

Introduction

Intellectual Constructions of Iranian Modernity

This book is about the intellectual construction of Iranian modernity during the twentieth century, up to the end of the 1970s. As a work of intellectual history, it focuses on broad patterns of influential ideas, and their relation to each other, in a historical context. In a sense, this is what historians often do, as they “rethink past thoughts,” to quote R. G. Collingwood’s succinct definition of our profession. Traditionally, intellectual history, as well as historiography in general, has been the study of recognizably “influential ideas,” traceable in written or printed texts, thus implicitly biased toward elite or high culture. Historians admit, however, that “influential ideas” are defined as such via the consensus of their profession, primarily because, appearing in printed texts, they are the most accessible type of historical record. Given this definition, intellectual history focuses neither on the most objectively important ideas of a given age, nor necessarily on its “ruling ideas,” in the sense of Marx’s famous dictum. At the same time, despite focusing mainly on individual thinkers, intellectual history can be “the social history of ideas” by locating intellectual discourses and movements within broader social, political and cultural contexts. This kind of intellectual history, for example, links the ideas of nationalist, religious or revolutionary thinkers to state policies, popular culture and social movements.

Recently, intellectual history seems to have been demoted to the margins of mainstream historiography. This is a curious development since, during the past few decades, the dominant trend in American historiography has been cultural history, which, like intellectual history, is concerned ultimately with patterns of meaning, deciphered within broad clusters of ideas.¹ The marginality of intellectual history is more pronounced when it comes to Middle Eastern, including Iranian, historiography. According to a fairly recent study:

A deep and unjustified divide remains between the modes of thought which intellectual history is developing in the study of Western (and non-Western,

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mainly South-Asian) societies and cultures and the study of the intellectual history of the Middle East, which seems to lag behind and remains ghettoized.²

English-language intellectual histories of the Middle East have largely dealt with Arab nationalist thought, while Iranian intellectual history is a new scholarly field, emerging in the aftermath of Iran's 1978–1979 Revolution. Counting no more than a dozen major English-language works, the field of Iranian intellectual history emerged mainly in response to the paradox of a late twentieth-century popular revolution leading to a theocratic regime, dominated by Shi'i clerics. The Iranian Revolution's deviation from the expected trajectory of modernity, primarily the demise of religion, made it a harbinger of the arrival of a global "post-modern condition." In particular, the revolution's triumphant "Islamic ideology" was widely perceived as a challenge to modernity's "meta-narratives" of Marxism, liberal democracy, modernization and secularization. Michel Foucault, for example, welcomed the fall of the Shah as a "revolution against Modernity," calling Ayatollah Khomeini's ideas a new kind of "spiritual politics" that could come only from outside Europe.³

While hasty generalizations, such as Foucault's, were gradually tempered by more sober reflections, the paradox of the Iranian Revolution endured as the Islamic Republic consolidated and survived into the twenty-first century. Though never repeated elsewhere, Iran's "Islamic Revolution" initiated a burgeoning literature on topics such as Islamic fundamentalism, political Islam and Islamism, as well as on comparable global trends of religious revivalism. During the 1980s, this literature focused on particular doctrinal and/or historical features that presumably made Iranian Shi'ism a potentially revolutionary ideology. The most influential works of this genre were by sociologist Said Amir Arjomand, who recognized that the Iranian Revolution was not generically Islamic or Shi'i, but instead "an ideological revolution in Shi'ism."⁴ Nevertheless, as with similar 1980s studies, Arjomand's analysis remained preoccupied with the minutiae of Shi'i doctrine and the vicissitudes of its history, paying less attention to the revolution's embeddedness in modern Iran's intellectual and ideological landscape.⁵

At the same time, pioneering studies by Ervand Abrahamian showed Iran's revolutionary "Islamic Ideology" was a species of modern political ideology, deeply indebted to Marxism. A similar understanding of

“Islamic Ideology” meanwhile had emerged in Iran, where the post-revolutionary regime was purging its leftist factions, consciously removing Marxist “contaminations.”⁶ The first major scholarly work devoted entirely to the study of “Islamic Ideology” was Hamid Dabashi’s *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundations of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (1993). Building on Arjomand’s and Abrahamian’s focus on “Islamic Ideology,” Dabashi traced its genealogy in works by eight twentieth-century thinkers. Making a new thought-world available to non-Persian readers, *Theology of Discontent* also launched the genre of modern Iranian intellectual history, setting standards and opening pathways for studies that followed. Among these were Dabashi’s attention to the intertwining of secular and religious aspects of revolutionary ideology, and his focus on the textual authority of intellectuals in conferring, denying and challenging political legitimacy. Dabashi had diagnosed “Islamic Ideology” as Iran’s intellectual response to a painful encounter with Western modernity. Still, his emphasis remained on the religious side of “Islamic Ideology,” leading him to conclude: “The theological language of discontent was inevitable, perhaps because theology is the ultimate language of truth.”⁷ Related to Dabashi’s (over)estimation of theology/religion as “truth language” was his choice only of Muslim thinkers as authoritative pre-revolutionary intellectuals. In 1996, political scientist Mehrzad Boroujerdi’s *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* added a number of important secular thinkers to Dabashi’s roster, provided more social and political context, and showed the continuity of pre- and postrevolutionary intellectual production along “the central concepts of *other-ness*, *orientalism*, *orientalism in reverse*, and *nativism*.”⁸ Boroujerdi’s focus on “nativism,” i.e. the project of constructing an “authentic” indigenous national identity, moved the analysis of Iranian intellectual discourse in a more secular direction. Moreover, Boroujerdi was the first scholar to note the influence, on both pre- and postrevolutionary Iranian intellectuals, of German Counter-modernist thought, and specifically the philosopher Martin Heidegger.

The contributions of Abrahamian, Dabashi and Boroujerdi were followed by only a few notable works in the specific genre of intellectual history. Ali Gheissari’s *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (1998) was a succinct but meticulous survey beyond “master thinkers” to consider less familiar authors and texts, collectively

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engaged in the intellectual labor of crafting a modern Iranian national identity. Like Dabashi, he mainly covered the prerevolutionary period, noting, but not analyzing, the mid-century hegemony of Marxist intellectuals. The latter topic was eventually addressed in Negin Nabavi's *Intellectuals and the State in Iran: Political, Discourse and the Dilemma of Authenticity* (2003). Focusing on the intellectual production of the 1950s to the 1970s via books and periodicals, Nabavi showed the prerevolutionary discourse of nativism and cultural authenticity was articulated mainly by secular leftist and Third Worldist intellectuals.⁹ Dabashi's prolific output often returned to Iranian intellectuals, while remaining more concerned with postcolonial theory, literary criticism, and the politics and aesthetics of cinema.¹⁰ Postmodern and postcolonial theory informed also Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi's *Refashioning Iran* (2001), an important work moving the historiography of Iranian modernity from a national to a global context, postulating a "Persianate modernity," coeval with its European counterpart, emerging in Mughal India's Persian-language texts (see Chapter 1). More recently, the study of Iranian intellectuals has been avidly pursued by sociologist Ali Mirsepassi, who has published four books on the subject within about a decade. Reflecting a pervasive intellectual trend, Mirsepassi's intervention is a critique of both Marxist and right-wing intellectuals from a liberal and presumably "non-ideological" perspective. His *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (2000) expanded on Boroujerdi's work to directly trace prerevolutionary Iran's "authenticity" discourse to Nietzsche and Heidegger. In *Democracy in Modern Iran: Islam, Culture, and Political Change* (2010), he urged Iranian intellectuals to follow American philosopher Richard Rorty's blueprint for building democracy pragmatically and without recourse to "philosophical systems." His *Political Islam, Iran, and the Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (2011) argued passionately, if not persuasively, that Heidegger's influence on leading pre-revolutionary intellectuals "helped enormously to articulate the Islamist ideology that paved the way to the 1979s revolution"¹¹ (see Chapters 5–6). Similarly, *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid* (2017) exaggerates Fardid's political and intellectual significance.¹²

Taking stock of the above-mentioned body of academic work on Iranian intellectual history, as well as outstanding similar works in Persian, one could make a number of observations about this field's accomplishments and remaining challenges. First, the field is dominated by sociologists and political scientists, hence showing a propensity for theorization, lacking adequate attention to the complex interplay of intellectual history and historical narration. In other words, existing scholarship does not sufficiently address intellectual history's problematic entanglement with historical meta-narratives that it implicitly presupposes and potentially also subverts. Second, and partly due to the field's disciplinary divergence, individually notable contributions remain largely unengaged with each other, thus producing little debate or cumulative consensus. On the positive side, existing scholarship already has moved the question of Iran's engagement with modernity beyond the dichotomies of Iranian/foreign, clergy/state, religious/secular, traditional/modern, authentic/derivational and singular/universal. More specifically, this scholarship shows the discourses of Iranian nationalism, official Pahlavi state ideology, Iranian cultural authenticity and "Islamic Ideology" are interconnected, as well as intertwined with Orientalist, Marxist and counter-modernist discourses. In other words, without having done so itself, existing scholarship suggests Iranian intellectual history makes sense only when framed within a broad global context.

This book therefore aims to complement as well as critique existing scholarship by approaching modern Iranian intellectual history within the perspective of global and comparative history. The book's first and overarching argument is that Iranian modernity, or the ideational project for crafting a modern Iran, has been sustained by at least a century of intense intellectual interaction with global ideologies. Iran is "Neither Eastern, Nor Western." This was a defiant declaration of national and cultural independence, coined in fact under the monarchy and adopted by the Islamic Republic. Turning this slogan on its head, this book will contend that modern Iran as a nation, similar to pre-modern Iran as an empire, has been culturally and intellectually "Both Eastern and Western." The Qur'anic phrase, *Neither Eastern, Nor Western*, appeared in the title of a 1974 collection of essays by Iran's leading historian Abdul-Hossein Zarrinkub, who rejected facile East–West dichotomies, calling on Iranians to create their "dialectical" synthesis, drawing on a "humanist" reading of Islamic mysticism.¹³

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Second, my inversion of Zarrinkub's phrase, in the title of the present book, stresses the continuity of modern political culture, as well as its simultaneously global and local character, across the pre- and post-revolutionary divide. This means a break with nationalist, Islamist, postcolonial and postmodern insistence on the "authenticity" of pre-modern and national cultures and their "autonomy" from European or "Western" modernity. Works such as Partha Chatterjee's study of India have characterized nationalist thought as "a derivative discourse" vis-à-vis global master narratives. This, however, does not mean modern national cultures are facsimiles of a universal script, particularly if modernity is understood to have been constructed globally, rather than in "the West," and defined by its conflicts and antinomies, rather than any singular essence.¹⁴

This book's third major objective is to align the study of Iranian intellectual history with current debates, among world historians, on the meaning of modernity. This ongoing debate may be traced in publications such as *American Historical Review*, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, *History and Theory*, *Journal of World History* and *Intellectual History Review*. A 2011 issue of *American Historical Review*, for example, was dedicated to "Historian and the Question of modernity." Surveying contributions by nine leading historians, the issue's editor found a "lack of converge" among their definitions of modernity. It was clear, however, that participants in this debate, like most historians, agreed that the adjective "modern" referred properly to recent history, often a century or two before the present, as well as to specific features distinguishing this period from those preceding it. An important point emerging in this debate was that definitions of modernity hinged on our understanding of an enormously vast and complex span of "premodern" history, categorized as medieval, ancient, traditional, oriental, colonial, etc., from our own privileged "modern" perspective. Moreover, this ontological privileging becomes more problematic when modernity is defined concretely by a core ethos, for example "Critical Reason," or the "Enlightenment Project."¹⁵ To avoid such conceptual pitfalls, this book links modernity neither to ostensibly liberating "Western" rationality, nor to discourses of European domination. Instead, modernity is treated as a malleable universal abstraction, inevitably deployed by historians to frame the recent global past in meta-narratives characterized by tension and antinomy, rather than by coherence and essentialism. Thus,

modern history is the story of capitalism, as well as communism and fascism, of unprecedented gains in human well-being, as well as suffering in total wars, genocides, ecological disasters and the commodified debasing of modern politics and culture. I thus concur with international relations theorist Kamran Matin's understanding of modernity as the fluid universal encompassing social, national and global particulars, perpetually recombining, at all levels, to produce nonlinear open-ended historical trajectories. Thus, while the history of any particular society or nation, including its intellectual history, is *sui generis*, it is also shaped by, and in turn gives shape to, larger global frames. Matin's approach is in line with leading scholarship in comparative and world history, such as Sanjay Subrahmanyam's model of Connected Histories. Subrahmanyam sees early modern history as the interface of the local and regional with the global, countering nationalist historiography's attachment to "fixity and local rootedness," as well as the "methodological fragmentationism" caused by the postmodernist universalization of Europe's anti-Enlightenment philosophical tradition.¹⁶ Last but not least, in this book's schema, "the pre-modern" is not modernity's antithesis, but epistemologically uncharted historical territory, just as "tradition" means no more than a particular pattern of collective thinking or practice with recognizable temporal continuity.

Finally, this book treats the rise of "Islamic Ideology" in Iran not as a failure of "Westernization," and "Modernization," but as a project for turning Islam into a political ideology compatible with modern "meta-religious" and secular worldviews. As a worldview, religion is a comprehensive system of ideas providing meaning and purpose to human existence, including, but not confined to, its political dimensions. It is thus similar to, but ultimately broader in normative scope and ambition than, secular political ideologies such as Marxism and nationalism.¹⁷ This understanding of religion is typical of post-Enlightenment thought, including Marx's early writings, where religion is not merely "the opium of the people" but also "a perverted world consciousness" and "the general theory" of human suffering, oppression and distress. It is "the heart of a heartless world" and a cry of protest against this world. Proceeding from such assumptions, certain strands of Marxism have been sympathetic to religion, comparing modern socialism to early Christianity, while recognizing the religious feature of premodern revolutionary movements.¹⁸ Thus, as several

chapters in this book will note, the intellectual confluence of Marxism and religion in modern Iran is in some ways quite understandable, rather than paradoxical or enigmatic.

Within the methodological parameters outlined above, this book will trace Iran's modern intellectual history from its nineteenth-century "pre-modern" and prenatal origins to its full articulation, via active engagement with the global discourse of orientalism, nationalism and socialism, in the twentieth century. The book's emphasis on "Eastern," in addition to "Western," features of Iranian modernity seeks to open up new paths for revisionist historiography. For example, breaking with mainstream historiography, I locate the intellectual origins of Iranian constitutionalism in nineteenth-century encounters with "the East," i.e. the Ottoman and Russian empires, rather than "the West" or Europe.¹⁹ Similarly, I will show how twentieth-century Iranian nationalism was impacted more by Young Ottoman thought, Turkish republicanism, German counter-modernity and Russian Marxism, rather than by "Western" liberal nationalist ideologies. The book's sharpest break with mainstream intellectual history, and Iranian historiography in general, is its treatment of socialism, and particularly its "Eastern" or Soviet form, as a creative influence on the formation of Iranian modernity. With a few notable exceptions, historians have been oblivious or hostile to socialist and communist contributions to modern Iranian political culture and modernity in general. As mentioned above, a few solid historical studies of the left do exist, but their findings are generally ignored by mainstream historiography. This is rather ironic, since, as we shall see in several chapters of this book, evidence of the left's fundamental contribution to Iranian modernity, particularly in the intellectual realm, is overwhelming. State-sponsored nationalist historiography in Iran of course denies or distorts this fact due to obvious ideological reasons. Unfortunately, the same ideological bias is manifest in mainstream scholarship outside the reach of the Iranian state. It should go without saying that recognizing the left's contribution to Iranian intellectual history is not an endorsement of various socialist and communist intellectual and political projects, which are often contradictory and at odds with each other. This book is critical of the left too, without being dismissive of it or denying its significant contributions to modern Iranian intellectual history.

In addition to critically engaging with a wide range of English-language secondary sources, this book's arguments are informed by

close readings of a host of Persian primary sources, including books, periodicals, memoirs, private and public archives, journalistic pieces and political tracts, translated by the author, unless referenced otherwise. What follows is a chapter summary of the book's main thematic focus and arguments:

Chapter 1, "Lineages of Authoritarian Modernity: The Russo-Ottoman Model," introduces the book's overall argument, for the specificity of Iranian modernity, by challenging conventional historiography's conceptions of "premodern" Iran. First, it rejects narratives of seamless continuity in "Iranian history," proposing instead a categorical distinction between Iran as modern nation-state and premodern historical ideas of Iran as an empire. Nevertheless, the book's treatment of Iranian modernity as highly syncretic ("Eastern and Western") fits with perceptions of premodern or imperial Iran as a cultural melting pot at "the crossroad of civilizations."²⁰ Second, the chapter criticizes the lingering confusions resulting from narrations of Iranian history within Orientalist paradigms of Asiatic despotism and Islamic absolutism. It argues, instead, that pre-national Iranian "states" were decentralized hierarchies of overlapping authority. Equally fallacious are Orientalist notions of Iranian history's broad linkage to Shi'ism, whereas in fact premodern Iran was religiously heterodox, being the only Muslim country producing open breaches with Islam, manifest in Babi and Baha'i religions. Third, the chapter argues that the birth event of Iranian modernity, the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–11, was intellectually and politically inspired by nineteenth-century interactions with Ottoman and Russian empires, rather than "the West."²¹ Iranian constitutionalism followed the path of Russo-Ottoman techno-militaristic state-building, primarily Ottoman "Islamic Constitutionalism," just as Iran's reformist and revolutionary intelligentsia followed the example of their Ottoman and Russian counterparts. Bordering the Caucasus and Anatolia, the province of Azerbaijan was Iran's center of modernizing institutional reforms and revolutionary politics, while Caucasian Azeri intellectuals, like Mohammad-Amin Rasulzadeh and Ahmad Aqaoglu, were pioneers of Iranian nationalist and socialist thought.

Chapter 2, "The Berlin Circle: Crafting the Worldview of Iranian Nationalism," locates the intellectual origins of modern Iranian nationalism and the nation-building project in the global upheaval caused by the Great War between 1911 and 1921. Conventional historiography depicts this decade as a time when foreign occupation and political

chaos crushed the Constitutional Revolution's democratic aspirations, paving the way for authoritarian nation-state building during the 1920s and 1930s. This chapter, however, finds the genesis of illiberal nationalism in Iran's intellectual encounter with Russian and German socialism and counter-modernity, British imperialist ambitions, and the Bolshevik Revolution during the first two decades of the century. Prior to World War I, Caucasian and Russian social democrats had joined Iran's constitutional movement, helping turn it into a revolution and introducing what became modern Iran's core social reform agenda. The Bolshevik Revolution's spillage into Iran further strengthened this trend, providing an alternate revolutionary path to modernity. With Iran's fledgling nationhood hanging in the balance of a world war, the nationalist intelligentsia tried shifting political and ideological alignments with Imperial Germany, the Ottoman Empire and the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, a group of Iranian émigrés in Berlin labored desperately to articulate a viable nationalist ideology, anchored in a modern *weltanschauung*. This chapter traces their efforts in the pages of *Kaveh*, *Iranshahr* and *Name-ye faranestan*, nationalist periodicals published in Berlin between 1915 and the mid-1920s. Largely overlooked by historians, this Berlin intellectual circle, led by men like Hassan Taqizadeh, Hossein Kazemzadeh and Morteza Moshfeq-Kazemi, steered Iranian nationalism away from liberal constitutionalism and social democracy toward enlightened despotism and spiritual revivalism, flirting even with fascism.

Chapter 3, "Subverting Constitutionalism: Intellectuals as Instruments of Modern Dictatorship," focuses on the nationalist elite's role in making Reza Khan the country's strong-man and the evolution of his monarchy into a fully fledged modern dictatorship in the 1930s. Here, I reject two common explanations of Reza Shah's dictatorship: First, that 1920s Iran needed a strong man to save it from foreign intervention, chaos and disintegration; and second, that 1930s Pahlavi dictatorship was in line with Iran's supposedly historical patterns of "despotic and arbitrary" rule. I argue, instead, that the early Pahlavi state followed a global nation-building script that suspended constitutional government and forcibly imposed linguistic, legal, religious, educational and even sartorial unanimity on the country. Nationalist intellectuals, like members of the Berlin Circle and their cohorts in Tehran's Young Iran Society, actively served as "instruments" of a dictatorship that soon began to discard or destroy them one after another. Meanwhile, intellectuals advocating more

democratic conceptions of modernity and nation building were silenced by physical elimination and political repression. These included pioneers of avant-garde trends in art and literature and revolutionary voices in political culture. Nor was the triumph of authoritarian nationalism a foregone conclusion. As late as 1921, for example, the fall of Tehran to the revolutionary militia of a Soviet republic was thwarted only by occupying British forces. A year later, the communist daily *Haqiqat* remained Tehran's most vociferous defender of press freedom and constitutional government. Soon, however, Reza Shah's nationalist dictatorship targeted the left as the enemy of the state, banning all organizations espousing "collectivist creeds." During the 1930s, the brief run of the Marxist magazine *Donya* was the most serious intellectual challenge to official nationalism and a harbinger of the coming Marxist hegemony in political culture. *Donya's* positivist Marxism was the most radical expression of a new "scientific" ideology serving the rise of a modern-educated middle-class elite. *Donya* called for the cultural hegemony and social leadership of middle-class intellectuals, espousing an evolutionary "cultural Marxism" closer to Gramsci's than to Lenin's.

Chapter 4, "Intellectual Missing Links: Criticizing Europeanism and Translating Modernity," focuses on three thinkers, considering their understudied works of the 1930s and 1940s as the intellectual bridge between the inchoate and multifarious nationalism of the Constitutional era and the radical nationalist and anti-Western discourses of the 1960s and 1970s. The first is Ahmed Kasravi, interwar Iran's most original nationalist thinker, whose critique of "Europeanism," as the imitation of a nihilist and materialist modern European civilization, remains underappreciated by intellectual historians. Kasravi was equally critical of Iranian cultural and religious traditions, rejecting Shi'ism, mysticism and the ethics of classical Persian literature. Moreover, he launched the project of turning Islam into a modern political ideology, preaching a new religion of Reason, with the nation as its sacred object. This chapter then revisits Ruhollah Khomeini's participation in the mid-century's intellectual debates. In 1944, Khomeini published *Secrets Exposed*, a response to Kasravi and other critics of clerical Shi'ism. Oblivious to foreign thinkers, Khomeini nevertheless was in line with certain global intellectual trends, such as Traditionalism, in rejecting secular modernist thought and philosophy. *Secrets Exposed* remained primarily a refutation of anti-clerical intellectuals rather than a critique of Western cultural and

political domination of Iran, subjects that become Khomeini's preoccupation only in the 1960s and 1970s. Still, a close reading of *Secrets Exposed* shows the kernel of a political philosophy that eventually would evolve into Khomeini's revolutionary Shi'ism of the 1970s. The third thinker analyzed in this chapter is Fakhreddin Shadman, whose *Conquering European Civilization* (1948) is considered a "liberal" response to the challenge of Iran's encounter with Europe. Shadman believed the real problem of Iran's modernization was the hasty imitation and shallow understanding of European civilization. His remedy was a cultural crusade of knowledge production, literally a national translation project, aimed at thoroughly understanding and thus conquering European modernity.

Chapter 5, "The Mid-century Moment of Socialist Hegemony," investigates the impact on Iranian intellectual history of "Eastern," Soviet-style, socialism. Utilizing both older and newly available primary sources, it explains how communists launched modern Iran's most successful political party (Tudeh), whose ideological and political legacy deeply influenced the monarchy and its opposition in the 1960s and 1970s. Breaking with nationalist and Cold War historiography, I argue the Tudeh Party's phenomenal impact was due primarily to the appeal of its worldview and social reform program to middle-class intellectuals and the laboring masses. Remarkably, within the span of a decade (1941–1953), the Tudeh Party accomplished the *Donya* circle's project of socialist cultural hegemony, and Shadman's project of "translating" modernity, albeit in a Marxist-inflected version. Moreover, this chapter shows how the 1960s and 1970s project of monarchist modernity, i.e. "the Shah-People Revolution," was "plagiarized" from the Tudeh Party and its offshoots, such as the Socialist League. Another example of revisionist historiography appears in this chapter's attention to Islamic socialism and "Islamic Marxism," obscure trends in the political culture of the 1960s and 1970s, which made the project of an Islamic Revolution intellectually conceivable. The chapter ends with a case study in intellectual history, revisiting the controversial legacy of Jalal Al-Ahmad, Iran's leading writer and essayist of the 1960s. Rereading Al-Ahmad, along with his contemporary Iranian and global interlocutors, it concludes that his travelogues and essays, particularly *On the Services and Betrayal of Intellectuals*, deservedly establish him as Iran's quintessential public intellectual of the 1960s.

Chapter 6, “Revolutionary Monarchy, Political Shi’ism and Islamic Marxism,” investigates the makeup of three ideological narratives contending for hegemony in 1960s and 1970s Iranian political culture. All three, it will be argued, were responding to the powerful challenge of a global master narrative, namely Third Worldist Marxism. First, the Shah-People Revolution was justified by an official ideology of revolutionary monarchism, articulated mainly via the Shah’s writings and speeches, setting guidelines for national cultural planning through the state-run educational system and mass media. An overview of government publications, such as *Culture and Life*, reveals the state’s systematic co-optation of the opposition’s rhetoric of revolution, anti-imperialism and cultural authenticity. Second, a number of intellectual circles linked the official discourse of cultural authenticity to European counter-modernist philosophy and neo-mystical interpretations of Shi’ism. 1960s Iran’s pervasive discourse of “West-struck-ness,” for example, was first articulated by Ahmad Fardid, who claimed a neo-mystical reading of Islam corresponding to Martin Heidegger’s critique of Western modernity. Fardid’s obscure ideas paralleled those of a more influential circle of academics and clerics, led by French Orientalist Henri Corbin and Seyyed Hosein Nasr, a leader of the global Traditionalist movement. The Corbin-Nasr circle proposed an esoteric Shi’i reading of Iranian nationalism countering secular liberal and Marxist worldviews. Third, the above two ideological trends reacted largely and often explicitly to the intellectual hegemony of Marxism, reaching beyond underground dissident groups into universities and the mass media, literary and artistic production, and popular culture and entertainment. The chapter’s conclusion analyzes the intellectual formation called “Islamic Marxism,” identified by the regime as a chief political nemesis during the 1970s. Though polemical, this label captures the eclectic character of a potent ideological mix that anticipated the merger of Marxist and Islamist opposition factions during the 1978–1979 Revolution. The chapter ends by reassessing the intellectual production of Ali Shariati, the quintessential 1970s “Islamic Marxist,” whose influential discourse oscillated between mystical existentialism, Third Worldist Marxism and anti-clerical Shi’ism.

Chapter 7, “Conclusion: Aborted Resurrection: An Intellectual Arena Wide Open to the Opposition,” concludes the book by tracing the revolution’s ideological makeup back to the intellectual contestations

and culture wars of the prerevolutionary decade. It argues that, while neither inevitable nor predictable, the revolution's peculiar ideological makeup "made sense" only within the particular intellectual and cultural matrix of 1970s Iran. By the late 1970s, the intellectual trends outlined in Chapter 6 converged into a revolutionary ideology that occupied the political space that was suddenly vacated by the regime. Tracing contemporary sources, this chapter traces back the regime's sudden meltdown to the failure of the mid-1970s Resurrection Party project. Conceived by an odd assortment of ex-communists and US-educated technocrats, the Resurrection project did away with the façade of constitutionalism, launching instead a Shah-centered "Imperial" one-party state. When this gambit quickly floundered, the Shah reversed course and declared "the opening up of the political space," taking hesitant steps toward the restoration of constitutional government. Though aligned with the "Human Rights" turn of US foreign policy, this final corrective measure had come too late, when the political initiative was passing first to the moderates and then to the revolutionary opposition. Meanwhile, the Shah was desperately seeking a new ideological departure to halt his regime's downward spiral. To this end, he had ordered a task force of intellectuals to forge a monarchist "Philosophy of Resurrection," which, he insisted, had to be revolutionary, authentically Iranian, "neither Eastern nor Western" and rooted in the mystical "dialectic" of Shi'ism. Ironically, this precise ideological *mélange*, minus its monarchist component, was already in the making through the intellectual convergence of Marxist, Islamist and nativist strands within the opposition. Thus, the Shah hoped to retake the political initiative by once again appropriating his opponents' intellectual resources. This time, however, the abject failure of the Resurrection project, and its counterfeit political philosophy, cleared the path of an actual revolutionary apocalypse that brought the monarchist regime to its end.