular groups was their acceptance of the idea that women should wear the veil while participating in street demonstrations. Whether the veil was a symbol of resistance to the Shah's Westernization policies or simply represented the patriarchal nature of the Islamic opposition is a matter of interpretation (Tabari and Yeganeh 1982; Nashat 1983), but the tactic epitomized the total invasion of Islamic revolutionary ideology into secular discourse. However, the enhanced power of Shi'i revolutionary discourse did not stem solely from the tactical necessity of the struggle against the Shah. It activated people to action precisely because it meant different things to different contenders. As became clear after the Revolution,

there were as many interpretations of the teachings of Shi'i Islam on practical issues as there were Islamic groups. Highly educated women, who had proudly worn the veil for the sake of the Revolution, probably had no idea what Khomeini and his followers would do to women's liberty in the postrevolutionary period. Likewise, the Tudeh and other groups of the Left accepted Khomeini's hegemony because they believed that he was a revolutionary democrat or petty bourgeois anti-imperialist and overlooked the fact that he was equally anti-Communist. Finally, the liberals do not seem to have contemplated the incompatibility of their democratic ideals with ideals prescribed by revolutionary Islam.

The Qum incident unleashed a chain of ideologically constituted events that prolonged and intensified the revolutionary crisis. These events were produced by the Islamic ritual for the dead which includes memorial services and commemoration of the deceased on the 40<sup>th</sup> day after death. During this ritual for those killed in the anti-Shah demonstrations, some of the participants were killed, providing another occasion for performing memorial services 40 days later, and so on. Major anti-Shah demonstrations occurred in several cities on February 18 — that is, 40 days after Qum incident on January 9. In Tabriz, in particular, the occasion sparked serious riots and violent clashes between troops and demonstrators that left a dozen dead and twice as many injured. Forty days later, on March 29, during the commemoration for those killed in Tabriz, scattered riots erupted in several major urban centers, again leading to a number of deaths (particularly in Yazd). Forty days later (May 8–9), disturbances occurred in some 34 towns. This cycle continued until 1979 (Fischer 1980, pp. 195–96). Hence, there was no need for revolutionary leaders to “schedule” demonstrations against the Shah — the cycle of these religious rituals provided the dates and rationale for protest.

Third, the Islamic calendar not only negated the ideology of the monarchy, it also provided periodic occasions to mobilize people against the Shah. By observing the rituals and ceremonial practices associated with religious holidays and disregarding the state-specified civil holidays, the opposition undermined the ideology of the monarchy. In fact, the Shah's first retreat vis-à-vis the opposition was to reinstate the Islamic calendar in the summer of 1978. Furthermore, major demonstrations against the Shah often transpired in the holy months and were initiated in the mosques. August 1978 was the lunar month of Ramadan

(the month of fasting), a time when religious activities and evening sermons were paramount. The religious opposition used these occasions to attack the Shah and to prepare the first massive demonstration to occur on the day following the end of Ramadan — *Id-i Fitr* (a religious holiday). Following the prayers and sermons, mass demonstrations occurred during which people handed out flowers to the soldiers (Bazargan 1984, pp. 33–34). The month of Moharram provided an even more effective context for mass mobilization against the Shah. In Shi'i tradition, Moharram is a month of mourning and ceremonial practices commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hosein, the third Shi'i Imam. In their mobilization efforts, the religious opposition invoked the theme of martyrdom and vowed to make Moharram “the month of victory of blood over sword.” In defiance of the dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed by the military government, men in white shrouds signifying their readiness to be martyred went into the streets. Another ideologically-inspired mobilization tactic was that, again in defiance of the curfew, millions of people in the cities went to the roofs of their houses in the evening and shouted repeatedly *Allah-o Akbar* (God is Great) (Davani 1980, pp. 6–46). On the ninth and tenth of Moharram (December 10 and 11, 1978), large demonstrations took place in Tehran and other major cities in which several million people participated. The resolutions passed during these demonstrations designated Ayatollah Khomeini the leader of the nation and demanded the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of an Islamic government (Davani 1980, pp. 72–75). The resolution of the ideological conflict between the state and the opposition ends the first stage of the Iranian Revolution. Islamic discourse set the framework for the resolution of political and economic conflicts in the postrevolutionary period.

#### IDEOLOGY AND POSTREVOLUTIONARY CONFLICTS

February 11, 1979 is celebrated as the date of the Iranian Revolution. A number of significant events stand out in the postrevolutionary period: the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in the fall of 1979; public endorsement of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic in late 1979; the cultural revolution that began in the spring of 1980; political conflict in the Islamic Republic that developed into a reign of terror in the summer of 1981; the resolution of class-related issues in fa-



vor of merchants and landowners; and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war.

The revolutionary dynamic set by the Shi'i discourse continued unabated for several years after the overthrow of the monarchy. As long as the Shah, i.e., the common enemy, was present, diverse Islamic groups were united and the Islamic alternative to the ideology of the monarchy seemed uniform and consistent. But when concrete plans emerged for building the postrevolutionary "Islamic" order, disputes replaced harmony. Of notable significance were three rival groups: (1) liberal Muslims, headed by Mehdi Bazargan who predominantly controlled the provisional government, and followed by Bani-Sadr and his supporters; (2) the ulama followers of Ayatollah Khomeini; and (3) the Mojahedin, a radical Islamic political organization. To liberals, a form of parliamentary democracy within the existing capitalist relationships guided by the moral values of Islam was all that was achievable or even suitable for Iran. For Khomeini and his followers the overthrow of the Shah was only the first stage of the Revolution — several decades of secularization had to be stopped and reversed. Liberalism, Marxism, and other ideologies belonged to the West or the East and had no place among the Muslim people — society needed reorganization and purification according to the teachings of Islam. In short, the central objective of Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers, who were now largely organized in the Islamic Republican Party (IRP), was the establishment of the governance of Islamic jurisprudent (*velayat-i faqih*). Finally, the Mojahedin advanced a sort of Islamic socialism. The presence of these ideological variants, however, does not indicate that Shi'i ideology as a whole became a tool in the contention for power. On the contrary, Shi'i discourse contributed to the shaping of postrevolutionary events, structured the opportunities available to the diverse social classes and contenders for power and determined the legitimacy of their claims.

Ideological disputes in the postrevolutionary period drifted increasingly in an extremist direction. This extremism was not a simple outcome of contentions for power or class conflict, but emanated from the internal logic of Shi'i discourse itself. A foremost function of Shi'i revolutionary discourse was the signification of the idea of counterrevolution. In a real sense, the Iranian Revolution had no counterrevolution. In a referendum, the public overwhelmingly endorsed the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

The United States and its allies, who were the prime supporters of the Shah, reluctantly accepted the Revolution. To be sure, the U.S. government was apprehensive about the nature of the postrevolutionary regime and the Left had every reason to see this apprehension as counterrevolutionary. But for the Revolution as a whole, there was no organized interests inside or outside the country that aimed to overthrow the new Islamic Republic. Therefore, the idea that the Revolution was under attack and being undermined by the diabolical machinations of the United States was primarily the product of the Islamic revolutionary discourse. And the seizure of the U.S. embassy in the fall of 1979 was dictated by this ideological prophecy. Suggestions that the ruling clerics supported the embassy takeover because they wanted to expel liberals from government and that the takeover was triggered by the Shah's admission to the United States are inadequate. The provisional government had already decided to resign before the embassy takeover and the ruling ulama new this (Bazargan 1984, p. 95, fn. 1). Furthermore, the plan to seize the embassy was contemplated well before the Shah entered the United States. None of these reasons prompted the seizure of the embassy. Rather, the Shah's admission to the United States was a circumstance that the revolutionary ideology fed upon and saw as part of a counterrevolutionary conspiracy by the United States. When Ayatollah Khomeini proclaimed that the seizure of the embassy was tantamount to a "second Islamic Revolution" and demanded that the counterrevolutionary, the "Great Satan," be exposed and disarmed in its "spy nest," he was acting as the spokesperson for the Revolution.

The embassy seizure, however, did contribute to ulama success in realizing their revolutionary ambition — the passage of a Constitution in which the doctrine of *velayat-i faqih* was central. Using mass mobilization resulting from the seizure of the embassy, the ulama quickly set up a referendum on the new Constitution, which received mass endorsement in December 1979. The Constitution gave the ulama unprecedented power: Besides the doctrine of the *velayat-i faqih*, which extended the Shi'i "juristic norm of authority from the religious to the political sphere" (Arjomand 1988, p. 151), the Council of Constitutional Guardians was empowered to interpret and determine the conformity with Islam of any law passed by the Parliament, to supervise presidential and parliamentary elections, and to hold referenda (Islamic Republic 1979). The Constitu-

tion effected an unprecedented change in the clerical establishment in the direction of formally centralizing religious authority.

Islamic revolutionary discourse also conditioned the *form* of political conflict. The intermeshing of ideological disputes with contentions for power was reflected in the course of conflicts over control of the state bureaucracy. The election of Bani-Sadr as the country's first President was a serious defeat for the IRP and a resounding success for the liberals. Soon, however, the revolutionary ideology helped tip the balance of forces in the government in the IRP's favor. The contradiction between Islam and the West (a major theme of Islamic revolutionary discourse) was the ideological dynamic underlying the cultural revolution launched in April 1980. Although one of the initial objectives of the cultural revolution was to expel the Left from university campuses (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 30 Farvardin 1359/1980, p. 1), the influence of the Left in academia was additional ammunition for the revolutionary ideology. When the IRP leaders and the liberals agreed to the idea of a cultural revolution, they were acting in accordance with revolutionary ideology to eradicate all vestiges of the anti-Islamic policies implemented by the Pahlavis. The cultural revolution was a further expansion of the discursive field of revolutionary Islam toward the Islamization of all social relationships.

The cultural revolution, however, meant different things to its diverse executioners and worked to the advantage of the IRP vis-à-vis the liberals. For liberals, it was a means to get rid of leftist agitators in public institutions, factories, and rural areas so that economic and political stability could be restored. The IRP, on the other hand, wanted to eliminate liberals as well. They mobilized gangs of *Hezbollah* (the Party of God) to invade the universities, injure or kill members of the opposition, and burn books and papers thought to be un-Islamic. The IRP then accused those who opposed the cultural revolution of being the agents of the West or the East (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 1 Urdibihisht 1359/1980, p. 9).

In the parliamentary elections during the cultural revolution, the IRP won a majority. With Bani-Sadr as President and the IRP dominating Parliament, selection of the Prime Minister and the members of his cabinet became the subject of intense dispute. Ideological disputes revolved around the criteria for selection of members of the state bureaucracy — Bani-Sadr emphasized technical competence and specialization where-

as the IRP emphasized religiosity and commitment to the *Maktab-i Islam* (school of Islam). Reja'ie, the Prime Minister, stated that the Revolution was for the sake of Islam and not for material things such as "the availability of, say, oranges and grapes" (cited in *Kar* 8 Mehr 1359/1980, p. 8). IRP leaders further argued that "morality" took precedence over "science," and "value" took precedence over "knowledge," and that only by hiring devout Muslims could Iran gain true independence and self-sufficiency (*Kar* 6 Azar 1359/1980, p. 15). These disputes were accompanied by *Hezbollah's* attacks on Bani-Sadr's supporters. Pressures on Bani-Sadr prompted him to forge an alliance with the Mojahedin.

Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin defined freedom and democracy as their prime issues. The Mojahedin's critique of the ulama and the IRP, however, went beyond their anti-democratic activities — they called the ulama the petty bourgeois, and argued that they had distorted and ridiculed Islam (Mojahedin 1981, p. 3). The Mojahedin claimed there was only one true Islam — "all other kinds of Islam . . . are the slogan of the declining forces and classes" (Mojahedin 1981, p. 1). The Mojahedin (1981) criticized the petty bourgeois understanding of Islam as "defending private property and exploitation" (p. 17), having a "dogmatic and narrow-minded understanding of the social laws of Islam" (p. 19), "overlooking or ignoring the realities and the objective economic bases of society and social development" (p. 33), and "negating social orientation of Islam in the direction of eliminating classes" (p. 74). Therefore, "the petty bourgeois understanding of Islam, from a 'socioeconomic' viewpoint, requires the acceptance of exploitation and social duality, and is thus a manifestation of *shirk* (the assignment of partners to God), invalid and empty of *towhidi* (pertaining to divine unity) content" (p. 38). In response, an IRP ideologue argued that the Islam of the Mojahedin was eclectic and influenced by Marxism. He claimed that, in the Mojahedin eclectic philosophy, history had replaced God; and social groups and movements were evaluated in terms of concepts like "reactionary" or "progressive" instead of "right" or "wrong" (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 22 Urdibihisht 1360/1981, p. 1).

These charges and counter-charges concerning ideological "correctness" were not resolved through ideological debate. The IRP called for the arrest and prosecution of the leaders of the Mojahedin, while the Mojahedin, in turn, launched an armed attack on IRP leaders and

cadres. In their mobilization efforts, the ulama and the IRP used popular idioms and rhetoric to condemn Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin. However, the bombing of IRP headquarters in June 1981, which resulted in the death of Ayatollah Beheshti, the IRP chairman, and other leaders and cadres of the IRP, provided the ulama with an excuse to unleash a reign of terror unheard of in Iran's contemporary history. To excite the faithful against Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin, the ulama claimed there were 72 casualties, which was also the number of legendary Hosein and his followers killed in Karbala (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 10 Tir 1360/1981, p. 1). The armed confrontation resulted in the defeat of Bani-Sadr and the Mojahedin. Thousands of members of the Mojahedin were either killed during armed clashes with the regime or executed in captivity (*Mojahed* 1364/1985).

Clearly, coercive power played a crucial role in shaping events as rival contenders manipulated ideology to fit their goals. Nevertheless, these events took place within the context of Shi'i revolutionary discourse that structured the form of political conflict. Shi'i discourse dictated political change through revolutionary action and glorified martyrdom and self-sacrifice. It emphasized unity within the Islamic community and warned of the presence of the counterrevolution. Any disagreement was considered a sign of danger, and an indication of the infiltration of the counterrevolution and U.S. agents into the ranks of the Muslim people that must be effectively suppressed. Each side in the dispute questioned the Islamic nature of its opponent, meaning that "deviants" not only lost the right to be members of the polity, but also the right to exist. The victor had no difficulty accusing the defeated of being the *Mofsid-ifil* Arz (corrupt on earth), a crime punishable by death. If national-democratic ideology had been the dominant discourse, as it was under Mosaddeq, competition among political groups clearly would have taken quite a different form.

### *Class Conflict*

Class struggle in the postrevolutionary period revolved around three major issues: land reform; labor law, including labor control of production through newly-formed labor councils; and nationalization of foreign trade. Islamic revolutionary discourse helped resolve these issues in favor of landowners and merchants.

*Peasant-landlord struggle.* The land reform law formulated by the Islamic Republic was an

outcome of extensive peasant struggles prompted by the breakdown of the old regime's central authority. Peasant self-assertion was initially directed toward seizure of land in large estates — especially those belonging to members and associates of the Shah's regime — and then expanded to include smaller holdings (Nik-A'een 1359/1980, pp. 96–117). Rural turbulence, however, was not initiated by peasants. In parts of Khorasan and in areas where semitribal forms of social organization persisted such as Kurdistan, Fars, and Baluchistan, khans and landlords sought to reclaim lands they had lost under the land reforms of the 1960s. Elsewhere, landlords laid claim to disputed properties or pasturelands in the public domain (Bakhash 1984, p. 197).

The provisional government opposed the land seizures and launched military attacks on the peasants and even armed the landlords and khans in some areas (*Ummat* 10 Bahman 1358/1980, p. 5). However, the government's actions to calm the anxious climate were hampered by the "pro-poor" rhetoric of Ayatollah Khomeini and other radical clerics. Ayatollah Khomeini proclaimed that "the country belongs to the slum dwellers" (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 9 Aban 1358/1979, pp. 1–2). Ayatollah Beheshti stated that "the line of the revolution is anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and anti-feudalism" (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 11 Khurdad 1359/1980, pp. 1, 4). Finally, Ayatollah Dastghaib encouraged the peasants to seize lands from the landowners and cultivate these lands "behind the banner of Islam" (*Kayhan* 6 Shahrivar 1362/1983).

With the fall of the provisional government, many liberal politicians were replaced by men committed to radical economic change. A radical Muslim, Reza Isfahani, the new Undersecretary for Land Affairs in the Ministry of Agriculture, announced that revolutionary land reform begins with the seizure of land from large landowners and its distribution among landless and small peasants (Ashraf 1361/1982, p. 31). By mid-April 1980, the Revolutionary Council passed a land reform bill that "provided for a sweeping land distribution" (Bakhash 1984, p. 202). However, landowners, merchants, and the conservative ulama continued to oppose the reform (*Ummat* 24 Dey 1359/1981, p. 11), and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war prompted Ayatollah Khomeini to halt implementation of the land reform. Subsequently, the land reform law was reviewed and revised by Parliament, which retreated from the original objectives of the law passed by the Revolutionary Council. The re-

vised law was still rejected by the Council of Constitutional Guardians.

*The labor movement.* Although they were late-comers to the Revolution, industrial workers played an important role in the downfall of the monarchy. Strike committees were major coordinators of the workers' movement during the Revolution and formed the nucleus of the subsequent workers' councils in different industrial units. These councils assumed the management of factories. In many cases, workers were able to reduce working hours, obtain a more favorable job evaluation and classification, fire corrupt managers, hire additional workers, obtain across-the-board pay raises, lower managers' salaries, and receive regular health examinations (Azad 1980, pp. 17, 21).

The upsurge of the workers' movement in the summer of 1979 continued into the fall. In Khuzistan and Azarbayjan, workers concentrated on establishing a minimum wage, a 40-hour work week, and councils and syndicates. They also took steps toward forming regional unions. By March 1980, 31 factory councils in Gilan had formed a coordinating council that incorporated 20,000 workers. A coordinating council was also formed by eight factory councils in Tabriz (Azad 1980, pp. 20–22). In Fars, the Islamic councils of workers formed their first Congress (*Ummat* 5 Isfand 1358/1980, p. 5).

However, the workers' movement, like the peasant movement, was also undermined. The provisional government opposed workers' councils. Bazargan assailed radical political groups who "say that the army must be destroyed and councils run the affairs of the nation, and that people must be in a state of revolution all the time. If this goes on we will have no alternative but to resign" (cited in Azad 1980, p. 19). In the same vein, the Minister of labor expressed his opposition to the councils by threatening that "the Ministry of Labor is either my place of work or the councils" (cited Fedai'yan 1982, p. 10). Although Khomeini called workers the pillar of the revolution, in practice the Islamic Republic did not tolerate the autonomy of the labor councils.

*The merchants and foreign trade.* Prerevolutionary economic difficulties worsened after the Revolution. Skyrocketing inflation and scarcity of basic commodities expedited the government's intervention in the distribution of commodities. The provisional government was not interested in nationalizing foreign trade and simply suggested the establishment of centers for the provision and distribution of commodities with the

direct participation of the private sector, in particular the merchants (*Ittila'* at 7 Farvardin 1359/1980, p. 9). With the fall of the provisional government, the nationalization of foreign trade and its relationship to domestic distribution of commodities were subjects of acrimonious debate in and outside the government. Parliamentary debates on nationalization of foreign trade began in early fall of 1980, and after about 19 months, Parliament overwhelmingly passed the nationalization bill in April 1982 (*Ittila'* at 23 Urdibihisht 1361/1982, p. 7). However, the bill was rejected by the Council of Constitutional Guardians in late fall of 1982 on the grounds that it was incongruent with Islam (*Ittila'* at 6 Azar 1361/1982, pp. 15–16).

#### *Islamic Discourse and Class Capacity*

The demise of the social revolutionary movement cannot be adequately explained in terms of political conflict or the exigencies of state-building. The dominated classes failed despite the fall of the provisional government, Bani-Sadr, and Quotbzadeh who had supported the bazaaris and landowners. The Marxian model also faces difficulty explaining the failure of peasants and workers. Although the organizational power and class capacity of the warring classes were crucial variables that determined the social outcomes of the Revolution, class organization and capacity were not primarily rooted in the structure of class relations or pre-existing class organizations. The ideological context of the class conflict tipped the balance of forces in favor of the dominant classes. By structuring the legitimacy of the claims advanced by diverse classes and promoting selected organized activities, Islamic revolutionary discourse operated in favor of merchants and landowners vis-à-vis workers and peasants.

Industrial workers were weak because of limited industrial development in Iran. According to 1981 statistics, nationwide, there were 7,531 industrial enterprises with 10 or more employees. Of this total, 6,738 (89 percent) had between 10 and 100 employees, and 4,628 (61 percent) had 10 to 19 employees. Of 793 enterprises with more than 100 employees, only 233 employed more than 500 workers. The predominance of small enterprises hindered the development of an organized workers' movement. Workers had some latitude for effective collective action because of the oil industry's strategic location in the economy and because industrial units were concentrated in a few major cities (Markaz-i Amar-i Iran

1983, pp. 7, 13, 37). Although a prolonged national strike could shut down the economy, in the absence of a nationwide union, such a unified class action was unlikely. The peasants' capacity for collective action was no better than the workers'. Historically, the geographical dispersal of villages, the persistent threats of raiding nomads, and the absence of a middle peasantry hindered the peasants' collective power (Halliday 1979, pp. 108–109; Kazemi and Abrahamian 1978). Furthermore, the state's policies in the 1960s added to the peasants' political weakness by destroying traditional farming organizations and undermining the newly-emerged nationwide cooperative movement.

Organizational problems in the other camp were no less important. Landowners as a class were effectively undermined by the land reforms of the 1960s, and there was no nationwide network in the postrevolutionary period through which landowners could mobilize support against the land reform movement. To be sure, landowners took advantage of the law concerning the establishment of agricultural councils passed by the Revolutionary Council in April 1979. This law was a response to pressures from the Left for the formation of councils of peasants and agricultural workers to supervise production. However, with the aid of the provisional government, councils of landowners were formed for the defense of their common interests. With the fall of the provisional government, landowners lost an important ally, and by themselves these councils were too weak to defeat the land reform movement. Similarly, merchants had no nationwide union in the prerevolutionary period. During the oil nationalization movement, the Society of Merchants and Guilds which was tied to the National Front was formed. It was outlawed after the coup but was re-established in the late 1970s as the Society of Merchants and Guilds of the Tehran Bazaar (SMGTB). But, in the postrevolutionary period, the bazaar, was represented by politically diverse organizations. SMGTB was tied to the liberals, the Committee on Guild Affairs was tied to the IRP, and the Traders' Towhidi Guild was connected with the Mojahedin. During the conflict between the IRP and the Bani-Sadr/Mojahedin coalition, a group of bazaar activists and organizers was executed or fled the country (Parsa 1989, p. 282). To be sure, following the Revolution, merchants accumulated substantial wealth (*Ittila' at 7, 10 and 11 Aban 1360/1981*), and lobbied the government against nationalization of foreign trade. Nonetheless, the

profiteering of the merchants had reached the point that it outraged the public as well as Parliament and reinforced the move for nationalization of foreign trade (*Ittila' at 20 and 31 Farvardin 1362/1983*).

Therefore, the key to understanding the landowners' and merchants' ability to protect their interests despite popular support for the social revolutionary movement lies in the ideological context in which class conflict took place. Merchants and landowners were successful because of the built-in bias of Islamic discourse toward the property owning classes. Furthermore, the Islamization of the country produced by Shi'i revolutionary discourse encouraged the re-establishment of the traditional organizations of the bazaar that had been undermined under the Pahlavis. There were ideological and historical precedents for the establishment of various bazaar-based organizations, while no such precedents existed for the formation of workers' and peasants' unions.

When a leading governmental official began to support land reform, landowners reacted strongly and accused him of being a Communist and labelled his land reform bill part of a Communist conspiracy. The conservative ulama also mobilized against the bill. Ayatollah Ruhani in Qum and Ayatollah Qumi in Mashhad voiced their opposition (*Ittila' at 20 Farvardin 1359/1980*), Ayatollah Ruhani argued that the bill was contrary to the law of Islam (*Ittila' at 2 Urdibihisht 1359/1980, p. 4*). Landowners also secured *fatva* (an authoritative statement) from the conservative ulama against land reform. Ayatollah Golpayegani issued a statement declaring the law to be in violation of Islamic tenets, and Ayatollahs Ruhani, Mahallati, Qumi, and Shirazi also criticized the measure. The Society of the Seminary Teachers at Qum, a group close to Khomeini, issued a declaration warning against bills "damaging to the interests of the oppressed . . . which appear in the dress of Islam," and said that the land reform measure would lead to "the ruin of the cultivated lands" (Bakhash 1984, p. 204).

Given that religious opposition was partly a reaction to the Shah's land reform program of the 1960s, landowners and the conservative ulama could easily invoke past arguments against the reform, while there was no ideological precedents in Islam favoring land redistribution among peasants. For example, in Hamadan, landlords circulated an old *fatva* by Khomeini that prohibited the usurpation of land. Even Ayatollah Talqani, who was considered the most radical and

socially conscious cleric, in his book *Islam va Malikiyyat* (Islam and Private Property), never questioned the legitimacy of private ownership of land. Thus, when the Council of Constitutional Guardians pronounced the land reform bill to be contrary to the law of Islam, there was little the social revolutionary forces could do short of questioning the legitimacy of the Council itself. However, for pro-land-reform activists who believed in the Islamic Republic, this option was not acceptable, and the land reform debate could not be taken out of the Islamic discourse. Those who opposed the government did not have the right to speak.

Likewise, merchants effectively used religion to question the legitimacy of the bill for nationalization of foreign trade. When the Reja'ie government began drawing up a plan for nationalizing foreign trade, merchants questioned his competence for running the government. Addressing Prime Minister Reja'ie, a pro-merchant placard read that "for the sake of Islam, we demand that you resign from the job; you are incapable of handling its responsibilities and should vacate the position for a devout Muslim" (cited in *Ummat* 22 Dey 1359/1981). The merchants mobilized the conservative ulama, who objected to the nationalization of foreign trade on the grounds that it was contrary to the law of Islam. A chief opponent of the measure was Ayatollah Hasan Qumi of Mashhad, who condemned the arbitrary nationalization and expropriation of private property (Bakhash 1984, p. 194). Pro-merchant politicians and the ulama proclaimed that "the *Shari'a* (holy law of Islam) does not allow anyone to point a finger at the merchants. From the beginning of Islam, the bazaar has been operating in this manner, and any deviation from it is *kufir* (the rejection of Islam) and Communism" (*Ittila'* at 6 Aban 1360/1981, p. 5). In a series of editorials published in *Jomhuri-ye Islami*, Asgar-Owlad — the Minister of Commerce and an influential member of the IRP — outlined the tasks of the "devout Muslim of the bazaar" by encouraging the bazaaris "to strengthen the Islamic Societies of the Bazaar and the formation of such Societies where there is none" (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 7 Urdibihisht 1360/1981, pp. 1, 3). Asgar-Owlad charged that the "counterrevolution and the hypocrites were spreading rumors aimed at the exclusion of the bazaar and for that matter the whole private sector from domestic and foreign trade, the exclusion of 'distribution cooperatives,' and the nationalization of all commercial transactions, domestic and foreign, wholesale and

retail" (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 15 Urdibihisht 1360/1981, p. 1). Finally, although the Islamic Republic disrupted some bazaar-based political organizations like SMGTB and Traders' Towhidi Guild, the process of the Islamization of society provided a favorable ideological context for the bazaaris to re-establish and revitalize their traditional organizations. In addition to the Committee on Guild Affairs, which was highly influential, the merchants set up other organizations like the Organization of Islamic Economy and the Interest Free Loan Fund that allowed merchants to mobilize support against the foreign trade nationalization bill (*Rah-i Tudeh* 27 Jan. 1984, p. 9).

### *The Iran-Iraq War*

Shi'i revolutionary discourse contributed to the resolution of contention for power and class conflict in favor of the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and the dominant classes. In turn, the victors channeled ideological discourse in a direction consonant with their interests. The Iran-Iraq war mediated this process by directing ideological debate away from the class and political issues raised by contenders for power, thereby influencing the outcomes of political and class conflict. While Shi'i revolutionary discourse was a factor in the outbreak of the war, it also mediated the war's influence on the reconstruction of the state and shaped the attitudes of the leaders of the Islamic Republic toward the war.

Historically, tension between Iraq and Iran revolved around two basic issues: (1) control over the Shatt-ul Arab waterway and (2) control over three strategic Gulf islands of Abu-Mousa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs. These disputes had never led to full-scale war. Indeed, political arrangements in the prerevolutionary period favored peaceful coexistence. The Iraqi regime did not have the military capability to confront the Shah's army, and even if it had, the Gulf States would not have supported a war between the two countries: Saudi Arabia and Iran were partners in curbing revolutionary movements in the region; Kuwait preferred Iran over Iraq because of the Iraq's territorial claim to Kuwait; the Sultan of Oman needed the Shah for his own protection; and Iran and Iraq needed each other's cooperation to control and suppress Kurdish demands for autonomy in both countries.

The Iranian Revolution suddenly changed the balance of forces in the region as the Shi'i revolutionary ideology began to affect neighboring

states. In Saudi Arabia, about 200,000 Muslims of the Shi'i sect rioted, carrying signs hailing Ayatollah Khomeini. In Oman, it was reported that political dissent was growing in the northern provinces distinct from the struggle that had been going on in the Dhoffar province for many years (MERIP Reports 1980; Abdulghani 1984, pp. 193–200). Iraqi leaders viewed the Iranian Revolution with mounting anxiety. To make the matters worse, Ayatollah Baqir Sadr, Khomeini's counterpart in Najaf (Iraq) sent a congratulatory message to Khomeini, saying that "other tyrants have yet to see their day of reckoning," an apparent reference to Iraqi leaders (Hiro 1985, p. 106). Khomeini then called upon Iraqis to overthrow the Baath regime. Because Baathist party was dominated by secular-minded Sunnis while 55 percent of the Iraqi population was Shi'i, the threat of a Shi'i uprising in Iraq was real. The threat of the Iranian Revolution and Iraq's desire for a leadership position in the Middle East, combined with Iran's military disorganization, prompted Iraq to end the rule of the Ayatollah by military invasion (Falk 1980; *U.S. News and World Reports* 1980, 6 Oct., pp. 24–29).

Preparation for the war, and the urgent need to defend Iran and the Revolution against the invading forces changed national priorities. It shifted attention away from the issues of democracy and freedom. Furthermore, on the grounds of maintaining unity among the people, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered the halt of land reform "temporarily." The war also provided an occasion to usurp the workers' right to strike. In February 1989, using the justification that the "citadel of Islam" was in danger because of "the war imposed by the United States and Iraq" and that there was an urgent need to increase production, the ruling clerics organized a gathering of the "representatives" of 170 Islamic associations of factories to condemn any form of labor strike (*Jomhuri-ye Islami* 6 Isfand 1359/1981, p. 5). Finally, the war led to a further consolidation of IRP political power. The Revolutionary Guards (the armed wing of the IRP), previously under pressure to be dismantled or incorporated into the military, were demanding heavy weapons to fight the war, a demand that was gaining increasing support in the government because of the military's inability to resist the invading forces. The army was portrayed as an organ inherited from the old regime that could not be trusted. Although the ouster of Bani-Sadr and the subsequent purges of military personnel left no significant rival in the army, the Guards were trusted by the ulama

and favored over the armed forces (Rose 1984; Hickman 1982). Most leaders of the Revolutionary Guards were related to the ulama, and their rank-and-file were mostly ethnic Persians. To mobilize volunteers to join the Revolutionary Guards, the IRP utilized the "Islamic fervor and Iranian nationalism" provoked by the invasion (MERI 1985, pp. 20, 33). At the same time, the ulama set up the Ideological and Political Bureau of the Armed Forces to monitor the activities of military personnel. Soon the ulama were promoting their own men in the army. Indeed, "the military officers chosen for command positions were young, ambitious, motivated, and dedicated to Islam" (Hickman 1982, p. 30).

Therefore, while the war expedited the concentration and centralization of power, supporting Skocpol's (1979) theory of postrevolutionary reconstruction of the state, the preparation for war by the leaders of the Islamic Republic, and the continuation of the war for nearly a decade cannot be fully understood without considering the role of Shi'i revolutionary discourse. The revolution was to go beyond Iran's borders to fight "world imperialism" (*istikbar-i jahani*), and Iraq's invasion of Iran produced another circumstance that the revolutionary ideology fed on. In Iran, the war was perceived as a plot engineered by the United States and executed by the Iraqi regime to destroy the Islamic Revolution. The leaders of the Islamic Republic were quick to pronounce that the war was a gift from the West that they had been expecting, and that given their historic revolutionary mission, they were proud to welcome it and meet the challenge of the counterrevolution. The leaders of the Islamic Republic pursued their objectives of overthrowing the Iraqi regime and establishing an Islamic Republic in Iraq, conquering Jerusalem and destroying Israel, and beating "the Great Satan" overseas. Because Saddam Hosein was portrayed as an infidel (*kafir*) and the agent of imperialism, any peace negotiation with him was tantamount to the betrayal of Iran and Islam (Bazargan 1984, pp. 154–58). The self-fulfilling prophecy that a contradiction existed between Islam and the West was confirmed.

## CONCLUSION

I began by questioning the adequacy of the major existing models to explain the role of Shi'i ideology in the Iranian Revolution. As an alternative model, I conceptualized ideology as epistemic discourse: a set of general principles, con-

cepts, symbols, and rituals that humans use to address the problems of a particular historical period. This conception of ideology differs from conceptions that treat ideology as a set of ideas internalized by actors or connected to interests. To specify the connection between ideology and revolution, I distinguished two principle aspects of the revolutionary process: revolution as content and revolution as a mode. While emphasizing the significance of the content of revolutionary change, I argued that the dominant role of revolutionary ideology in shaping human action makes revolution an historically distinctive phenomenon. Above and beyond its content, revolution is a unique mode of social action that differs from routine social actions.

Islamic revolutionary discourse was not simply a pre-existing ideology resting on the political theory of Shi'ism or ulama institutional development, ready to be used by discontented groups and classes against the Shah. Rather, it was produced by diverse ideologues as a result of the dialectic between the state and its opponents in a broad episodic context. To demonstrate this, I contrasted the post-coup (1953) period with the national-democratic episode ushered in with the Allies' invasion of Iran in 1941. The coup ended the national-democratic episode and the subsequent events undermined secular ideologies and promoted the production and growth of Islamic revolutionary discourse within the opposition. Therefore, although the ideology of the state under Reza Shah and under his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, was similar, Reza Shah's secular and anticlerical policies did not lead to the rise of Islamic opposition because the Shah's cultural policies and the dominant cultural trend in society belonged to the same ideological universe. Under his son, in contrast, the state ideology and the dominant ideological movement within the opposition began to diverge and by the late 1970s the ideology of the monarchy and Islamic opposition were two mutually negating discourses. Revolutionary Islam autonomously contributed to the Iranian Revolution by transforming the economic difficulties of the 1970s into a revolutionary crisis. This role was significant because prerevolutionary Iran did not experience serious economic and political crises. During the revolutionary mobilization of 1977–1979, the religious calendar, rituals, and symbols facilitated communication among participants and provided occasions for demonstrations against the Shah. Finally, in the postrevolutionary period, Islamic discourse affected the outcome of

contention for power and class conflict. Shi'i discourse was a factor in the outbreak of the war and mediated the effect of the war on the reconstruction of the state. The war, in turn, directed the course of ideological debate away from class issues and the issues of democracy and individual freedom raised by the rival groups.

The Iranian case has implications for sociological theories of revolution. The social psychological and structural-functional theories of revolution rest on the notion of a discontinuity between a revolutionary and a routine contention for power. In contrast, organizational and conflict theories of revolution reject such a notion and emphasize that revolutionary action is a form of resource mobilization similar in logic to routine contention for power. However, my analysis modifies this claim. Because revolution is a mode, there is an important difference between revolutionary and routine contentions for power. Revolutionary action is dictated by a revolutionary ideology, and economic and political considerations play a secondary role. The availability of resources in a revolution is important, but, as the Iranian case demonstrates, groups that succeed are often those whose actions are consistent with the dynamic of ideology. It is not simply that ideology contributes to the resources of certain groups vis-à-vis others, but rather the resources themselves are constituted through discourse.

The contribution of ideology to the cause of revolution may vary from case to case. For future research, analysis of the rise of revolutionary ideology should consider the broad episodic context in which it emerges, including changes in the economy and class relations, the international context including not only the world economy and inter-state system but also the nature of international ideological relations, and the relationships between the state and civil society. Because revolutionary ideology arises within the context of a dialectic between the state and its opposition, the ideology of the state is an important clue to understanding the kind of ideology most likely to become the ideology of the opposition. The probability of the emergence of a revolutionary ideology is enhanced if the state ideology and the dominant cultural trends in civil society belong to different ideological universes. Finally, consideration should be given to the basic themes, ritual performances, and symbolic structures of the revolutionary ideology. These parameters determine the internal dynamics of ideology as they shape human actions and limit the options available to diverse actors.



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