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## Multiple Modernities and Islamism in Iran

*The author challenges the idea of a single and homogeneous modernity. Multiple modernization programs have been launched in many countries in general and in Muslim countries in particular. A great part of the literature on modernization of Muslim countries ignores the multiplicity of modernization processes in those countries. Using Iran as an example, the author presents an alternative theoretical tool for understanding modern developments in Muslim countries. The author argues that Iran did not go through a single modernization program, but several, and was affected by many factors such as Western interventions and wars, internal socioeconomic and cultural transformations, and the emergence of new political groups and ideologies. Among others, Islamic groups and parties have been engaged in modern economic, political and sociocultural transformations. A genuine democratic system therefore should include Islamic groups and parties in order to strengthen and legitimize democratic systems.*

**Key words:** *civil society · democracy · Islam · multiple modernities*

*L'auteur met à l'épreuve l'idée d'une modernité unique et homogène. Des programmes de modernisation multiples ont été lancés dans beaucoup de pays, et en particulier dans les pays musulmans. Une grande partie de la littérature qui porte sur la modernité des pays musulmans ignore la multiplicité des processus de modernisation dans ces pays. En se référant à l'Iran comme exemple, l'auteur présente un outil théorique alternatif permettant de comprendre les développements modernes dans les pays musulmans. L'auteur avance que l'Iran n'a pas traversé un programme de modernisation unique, mais plusieurs qui ont été affectés par plusieurs facteurs, tels que les interventions et les guerres occidentales, les transformations socio-économiques et culturelles internes et l'émergence de groupes idéologiques et politiques nouveaux. Les groupes et partis islamiques se sont, entre autres, engagés dans des transformations économiques, politiques et socio-culturelles modernes. Un véritable système démocratique devrait, dès lors, inclure les partis et groupes islamiques, de manière à renforcer et légitimer les systèmes démocratiques.*

**Mots-clés:** *démocratie · islam · modernités multiples · société civile*

The “Muslim world” as an ill-defined category has been tarred as the other side of modernity, reason, and rationality. The rise of “Islamic terrorism” in many Western countries has reinforced the ideas—in our view, groundless—

of a “clash of civilizations” presented among others by Samuel Huntington. The discursive representation of “Muslim otherness” has of course a longer history than post-9/11 events. The ideal type (in imagination) of Orientalism has been an inseparable counterpart of the self-perception of “the West” as the center of the world and the homeland of democracy, science, and progress (see, for instance, Said, 1978; Turner, 1994). On the contrary, the “Muslim world” has been considered the reverse image of “the West”.

This dualistic modern thinking and discursive categorization have influenced many intellectuals and social scientists in Muslim countries. By using established meta-theories, these groups try to reproduce the “cultural reason” behind Muslim countries’ “failure” to develop “a West” in “the Orient”. They, according to Turner, see their own societies through the eyes of Western social scientists, such as Weber, Marx, and Durkheim. They have been deeply engaged in the westernizing efforts that went through many unsuccessful sociopolitical experiments. Iran is one of the countries that went through several modernization programs.

The ideas of modernity are rather old in Iran. Iran, as many other countries, was drawn into a global network of economic and social transformation that changed the world and that country for ever. However, the modern changes in Iran did not fully follow any imported Western blueprints. Although highly influenced by the modern Western changes, the modernization agents in Iran combined various ideas and organization forms and authoritatively applied them in a new socioeconomic and cultural context. The major agent of modernization, namely the state, introduced a “selective modernization” that served both the ruling strata and part of the economic and social elites. On the other side, the civil society also mobilized itself and launched movements to modernize society, including its political power structure. The consequences of the interaction of civil society and state agents created different models of modernization in Iran that can be discussed under the heading “multiple modernities”. However, the authoritarian and selective modernizations led to the radicalization of civil society groups and the appearance and victory of Islamists in Iran.

### **Multiple Modernities**

It is generally held that modernity as a socioeconomic and cultural project has been a Western undertaking (Eisenstadt, 1973, 1999; Giddens, 1990; Wittrock, 2000). Many scholars consider modernity an evolutionary and coherent process, which has its roots in Europe. They mean that modernity began long before the Enlightenment and the establishment of modern political and economic institutions. The modern world emerged out of processes of industrialization, urbanization, and political upheaval at the northwestern edge of the Eurasian landmass. This territorially and highly Eurocentric understanding of events occupies a major part of discussions on modernity. Modernity also is supposed to have a unique history which began somewhere on the borders between Greece and Turkey and which has flourished in northwestern Europe. Theoretically, the European civilization is considered

to be a unique European project without any influence from its non-European neighbors (for instance, see Weber, 1984). Even the economic superiority of “the West”, namely the capitalist system, is presented to be a result of the “religious superiority” of the West.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the “democratic system” in “the West” is traced back 2500 years to southern Europe, namely ancient Greece (Morris and Raaflaub, 2000).

Accordingly, Europe and later “the West” are considered as rather homogeneous societies with the same history, which generated more or less the same paths of modernity. However, this established understanding of modernity, which is based on a Eurocentric ideal-type of *the modern age*, has been criticized by some social scientists. Bernard Yack (1997: 7) calls the image of modernity as a coherent and integrated whole an aspect of the “fetishism of modernity”:

Modernity, the modern condition, the spirit of modern life, these are intellectual inventions inspired by our need to come to grips with the unprecedented social and cultural transformations of recent centuries. We come up with these ideas by focusing our attention on the most distinctive features of recent social experience and by consciously abstracting from the great range of ideas and institutions that do not share these features. But by treating modernity as a coherent and integrated whole we turn these distinguishing features of modern life and thought into a condition that shapes *all* aspects of modern experience. In this way, our own intellectual inventions come back to haunt us as an omnipresent force in our lives.

The legacy of modernization theory, which dominated American social sciences during the 1950s and 1960s, contributed to creating a tradition of thinking and speaking of modernity as a coherent and integrated whole (Yack, 1997: 57). This tradition ignored the fact that the social theorists and philosophers who developed the idea of modernity did not themselves view the modern age as a harmonious unity; they believed rather that fundamental divisions, such as subject/object, private/public, inclination/duty, bourgeois/proletariat, structured modern life (Yack, 1997: 7–8). Others, such as Peter Taylor (1999), explore different modernities as simultaneous processes in which different forms of modernity appeared in different parts of the world. He means that while Europeanization was occurring in the “South”, in the “North”, Americanization of Europe was taking place. The 20th century has been an era of Americanization, a projection of US power through both coercion and consensus; while the consensus over Americanization was common in “the North”, the coercive side of Americanization was experienced by “the South” (Taylor, 1999: 9–10). Both the Americanization and the Europeanization of the world were coupled with coercion and wars in “the South” by colonial and imperialist powers engaged in direct fights or using local surrogates to realize their own interests (see also Chomsky and Herman, 1979). “American social scientists may have preferred to use the universal term modernization at this time, but the popular descriptions of Cocacolarization, Disnification, McWorld and the Levi generation leave no doubt as to its geographical provenance” (Taylor, 1999: 10).

Hence, the idea of modernity as a single and homogeneous phenomenon is a strongly Eurocentric assumption. Gerard Delanty (2003) contends that “the idea of an alternative modernity or alternative modernities is one of the most obvious solutions to the tendency to see modernity as uniformity”.

The assumption of a singular modernity has been, and still is, a part of the creation and recreation of established theoretical dualisms in the social sciences; for instance, the dualism of modern/traditional, based on the Durkheimian “structural differentiation” theory, in which societal transformations are conceptualized as a single movement from simple to complex, traditional to modern, community to society, sacred to secular, and folk/rural to urban, among others. This natural/evolutionist bias is premised on a view of historical developments as linear, as a series of displacements of, for instance, the traditional by the modern or the irrational by the rational. Such a biased understanding goes so far as to legitimize the brutality and contemporary militarism in the name of modernity, as Dahrendorf and Giddens do (in close cooperation with the neo-colonial political powers, such as the USA and Britain).<sup>2</sup> They attempt to defend a picture of modernity in which modern economics and democracy appear together and are indeed synonymous. In such views, political modernity is considered to be limited to the rise of the secular state and a secular polity. In such theories the bloody history of so-called secular nation-states is missing or hardly mentioned. Although the very basis of the power of the modern state is not based purely on military support or on religious legitimization (as with pre-modern states), but rather on the scope of political support that is managed by participation of masses in political processes, one should not draw the conclusion that nation-states are merely democratic institutions. In other words, political modernization is not to be understood as a process of democratization. “The modern state is not necessarily democratic. A history of democratization, therefore, is not synonymous with one of state modernization” (Therborn, 1992: 63).

War and its accompanying ideology—constructing, disqualifying, illegitimizing, and demonizing “the Other”—has been an inseparable part of modernity. Given the fact that for many Muslim countries, such as Iran, the modern world was revealed through war and the politics of contention, the exploration of the war and the politics of enforcement by “the West” are of great importance for understanding specific forms of Muslim modernization. The world wars, involving mass mobilization of societies, could not have been successful without disqualifying, illegitimizing, and demonizing “others”, who were the subject of military attacks, and with whom the invaders maintained a contradictory relationship. The invaders’ military and economic superiority was valued and legitimized by the creation of a supposedly superior identity, which was highly dependent on the existence of inferiority among the invaded groups and nations. This condition can be compared to that of the Tower of Babel, in which the superiority of those on the top is based on the inferiority of lower status groups.

In many non-Western societies a marginal stratum of society acted as a modernizing elite who, without popular support, forced through highly

selective modernization programs. Accordingly, the state selected those parts of modernity which could serve its own intentions and which were compatible with its own understanding of modernity. The state became a major agency of modernization and tried to authoritatively eliminate any protest and resistance from social groups disadvantaged from the authoritative modernization programs. In such societies, the modernization process was contentious and created highly unstable societies in which the authoritative institutions, such as the army and the police, became the major agents in guaranteeing continuity of state modernization programs. Such authoritative transformation of indigenous institutions and social groups and the institutionalization of new political regimes created highly segregated and segmented societies.

The Iranian modernizing elite had to cope with a very strong constellation of power in the civil sphere of society. The state as the major agent of selective modernization had to separate itself from its traditional allies in civil society, namely bazaris and the ulama (Kamali, 1998, 2001). It happened through what Robertson calls “selective incorporation” by which the non-Western states “copied” ideas and practices from other societies and were engaged in selective learning from other societies; each nation-state thus incorporated a different mixture of “alien” ideas (Robertson, 1995). During the Islamic pre-modern history of Iran, the alliance between state and influential groups in civil society was of crucial importance for the legitimization of state power. The reason for such an institutionalized relationship lay in the existence of a powerful civil society that both cooperated with and frustrated the aims of the state power.

Modern ideas and blueprints did not only influence the Iranian state but also other agents in civil society. Not only the worldviews of bazaris and the ulama had been influenced by modern ideas, but also their prominent positions in society and their institutionalized relationships with the state. The state’s highly selective modernization was not always compatible with the desires and interests of the indigenous groups of civil society. The authoritative and selective modernization of state apparatus and the changing direction of its interest from alliance with the internal civil societies to cooperation with foreign Western powers violated the traditional social stability in Iran. This, in turn, created conflicts and contradictions between the state and the indigenous and ever-growing modern civil societies.

### **Social Movements, Religion, and Modernity**

Iran went through two major revolutions in the 20th century, namely the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909 and the Islamic Revolution of 1977–1979. Religious and indigenous groups of Iranian society played leading roles in both revolutions. Reactions to governmental modernization projects in Iran, as well as in other Muslim countries, have not been anti-modern, but anti-authoritarian in societies where governments and leaders tried to restructure their societies in accordance with a specific understanding

of modernization. Social movements, including movements led by the clergy, have been mainly reactions against authoritarian modernization and dictatorship and have demanded participation in collective decision-making in Iran. Although a few anti-modern reactions can be singled out from the mainstream body of social movements for democracy and modernization, they were marginalized and disappeared in a very early stage. Both the early and the current Islamic movements have had a history of modern ideas and programs for modernization that often is ignored by social scientists. However, there are some studies exploring the modern features of the new Islamic movements (see among others, Abrahamian, 1993; Eisenstadt, 1999, 2002; Kamali, 1998, 2001).

Notwithstanding, as a result of a tradition of Orientalism and other dualistic “scientific” constructions of “the Muslim world” as the other side of rationality and reason, dubious pundits that provide and reinforce a simple “us-and-them” model have dominated the discussion. Even contemporary scholars who believe in the particularity of “the Muslim world”, such as Gellner, Lewis, Huntington, and Dahrendorf, present astonishingly simple models, typically based on a simple dichotomous world—orientalism reinvented. The simple models (doubtful in whole and in part) of Lewis, Dahrendorf, Huntington have, however, regrettable consequences when adopted or subscribed to by powerful Western countries. The results are: miscalculations, tragic unintended consequences, such as economic failure, political chaos, war, *coup d'état*, etc. They pay selective attention to history—ignoring positive cultural and institutional developments in Islamic societies, forgetting the negative, destructive role of European powers and the USA in many instances.

As Geertz (2003: 30) stresses:

Any attempt to conceive of “Islam” in sweeping, “civilization” terms – Lewis’s, Simon’s, Akbar’s, Armstrong’s, or anyone else’s – is in some danger of conjuring up cloudscapes, mighty like a whale, and concocting Joycean big words that make us all afraid. A descent into the swirl of particular incident, particular politics, particular voices, particular traditions, and particular arguments, a movement across the grain of difference and along the lines of dispute, is indeed disorienting and spoils the prospect of abiding order. But it may prove the surer path toward understanding “Islam” – that resonant name of some things at once.

Islam is not a simple religious phenomenon but different social and cultural constructions in different countries, that cannot be forced into a simple category of “the Muslim world”. Muslim societies and their modern histories are as diverse and multiple as any other. The importance of looking comparatively at modernization processes is that it helps us see discontents, diversities, competitive forces, and competing models.

Tragic developments among European and North American societies in their modernization initiatives, and also uneven and confused developments in “the West” and other countries in the “non-Western” parts of the world, among Islamic countries in particular, must be studied comparatively to generate a comprehensive theory of multiple modernities. The traditional

and established understandings and theoretical constructions of “single modernity” must be challenged—as they are in the face of new sociopolitical and cultural developments of the world. There are some commonalities, such as democracy and the market economy. But these are incorporated in a variety of ways and forms of institutional contexts in various societies. This generates different degrees of tension and conflict in different societies. Even relatively homogeneous societies with a high degree of cohesion, such as the Scandinavian countries, have had intense conflicts over questions of industrialization, commodification, capitalist development, democracy, and other disruptions connected to modernization. We should not forget that Finland had a civil war during the 20th century. The dichotomous sociological tradition of the Western societies, set up over against non-Western, Muslim, non-modern, non-developed, etc., has resulted in ideal-typical theories about “the West” that deny or minimize the wayward and tragic developments in Europe: Spain, Portugal, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Russia, to say nothing of Germany and Italy after World War I.

Although the modernization of Iran has a long history, it did not go through *a single* modernization program under one period, but several modernization programs affected by many factors such as:

international events, such as wars and occupations;  
internal socioeconomic and cultural changes and developments;  
political groups and ideologies.

The wars forced on Iran by the new expanding European powers, such as Britain and Russia, led to internal disruptions and crisis. The “trauma of defeat” forced the state to start reforming its institutions, in particular the army and the administration system, in order to reinforce state power (Algar, 1969; Kamali, 2006). The administrative reforms were limited because of internal opposition from the royal court and external opposition from European powers. The weakness of the state and the increasing influence of foreign powers in Iran led to financial dependency on those powers in the second half of the 18th century.

Increase in economic relationships with the new capitalist countries of Europe influenced the position of bazaris in Iran. The bazari merchants were increasingly drawn into international trade (Abrahamian, 1982). In the face of uneven economic development and foreign competition, the bazaris became highly dependent on government support. But because of the military weakness of the state they were not only left unprotected but also severely harmed by the government’s concession policy, through which many economic concessions were made in favor of European capitalist powers; their economic position was weakened (Algar, 1969; Arjomand, 1984; Kasravi, 1951). The state’s expenditures forced it to borrow from foreign banks and grant concessions to foreign companies in Persia.

This resulted in the disintegration of traditional relationships between the ulama, the bazaris, and the state. Bazaris, in alliance with the ulama, revolted against government policies and succeeded in mobilizing popular support.

The ulama successfully led the constitutional movement (1905–1909) and helped establish a constitutional government. This put an end to early modernization and changed its conditions, such that a new era of modernization in Iran came about. Both the Constitutional Revolution and the later sociopolitical transformations proved that religious groups have been an inseparable part of all the modern movements and changes in Iran.

### **Iranian Selective and Authoritarian Modernities**

“Multiple modernities” is not a term that signifies only variations of modernities in different countries but also must indicate various modernization programs conducted by modernization agents, in particular the state, in the same country. Modernity was not a homogeneous phenomenon or process that every agent and sociopolitical group agreed upon. It was understood and defined selectively, based on different ideological understandings of modernity. Countries, such as Egypt, Iran, and Turkey, did not experience one modernization but several. Muhammad Ali’s modernization did not have much in common with Nasser’s modernization in Egypt. Moreover, in Iran, the path of modernization under Qajars (1792–1924), Pahlavi (1924–1979), and the Islamic Republic showed tremendous variation. In Turkey too, the Ottoman modernization had very little in common with Kemalist modernization. The modernization of these countries did not follow a predestined model and process but can be divided into different periods with specific and various properties. For instance, the modernization of Iran can be characterized in the following four periods: (1) the Persian pre-constitutional modernization; (2) the constitutional modernization; (3) the authoritative Pahlavi modernization; and (4) the axial Islamic modernization.

The pre-constitutional modernization in Iran was a selective modernization of army and the administration system. These modernizations were called *Nezam-e jadid* (New order). The reform policy was mainly a consequence of army inefficiency in confrontations with the new European powers. The crisis of governance and the risk of disintegration led to social movements for constitutionalism, which resulted in the change of the traditional political system and the establishment of constitutional regimes in 1905. The constitutional regime’s main focus was to modernize the organization of government and the political system. World War I and its devastating consequences and the disintegration of the postwar period, resulted in the establishment of a new visionary and authoritative regime via a military coup in 1922. Thus began the effort to create a centralized nation-state.

The leader of the coup, an army officer, Reza Khan (r. 1924–1941), succeeded in abolishing the reign of the corrupt Qajar dynasty (1792–1924), establishing a new monarchy (Pahlavi) and changed the name of the country from Persia to Iran. Reza Khan (later Reza Shah) attempted at first to create political stability, which he considered a precondition for modernizing the country. He gradually destroyed almost all organized political opposition and created a dictatorial regime, in which he could do what-

ever he thought necessary for the socioeconomic and cultural modernization of the country.

Reza Shah was highly influenced by the political doctrines of the leaders of the “new Europe”, namely Nazism and Fascism. However, this was not the only reason for his attraction to the “new Europe”. Widespread negative attitudes among Iranian people towards the “old Europe”, in particular Britain and France, because of their colonial and imperialist policies in Iran, encouraged the political elites of Iran to seek new European allies in order to create modern, powerful, and independent nation-states.<sup>3</sup> Germany and Italy provided pertinent alternatives to the “old Europe”. Accordingly, both the political projects of the leaders of Iran and their need for new powerful allies encouraged them to establish closer contacts with Germany. In addition, the German and Italian one-party system was attractive to Reza Shah who needed political stability and centralization of power in order to be able to change the society in accordance with his revolutionary ideas.

The negative experiences of the post-revolutionary democratic constitutionalism in Iran, which was about to end in the disappearance of the country as a political entity, created the ground for the establishment of a new authoritarian state. In early 1920s, even the intelligentsia of the country was convinced of the need for centralized and powerful states to fight disintegration. Accordingly, the takeover of political power in Iran by Reza Shah occurred without any major objections. Even the religious groups accepted the secular state of Reza Shah. Democracy was considered unfavorable for the modernization of the country and creation of a powerful state.

The rather radical modernization of the country by the new authoritative regime of Reza Shah and his policy of “friendship” with “new Europe” came to an end as a result of occupation of the country by Allies and the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941. However, his heir and son, Muhammad Reza Shah (1941–1979) continued Reza Shah’s modernization programs. Pahlavisan authoritarianism and rapid modernization (1924–1979) succeeded in creating one of the most modern and powerful countries in the Middle East. However, selective modernization generated also opposition and led to the disintegration of society. Politically, the “fundamentalist secularism” of the Pahlavis created religious opposition on the one hand, and the dictatorial nature of the regime provoked leftist and liberal opposition on the other. Economically, “fundamentalist marketism” increased the gap between social classes and created lasting segregation. Rapid urbanization and land reform (more substantial in Iran than in Turkey) led to mass movement of people from rural areas to the cities. This, coupled with ultra-liberal market economic reforms, created many slums in the major cities. Both the indigenous civil-society groups, namely the ulama, the bazaris, intellectual religious groups, and the secular civil-society groups (such as intellectuals and political parties), were marginalized and excluded from the political life of the country (Algar, 1969; Abrahamian, 1982; Arjomand, 1984; Kamali, 1998). This resulted in the uprisings of the 1970s which gave rise to the Islamic Revolution (1977–1979) which put an end to a thousand-year-old monarchy in Iran and established a republican regime.

The establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran created a new era of political dictatorship and simultaneously a new form of authoritarian modernization. Although the economic policy of the shah continued more or less under the new regime, the main efforts of the new regime were directed at reinforcing its political power, which resulted in one of the most substantial attacks ever made on both the opposition from indigenous civil society groups, and (even more fiercely) on Westernized civil-society groups. The new regime considered itself to be the “true representative” of the Iranian people, and with epoch-making zeal claimed legitimacy and the right to destroy opposition and abolish any dualism between civil society and state. However, the republican nature of the regime forced it to legitimize its reign by popular elections and a modern constitution (Abrahamian, 1993). In its desire to install a more authoritarian system, the Islamic regime used the war with Iraq (1981–1989) as a good pretext for realizing its blueprint by mass arrest and execution of thousands of members of the political opposition.

However, the regime did not succeed in destroying all opposition. Using the end of the war with Iraq and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, both aspects of civil society in Iran, namely the indigenous and the “Western” sides, started organizing themselves and protesting against the dictatorship. In 1997, a religious liberal group led by Muhammad Khatami succeeded in winning an election and seizing state power. This set the stage for a period of struggle between liberal groups and religious monopolists (*enhesartaban*) which is still continuing. The Khatami presidency probably put an end to the revolutionary political dictatorship which had many similarities with Fascist and Communist political systems.

However, the conflicts between the two main groups in the governmental body of the Islamic Republic continued in new forms. Khatami’s presidency marked a change in the attitudes of many Iranians concerning the compatibility between religion and democracy. Although many revolutionary and judicial hindrances confronted democratic development, the civil societies of Iran (both the modern Westernized and the modern indigenous one) started mobilizing themselves for participation in collective decision-making. The new political spectrum included many groups in the civil society, from those who believed in a democratic development within the framework of the Islamic Republic to those who advocated more revolutionary change. Radical groups in Iranian civil society, across the spectrum, challenged the very existence of the leadership institution of *velayat-e faqih* (vice regency of the Hidden Imam) seized by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the so-called spiritual leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The conservatives under the leadership of the spiritual leader started a chain of attacks on liberal groups and journalists, arresting many, closing newspapers, and in some cases assassinating journalists and opposition activists. However, conservative terror was not limited to attacks on opposition groups. President Khatami’s group was also attacked. Using their control over judicial, military, paramilitary groups, and support from groups in civil society who lost the presidential election of 1997, the conservatives succeeded in isolating and paralyzing Khatami and seized control of the Iranian parliament in the

election of 2004. The victory of the conservatives in the parliamentary election of 2004 put an end to the Khatami era.

In the recent presidential election of summer 2005, the presidential race was dominated by two groups of conservatives: moderates and hardliners. The moderates' candidate, Hashemi Rafsanjani, was also supported by part of the Khatami faction who saw no other way to loosen the conservatives' grip on all political organs of the country. The conservatives' candidate, Ahmadinejad, won an unexpected victory and defeated one of the most established figures and leaders of the Islamic republic, Rafsanjani. There were many reasons for Ahmadinejad's victory. The failure of Khatami's administration in the attempt to establish a democratic system and to improve the living conditions of many groups, plus Rafsanjani's bad reputation (he was said to be one of the richest men in Iran), and his record of participation in political oppression against the opposition during the 1980s are some of the reasons for his defeat.

### Islam and Democracy

The incompatibility of Islam and democracy has been assumed at least since the formulation of the compatibility of Christianity, modernity, capitalism, and democracy by Max Weber in his classic work, *Capitalism and Christian Ethics*. Such an understanding of the conflict between Islam, modernity, and democracy reinforced overt and covert orientalism both in social sciences and in public debate. This led to marginalization of Islamic groups and parties and exclusion from participation in modern changes in many Muslim countries. The Iranian modern history is no exception. Secular political leaders armed with Western blueprints, and supported by the army, such as Reza Shah (1924–1941) launched many modernization projects, including the project to exclude religion and religious groups from modern socio-political transformations. Such a policy, realized by authoritarian means, inflated the popularity of radical ideologies, such as Marxism. During the reign of Reza Shah, the weak leftist movement that started during the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1909) and that continued in the post-revolutionary period grew stronger and established a communist party after the abdication of Reza Shah in 1941. The party succeeded even in gaining control of governmental positions during the democratic period of 1941–1953. The military coup of 1953 put an end to the golden age of the party and encouraged the emergence of even more radical ideological groups and parties.

Radical Islamic groups started organizing themselves in new radical formations, such as *Hezbe melale eslami* (Islamic Nations Party) and *Anjomane Zedde Bahai* (Anti-Bahai Society). They believed in more radical measures for political change, such as armed struggle including political assassination. However, more moderate Islamic intellectuals were organized in the *Nehzat-e azadi-ye Iran* (the Liberation Movement of Iran, LMI), led by Mehdi Bazargan, who became the first Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Bazargan worked to establish links between his movement and the

moderate clerical opposition. He considered Islam as compatible with both modernity and democracy and looked to Islam as a vehicle for political mobilization. He believed that the younger generation could be mobilized for modernization and democratization of the Islamic country of Iran. Among the best-known thinkers associated with the LMI was Ali Shariati, who argued for Islamic political struggle for social justice and the cause of the deprived classes. Shariati's ideas influenced many young Muslims who at the end of 1960s started a radical Islamist organization, *Mojahedin-e Khalq*, advocating armed struggle for revolutionary change. Shariati's political ideas and successful agitation with regard to the younger generation also influenced Ayatollah Khomeini who from his exile in Iraq continued to issue antigovernment statements (*fatvas*) against the Shah's regime (Kamali, 1998). In a series of lectures delivered to his students in Najaf in 1969 and 1970 and later published in book form under the title of *Velayat-e Faqih* (The Vice Regency of the Islamic Jurist), he argued that monarchy was a form of government that was not compatible with Islam, that true Muslims must strive for the establishment of an Islamic state ruled by the institution of *Velayat-e faqih*.

The Shah's authoritarian modernity projects continued to stress rapid economic change and excluded not only radical groups but also moderate and liberal groups, both Islamic and secular, from participation in political decision-making. Such modernization programs left few options for political groups. Even moderate Islamists, such as the members of LMI, were attacked, and the political dictatorship tightened its grip over the political life of the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Accordingly, the political opposition radicalized, and leftist and Islamist groups began an armed struggle against the Shah's regime. Paradoxically, the Shah's selective and authoritarian modernization, aiming at reducing the religious groups' influence in Iranian society, reinforced their political influence and power. The radical Islamists gained the leadership of a revolution that overthrew the dictatorship in the name of political reforms and democratization and established an Islamic republic in 1979.

Radical Islamists under the leadership of Khomeini succeeded in excluding liberal groups including the LMI through a coup in 1981, which reinforced their control over the Iranian state and society. They launched a new modernization program for the elimination of the duality of civil society and state. There were many similarities between the Islamic revolutionary republic in the period 1981–1997 and the Italian Fascist regime of the 1920s and the 1930s. The Islamic government saw itself to be the politically and religiously legitimate representative of the people and as such not in need of a civil society of cadres forming the governmental body of the republic.

Islamic modernization created both Islamic and secular opposition, and this led to the victory of liberal Islamists and the presidency of Muhammad Khatami. Although the Islamist hardliners won an unexpected victory in the last election, the reformists, both liberal Islamists and secular groups, are continuing their struggles for democracy and the reinforcement of Iranian civil societies. This is a process that needs the cooperation of both Islamists

and secular groups against political dictatorship. I have argued elsewhere (Kamali, 1998, 2001, 2006) that in Iran, and in many other Muslim countries, there are at least two civil societies, a quasi-modern, quasi-traditional one, and a hybrid, Westernized one. The first society is composed of those who see no incompatibility between religion, modernity, and democracy, and the second groups advocate complete secularism. The conflict between the two groups has been a major factor in the failure of lasting democratic development in Iran and other Muslim countries. Therefore, and based on the experiences of the modern history of Iran, a lasting democratic development can only come about through cooperation and peaceful competition between Islamist modernist groups and secularists. Neither of these groups will enjoy democracy and freedom as long as they deny equal rights and the proper place of the other.

Both the Pahlavis' secular modernization and the Islamic Republic's Islamic modernization bear witness to the fact that authoritative political systems cannot eliminate different groups of civil society from political participation. Their participation will take democratic or revolutionary forms depending on the state's policies towards civil societies.

The European democratic developments should convince even Eurocentric groups both in "the West" and in Muslim countries that religious groups and parties should be allowed to participate in democratic processes in order to legitimize democratic ruling systems. Participation of all groups, including the Islamist groups, in the democratic developments in Muslim countries is not very different from the participation of Christian groups and parties in many Western countries. Participation of Islamist parties in the elections of many Muslim countries should be as accepted and legitimized as participation of Christian Democratic parties is in many Western countries.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Religion was isolated from many other social and historical factors, which together helped to create the capitalist system of the West. Social scientists, such as Weber, recognized a very significant role for Christianity in creating the capitalist system. Islam was, on the other hand, considered an obstacle to the development of capitalism.

<sup>2</sup> Dahrendorf, a member of the House of Lords, after September 11, 2001, has written several articles in which he claims the reunion of Europe and the USA to defend "Western values" against terrorists. Giddens too in his article in *The Guardian* asks the authorities to be "tougher on immigrants" in order to stop right-wing parties and save Western democracy. He sees liberal immigration policy as a problem for preservation of Western values.

<sup>3</sup> The attraction of the "new Europe" was not only limited to Iran, but was widespread in many other Middle Eastern countries, such as Turkey, Egypt, and Iraq.

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