Ervand Abrahamian

THE CAUSES OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION IN IRAN

The mode of production in material life conditions the social, political, and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, the social being that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production— or what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.

KARL MARX

Ideas were all-important for the individual whom they impelled into action; but the historian must attach equal importance to the circumstances that gave these ideas their chance. Revolutions are not made without ideas, but they are not made by the intellectuals. Steam is essential for driving a railway engine; but neither a locomotive nor a permanent way can be built out of steam.

CHRISTOPHER HILL

The writers furnished not only their ideas to the people who made the (French) revolution, but also their temperance and disposition. As the result of their long education, in the absence of any other instructors, coupled with their profound ignorance of practice, all Frenchmen from reading their books finally contracted the instincts, the turn of mind, the tastes and even the eccentricities natural to those who write. To such an extent was this the case that, when finally they had to act, they transported into politics all the habits of literature.

DE TOCQUEVILLE

THEORIES OF REVOLUTION

Marx, the prophet of revolution, may no longer haunt conservative politicians, but Marx, the theorist of revolution, continues to both attract and arouse social scientists. In the words of one student of politics, the social sciences, especially political sociology, can be described as a 'century-long dialogue with Karl Marx.' And as one prominent historian of ideas has aptly stated, Marx can properly be called the midwife of twentieth-century social thought, 'for in the process of discarding what they had found invalid in Marxism and explaining

Author's Note: I would like to thank the Ali Banuazizi, James Bill, the late T. Cuyler Young, and Mangol Bayat Philipp for reading and commenting extensively on this paper. Of course, they are not responsible for any errors or opinions found in the paper.


020-7438/79/0200-0201 $01.50 © 1979 Cambridge University Press
what aspects of it had proved helpful, the innovators of the late nineteenth century took their first steps towards constructing a more general theory of social reality. 2 For example, Emile Durkheim developed the paradigm of 'mechanical and organic solidarity' to counter the theory of class struggle. Vilfred Pareto and Gaetano Mosca stressed the dichotomy between ruling elites and ruled masses to supplant the concept of socioeconomic classes. 4 Robert Michels formulated the 'iron law of oligarchy' to warn that popular organizations such as the Social Democratic Parties, would bring in not the era of democratic socialism but the autocracy of bureaucratic socialists. 5 And Max Weber, of course, devoted much of his career to showing that the dynamics of class conflict should be studied concomitantly with the heavy weights of conservative ideologies, traditional religions, ethnic castes, and bureaucratic institutions. 6

The recent revival of interest in theories of revolutions has rekindled the old dialogue between Marxists emphasizing the role of classes and non-Marxists stressing the importance of ideas, cultures, religions, and ideologies. 7 Marx had argued that changes in the economic base of society created new forces, new interests, and new aspirations in the class structure of the same society. These social changes, in turn, undermined the political, institutional, and ideological superstructure controlled by the ruling class. As Engels eulogized at his friend's funeral, Marx's main contribution had been to prove that the superstructure of any society—especially the dominant values, laws, and organizations—were founded on the class structure, not vice versa as previous philosophers, particularly Hegel, had claimed. 8 Thus according to Marx, revolutions were caused not by disruptions in the mode of perception but by innovations in the means of production; not by radical ideas but by revolutionary classes; not by 'outside agitators,' 'empty-headed propagandists,' and 'underground anarchists'—the magical alchemists of insurrection— but by viable and broad social classes; and not by small groups of intellectuals but by major classes fighting for their own interests while 'inspiring' the masses with the dream of 'a new social order.' 9

5 R. Michels, Political Parties (New York, 1949).
8 F. Engels, 'Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx,' Selected Works (Moscow, 1958), II, 167.
Although Marx and Engels considered ideologies to be a part of the superstructure dependent upon the social structures, they did not deny the possibility that radical ideologists could, at times, develop into independent forces capable of helping undermine the ruling class. As Engels protested in his old age when young disciples tried to reduce all phenomena to economic explanations, Marx's 'guide to history' was designed to prove that the mode of production was the 'ultimate,' but not necessarily the 'only,' assertive force in social change:

According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle, constitutions, judicial forms, and reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, such as political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views, and systems of dogmas — all these exercise their influence on the course of historical struggles and in many cases predominate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.10

The interaction between socioeconomic environment and ideological forces has become the focus of interest for a school of empirical Marxist historians in Britain. For example, Christopher Hill has devoted much of his work to the complex relationship between Puritanism and the middle class gentry in the English Revolution.11 Edward Thompson has detailed the contribution of radical culture to the formation of working class consciousness in early industrial England.12 George Rudé has investigated the role of popular values in early modern Europe in such public disturbances as bread riots, rural upheavals, and political demonstrations.13 Finally, Eric Hobsbawm has described how popular discontent expresses itself in different forms in agrarian, industrializing, and fully industrial societies.14 In his article 'Karl Marx's Contribution to Historiography,' Hobsbawm has labeled as 'vulgar determinists' his fellow Marxists who fail to recognize the complex relationship between social structure and ideological superstructure.15

While Marxists trace ideology to social reality and radical ideas to discontented classes, non-Marxists — both behaviorists and structural-functionalistists — usually use the framework developed first by de Toqueville who connected political

10 Engels to Bloch, Selected Works, II, 488.
revolutions and social upheavals to intellectual innovations and cultural disruptions. For example, Talcott Parsons, the leading structural-functionalist, has argued that social systems are normally well integrated by their value systems, but occasionally lose internal equilibrium because of ‘deviant,’ ‘disruptive,’ ‘dysfunctional,’ and ‘aliened’ countercultures. Similarly, Ted Gurr, the main behaviorist who has examined the causes of rebellion, has formulated the argument that a widening gap between what individuals expect and what they receive produces ‘relative deprivation’; ‘relative deprivation’ creates ‘aggressive frustration’; ‘aggressive frustration’, in turn, develops a ‘revolutionary mentality.’

The aim of this essay is to apply the Marxist and the non-Marxist theories of revolution to the constitutional revolution of 1905–1907 in Iran. Although many historians – both inside and outside Iran – have examined the causes of the 1905–1907 upheavals, few have systematically tested these theoretical models. On the contrary, almost all have unsystematically – and often unknowingly – used an approach resembling that developed first by de Tocqueville. The classical Iranian historians of the constitutional movement – Ahmad Kasravi, Mehdi Malekzadeh, Yahyai Dawlatabad, and Nizam al-Islam Kermani – have all argued that the modern ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity, propagated by Westernized intellectuals, ‘awakened’ the ‘sleeping public’ at the end of the nineteenth century, and, thereby, led the way to the ‘national resurgence’ of the early twentieth century. The main contemporary historians in Iran – such as Fereyduin Adamiyat, ‘Ali Shamim, Ibrahim Safa’i, and Hafez Farman Farman – have likewise stressed that the ideological foundations of traditional despotism were undermined by the introduction of the modern concepts of patriotism, secularism, and liberalism. This Whig interpretation is typified by a recent popular history of the constitutional movement. Beginning with the premise the past proves that no force can prevent the triumph of liberty,’ the author argues

that the arrival of Western concepts created an intellectual revolution, which, in turn, produced a sociopolitical revolution.21

The Western authorities on Iran have invariably used the same approach.22 For example, Edward Browne began his classic study on The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909 with a description of how European political thought influenced Jamal al-Din ‘al-Afghani,’ Mirza Malkum Khan, and other prominent reformers of late nineteenth-century Iran.23 Sir Percy Sykes, in his History of Persia, traced the origins of the country’s political ‘awakening’ to the establishment of printing presses, educational institutions, telegraph lines, foreign banks, and British consulates.24 Donald Wilber, in Iran: Past and Present, has claimed that the ‘political agitation’ was ‘rooted’ in the contact of the younger educated intellectuals with the ‘liberal thought of the West.’25 Peter Avery, in his major work Modern Iran, while describing the general decline of the country at the turn of the century, has stressed the role of new ideas in the actual revolution.26 Finally, Leonard Binder, the author of a rare study that applies sociological models—especially the structural–functional model—to the historical development of modern Iran, has argued that the introduction of Western concepts of legitimacy, particularly the principles of nationalism, secularism, and constitutionalism, generated the age of revolution in contemporary Iran.27 Marx had intended to place Hegel ‘on his feet’ by showing that human consciousness was grounded in social existence. Binder, however, tried to turn Marx ‘right side up’ by arguing that ideological revolutions—not classes, interest groups, and other social groups—propel economic, political, and social revolutions.

This study tests the Marxist and the non-Marxist theories of revolution by assessing the relative importance of ideological innovation and sociological forces in the Iranian revolution. It compares the role of radical ideas with that of discontented classes; of modern concepts, beliefs, and value systems, with that of modern socioeconomic groups; of intellectuals—the carriers of new ideas—with that of major social interests; and of innovations in the mode of mental conception with that of disruptions in the mode of economic production and distribution.

The term ‘revolution’ requires an introductory explanation since it has

become a sponge word soaking up such diverse phenomena as peasant revolts, army rebellions, government dictated reforms, scientific innovations, industrial transformations, hair style variations, and, of course, annual alterations in car designs. Moreover, Ann Lambton has argued that the constitutional revolution in Iran cannot be described as a true revolution because its participants wanted to reform the traditional society rather than establish a modern system of government. I use the term 'revolution' to mean a sharp, sudden, and often violent change in the social location of political power, expressing itself in the radical transformation of the regime, of the official foundation of legitimacy, and of the state conception of the social order. The adjectives 'sharp,' 'sudden,' and 'violent' are used to differentiate revolutions both from gradual transformations obtained by forces outside the government and from peaceful reforms initiated by innovators inside the government. Change in the social location of political power means the ruling positions at the state center change hands either from one class to another class or from one group to a significantly different social group. Regime means the state system of government – despotic monarchy, limited monarchy, parliamentary democracy, parliamentary oligarchy. Official foundation of legitimacy means the regime’s method for claiming sovereignty, establishing legality, and converting revolutionary power into acceptable authority. State conception of the social order means the regime's perception of what is a healthy society, what should be the role of the government in such a society, and what were the causes of decline under the previous regime.

Using this definition, the constitutional revolution of Iran was indeed a true revolution. It was sharp, sudden, and violent – especially in the provinces during the subsequent two years of civil war. The bloody civil war is not discussed in this paper because of the shortage of space. More important, the constitutional revolution caused an immediate shift in the social location of power from the royal court ruled by the Qajar Shahs to a national parliament dominated initially by the urban middle classes. Moreover, the Qajars never succeeded in reestablishing their despotism, even though the revolutionary movement in later years, particularly in the 1910s, weakened because of internal contradictions, foreign interventions, and tribal insurrections. Furthermore, what emerged in the 1920s was not a reestablishment of the old despotism but the establishment of a new absolutism armed with such modern coercive institutions as a standing army and a statewide bureaucracy. Reza Shah Pahlevi differed from the Qajars as much as Napoleon differed from the Bourbons and Cromwell differed from the early Stuarts. The constitutional revolution also caused radical transformations in the system of government – from a despotic monarchy to parliamentary monarchy; in the official foundations of legitimacy – from the claims of Shadows of God on Earth and the Divine Rights of Kings to the sovereignty of the People.
(millat) as well as the inalienable Rights of Man and of Private Property; and in the official conception of the social order — from an hierarchical and patrimonial system to a supposedly democratic and egalitarian system where all Muslims, irrespective of birth, enjoyed in theory open access to positions of authority. Finally, the constitutional revolution was a true revolution in that it introduced a new regime rather than rebuilt the old regime. Of course, many of the participants denied that they intended to introduce a new order, and sincerely believed that they were revitalizing and reforming the old order. But, in the same way as the French Convention draped itself as the Roman Republic and the English Puritans considered themselves as free Anglo-Saxons overthrowing the Norman Yoke, so the Iranian revolutionaries thought that they were returning to ancient traditions whereas, in fact, they were introducing something new and unknown in their society — a statewide political movement that demanded an elected National Assembly to limit the authority of the traditional Shah-an-Shahs. They frequently referred to the teachings of Imams 'Ali, Hussein, and Hassan; but not a single one of these Shi'i Imams had ever spoken of elected National Assemblies. In the words of Marx:

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when men seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language.30

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRAN

Social scientists have used the term 'class' in at least two different ways: first, as a sociological category to rank individuals with similar sources of income, similar degrees of influence, and similar styles of life; second, as a sociopsychological term to classify individuals who share not only parallel positions in the social hierarchy, but also similar economic, cultural, and political attitudes. Marx described the first as a class 'in itself' but not yet 'for itself'; the second as a class 'for itself' as well as 'in itself.'31 Similarly, modern sociologists have contrasted socioeconomic, latent, and objective classes with sociopolitical, manifest, and subjective classes.32 Classes in the former sense of the word obviously exist, to various degrees, in all societies; but classes in the latter sense of the word do not necessarily exist in all societies.

In early nineteenth-century Iran, classes existed in the first, but not in the second, meaning of the term.33 The population, which totaled no more than five

33 For a description of the class structure in nineteenth-century Iran see E. Abrahamian,
million in the 1850s, can be categorized into four major classes (tābagat). The first, the landed upper class, consisted of a central elite and many local elites. The central elite included the Qajar dynasty, the royal princes (shāhsādegān), the influential courtiers (darbārīs), the large fief-holders (tuyūldārs), the hereditary accountants (mustawofīs), the royal ministers (vāzīrs), the princely governors (farmānfarmās), and the titled state officials—the al-Saltanehs (Pillars of the Monarch), al-Mulks (Victors of the Kingdom), al-Dawlehs (Aides of the State), and al-Mamāleks (Strengths of the Empire). The local elites comprised the regional notables (a‘yāns), the provincial noblemen (ashrāfs), the tribal chiefs (khāns), and the hereditary, titled, and invariably propertied, administrators (mirzās). Closely tied to the landed upper class were the few state-appointed religious officials: the qāzīs presiding over the state courts; the imām jum‘ehs in charge of the Friday Mosques in the major cities; and the shaykh al-islāms regulating the main religious courts. The central and provincial elites later became known as the aristocracy (aristukrāsī), the magnates (bosorgān), the power circles (hayāt-i hākemeh), and the ‘feudal’ landed class (tābageh-i malak-i al-tavā‘īf).

The second major class, the propertied middle class, included urban merchants (tujār), small landowners (malek), as well as bazaar shopkeepers and workshop owners (pishevarān). Since businessmen, tradesmen, and craftsmen financed the bazaar mosques, schools (mahtābs), seminaries (madresehs), theaters (takīyas), and other religious foundations (vaqfs), the propertied middle class was intricately connected to the clergy (‘ulama‘) – to the various preachers (vā‘ez), Koranic teachers (akhunds), seminary students (tullābs), low-ranking clerics (mullas), and even high-ranking theologians (mujtaheds). Moreover, some members of the bazaar population claimed to be descendants of the prophet (sayyids).

The third class was formed of urban wage-earners, such as hired artisans, apprentices, journeymen, household servants, porters, laborers, and building workers. Finally, the fourth major class consisted of the vast majority of the rural population (ri‘yat) – the tribal masses (ilāyāti) as well as the landless and near landless peasantry (dehqānān).

These four, however, were only latent, objective, and sociological classes. They failed to develop into manifest, subjective, and sociopsychological classes because of the predominance of local communal ties based on tribal lineages, religious sects, linguistic sentiments, and paternalistic affiliations. Cutting through the socioeconomic lines, the communal ties fragmented the horizontal strata, strengthened the vertical bonds, and, thereby, hindered the development of self-conscious sociopolitical classes. To paraphrase Marx, insofar as numerous individuals shared similar ways of life, similar positions in the mode of production, and similar relations to the means of administration, they constituted socioeconomic classes. But insofar as these individuals were bound by local ties,
failed to overcome regional barriers, and articulated no statewide interests, they
did not constitute independent sociopolitical classes.

The communal divisions found their origins mainly in the geography of Iran. A marked shortage of rainfall, a general lack of navigable rivers and lakes, a vast central plateau, and four formidable mountain ranges combined to make travel arduous and communications difficult. Thus geography tended to fragment the population into small local communities – into isolated villages, small towns, and nomadic tribes. The peasantry, totaling over 60 percent of the country, lived in some 10,000 small villages. The urban population, constituting less than 25 percent of the country, resided in some ten cities and seventy towns. And the nomads, numbering as much as 15 percent of the total country, were grouped into sixteen major federations, each federation segmented into numerous tribes, subtribes, and migratory camps.

Communal divisions were reflected in, as well as reinforced by, relative economic isolation. Until the growth of trade in the latter part of the century, many regions were predominantly self-sufficient, producing and consuming much of their agricultural and handicraft needs. The modest trade that did exist was limited mostly to luxury goods either en route to foreign markets or to one of the few large urban centers. Moreover, this modest trade was invariably restricted by slow and unreliable roads – by rugged terrain, long distances, natural disasters, government neglect, and such social disruptions as rural banditry and tribal uprisings. For example, the highway between the southern port of Khorramshahr and Tehran was so slow that it was quicker to travel from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea by boat, from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea by land, from Baku to Enzeli (Pahlavi) but boat again, and finally from Enzeli to Tehran by land again. This general lack of communications created periodic crises, in which one region could be suffering from dire famine while another was enjoying a plentiful harvest.

The geographical barriers were compounded often by linguistic differences. Persians, Bakhtiyarîs, Qashqayïs, Arabs, and Lurs lived in the Central Plateau. Small groups of Baluchis, Afshars, and Arabs were scattered in the southeastern deserts. Kurds, Lurs, Arabs, Afshars, and Mamesenâs inhabited the western mountains. ʿAzeris, Shâhšavans, Kurds, together with scattered settlements of Armenians and Assyrians, lived in the northeastern districts. Gilakis, Tâleshis, and Mâzandarânîs populated the Caspian provinces. Finally, Persians, Turkomans, Kurds, Shâhšavans, Afshars, Timurs, Baluchis, Tajiks, and Jamshids resided in the northeastern regions. Iran, thus, was a land of linguistic diversity.

Social barriers were complicated by religious cleavages, which in some areas reinforced existing communal differences, while in others they caused new ones. The country’s population was obviously divided into a Shiʿi majority, a Sunni minority formed of Kurds, Turkomans, Arabs, and Baluchis, and a non-

Muslim population of Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. The Shi'i majority, however, was itself divided into various sects, orders, and religious schools. Some districts were polarized into the Ni'matî and Haydari factions; others into the orthodox Twelver Muytahedî and the unorthodox Isma'îlîs, Karîmkhânîs, and Shaykhîs. These religious communities invariably segregated themselves into their own town wards (mahallât). For example, Shiraz was formed of five eastern Haydari wards, five western Ni'matî wards, and one suburban Jewish ward. 15 Tabriz — the largest city in 1850 with a population of 100,000 — included thirteen separate mahallât: an aristocratic suburb; six agricultural districts farmed by Muytahedî Twelvers who were known locally as Mutashar'îs; an Armenian quarter; three central wards of Khîbân, Nubar, and Amîr Khîzî inhabited by Shaykhî merchants, traders, and craftsmen; and two northern slums of Davachi and Sarkhâb crowded with Mutashar'î laborers, porters, peddlers, dyers, and carpet weavers. 16

These communal barriers were further reinforced by social organizations. Each tribe, each village, each town ward, had its own separate and hierarchical structure. At the apex were the landed magnates — the tribal chiefs, and major fiehholders, and the urban notables. At the base were the common people — the peasants, the nomads, and the town inhabitants. In between were layers of intermediaries, the most important of whom, throughout the country, were the village, tribal, ward, and guild, kadkhudâs (headmen). These kadkhudâs, drawn invariably from the medium-income families, were often elected to their posts by the local communities. As headmen, they carried out two major functions: they mediated disputes between members of their own community; and they represented their own community in its dealings with the outside world — whether with the state, especially in the collection of taxes, or with the neighboring communities, particularly in the periodic disputes over adjacent lands, water rights, and tax assessments. Because of these frequent disputes, kadkhudâs and influential landowners acted as patrons, defending their own community against other communities. The essence of this patriarchal system was summed up by an old Persian proverb, 'A man without a protector is like a dog howling in the wilderness.'

These communal divisions, by fragmenting the population into small self-contained units, not only prevented the development of social classes but also permitted the Qajar shahs to dominate the country in the manner of typical 'oriental despots.' In the words of an observant European visitor, the monarchs 'ensured their own safety' by continually 'fomenting' and 'nicely balancing the existing mutual jealousies.' 37 As Ann Lambton has appropriately stated, the ruling kings systematically manipulated the 'constitutional inability' of the landlords to combine and adopted the 'perpetuation of tribal feuds' as 'instru--

ments of state policy. Moreover, they consciously exploited the sectarian conflicts in the towns to weaken potential challenges from the urban populations. As one British traveler remarked, Iranian cities, unlike medieval European cities, were so sharply factionalized into rival wards that they were incapable of resisting the central government. To paraphrase Marx, the Qajar 'despots' manipulated the small communities — 'the little stereotype of social organisms' — and, thus, 'stood over,' 'poised above,' and 'symbolized' the unity of all the lesser communities:

The despot here appears as the father of all the numerous lesser communities, thus realizing the common unity of all. It therefore follows that the surplus product belongs to this highest unity. Oriental despotism therefore appears to lead to a legal absence of property. In fact, however, its foundation is tribal or common property, in most cases created through a combination of manufacture and agriculture within the small community which thus becomes entirely self-sustaining and contains within itself all conditions of production and surplus production.

THE IMPACT OF THE WEST

The impact of the West undermined the fragile relationship between the Qajar state and the Iranian society. A series of military defeats suffered in two Russo-Iranian wars and three Anglo-Iranian wars ended with the Treaties of Turkmenchai (1827) and Paris (1857). These treaties exacted, in addition to territorial concessions, harsh commercial capitulations that lowered import duties, permitted Britain and Russia to open trading agencies anywhere within Iran, and exempted their merchants from local laws, tariffs, and road tolls. These capitulations, in coinciding with the Industrial Revolution in Europe, opened the way for the dramatic influx of mass-manufactured goods into Iran. During the century, the volume of foreign trade grew in real terms by as much as ten times. This growth of foreign trade, in turn, caused, on one hand, the destruction of many handcraft industries, such as textiles, and, on the other hand, the construction of modern communications, the commercialization of agriculture, especially in the Caspian provinces, and the expansion of export-oriented industries, especially handwoven carpets. In short, the incorporation of Iran into the European world-system transformed the precapitalist economy, with its production for use-value, into a market economy, with its production for sale-value. As Marx stated, the cheap price of industrial commodities was the 'heavy artillery' with which Western capitalists 'battered down' all 'Chinese walls' in the non-Western world.

35 The term 'European world-system' is borrowed from I. Wallerstein, The Modern World-System (New York, 1974).
The impact, moreover, propelled a sharp rise in the prices of basic commodities. The incorporation of Iran into the international market, by coinciding with a worldwide fall in the price of silver, caused a drastic decline in the value of the country's silver currency. This undermined public confidence in the coinage and inflated the cost of imported products. Furthermore, the imposition of border controls against epidemics, the construction of roads into famine-infested regions, and the introduction of modern medicine into the cities, all contributed toward doubling the population from five million in 1850 to nearly ten million in 1900. This intensified the demand for food and, thus, stimulated a further rise in the price of essential commodities.44

The Qajars, at first, responded to the Western challenge by initiating ambitious programs for military, administrative, and economic reforms.45 But failing to mobilize sufficient financial resources and arousing the opposition of the provincial elites who felt threatened by the formation of a strong centralized state, the later Qajars—especially Naser al-Din Shah (1848–1896)—limited themselves to less ambitious reforms. Many of these reforms collaborated with rather than challenged the West; strengthened their state vis-à-vis the society rather than their society vis-à-vis the foreign states; and carried out piecemeal court-based rather than wholesale statewide modernization. The long reign of Naser al-Din Shah saw the establishment of a small Cossack brigade and a municipal police force; the reorganization of the informal court administration into a slightly more formal government cabinet with state ministers—but not yet with large-scale ministries; the introduction of electricity plants for the main cities; the opening of the first railway, connecting Tehran to the shrine of Shah 'Abdul 'Azim a few miles away; and the founding of a central mint to replace the thirty-one regional mints. The reign also saw the introduction of the first state newspaper, scientific journal, translation office, military academy, and modern high school—the Dar al-Funūn (Abode of Learning). The Dar al-Funūn, which admitted every year some 250 students, mostly from the sons of the upper class, offered secular subjects such as foreign languages, political science, engineering mineralogy, military sciences, medicine, and veterinary medicine. Over forty of the early graduates were sent to Europe to complete their studies.

The Dar al-Funūn, together with the translation office and an older publishing house in Tabriz, in the course of the century printed over 160 books. They included 88 textbooks on military subjects, scientific matters, medicine, and European languages, 13 works on Persian literature, 4 biographies of famous

44 Many nineteenth-century observers claimed that the inflation was caused by Qajar debasements of the silver coinage. But the debasements corresponded with the inflation in neither time nor degree. The coinage dilution of 50 percent hardly paced the price inflation of nearly 600 percent. And the debasements occurred mostly in the first half of the century, although food prices rose sharply in the second half of the century. For the statistics see Issawi, *Economic History of Iran*, pp. 339–390.

45 For the early attempts at modernization see F. Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran* (Amir Kabir and Iran) (Tehran, 1969); J. Lorentz, 'Modernization and Political Change in Nineteenth-Century Iran,' unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1974-
figures in Islam, to travelogues about the West, including Naser al-Din Shah's own account of his European tour, to translations of classics from European literature, such as Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Dumas's *Three Musketeers*, and Molière's plays, and to histories of Iran, including John Malcolm's famous *History of Persia*. Thus Iranians began to see their own history through the eyes of nineteenth-century Europeans. Finally, they published over 20 translations of European works on Western history—studies on Rome, Athens, France, Germany, Russia, and Britain, as well as biographies on Alexander the Great, Peter the Great, Charles the Great of Sweden, Louis XIV, Napoleon, and Frederick the Great of Prussia.

To pay for the modest reforms and to alleviate the deep cuts made into the court revenues by the sharp inflation, Naser al-Din Shah increasingly resorted to the sale of offices, titles, state lands, tax-farms, and, most important of all, economic privileges to foreign governments and concession-hunters. Baron de Steuteleer, a British citizen, bought rights to build railroads and search for minerals. Lynch Brothers, a British company, gained control over shipping in the Karun River. The Imperial Bank of Persia, also a British concern, purchased the monopoly to print banknotes and the privilege to collect tolls on southern roads. Meanwhile, a Russian company, the Cie. de la Route, won contracts to pave highways in the north and to dredge the port of Enzeli. Another Russian company obtained a monopoly over the fishing industry in the Caspian. And yet another, a monopoly over the insurance of transport on the northern roads. Moreover, European entrepreneurs invested more limited sums of capital in small ventures, such as in shipping on Lake Urmieh (Reza'ieh), carpet weaving in Sultanabad (Arak), cotton growing in Khurasan, and opium cultivation in Kerman. Thus foreign investments increased in the latter part of the century from almost nothing to over £12,000,000. Iran had been opened to European capital as well to European commerce.

The Western challenge and the Qajar response created two significant structural changes within Iranian society. On the one hand, the influx of mass-manufactured goods, the commercialization of agriculture, the introduction of modern communications (especially the telegraph), and the sale of monopolies to foreign concession-hunters coalesced the many regional bazaars into a cross-regional middle class conscious for the first time of its state-wide interests and foreign competitors. The bourgeoisie became a sociopsychological class as well as a socioeconomic class, a class 'for itself' as well as 'in itself.' On the other hand, opening of secular educational institutions, the expansion of the central administration, and the training of new civil servants, army officers, and technical professionals, created a small but vital salaried middle class. This class later came known as the modern intelligentsia (*munaver al-jehr*).

**BOURGEOISIE**

The local bazaars were transformed into a national middle class in a number of
ways. First, the integration of the regional markets into a national market and the national market into the international market dissolved the relatively self-sufficient units into one major statewide economic unit. Second, the introduction of modern communications bridged the geographical distances, and, thereby, brought the various urban centers closer together. Third, the beginnings of a modern state, especially the establishment of a central mint, of government newspapers, and of a cabinet system, focused the attention of the provincial towns onto the national capital. Fourth, the influx of mass-manufactured products undermined the traditional handicrafts, and, consequently, presented for the different bazaars a mutual enemy, the foreign competitor. As one tax collector reported in a detailed study of the commercial crisis in Isfahan:

In the past, good-quality textiles were manufactured in Isfahan since everyone – from the highest to the lowest – wore local products. But in the last few years, the people have given up their body and soul to buy the colorful and low-quality, but cheap, products of Europe. In doing so, they have incurred greater losses than they imagined: local weavers, in imitating foreign fabrics, have lowered their quality; Russians have stopped buying Iranian textiles; and many occupations have suffered great losses. At least one-tenth of the guilds in this city were weavers; not even one-fifth has survived. About one-twentieth of the needy widows lived by spinning for the weavers. They have now lost their only source of livelihood. Likewise, other important guilds, such as dyers, carders, and bleachers, have suffered.46

Fifth, the inflow of foreign capital created a small comprador bourgeoisie, but, at the same time, antagonized the majority of the national bourgeoisie. Although the latter invariably viewed the former as an alien non-Muslim element, a detailed British ‘Who’s Who’ of Iran in 1897 shows that of the fifty-three wealthy businessmen in the country only six were non-Muslims.47 Finally, the Qajar response – or rather, the lack of an effective response to the foreign threat – intensified the opposition of the national bourgeoisie to the central government.

Many of the problems facing the propertied middle class can be seen in a report sent to Naser al-Din Shah in 1882 by a government official from the port of Bushire on the Persian Gulf.48 Having described the recent growth of Bushire, the official explained that the boom had not benefited the Iranian merchants because, unlike their British competitors, they were handicapped by government neglect, by lack of storage depots and modern steamboats, and by higher taxes, import duties, and road tolls. The report warned that the local merchants had the choice of either going bankrupt or buying British citizenship. On the back of the report, Naser al-Din Shah criticized the merchants for their ‘selfishness’ and praised the official for his ‘interesting observation,’ but failed typically to initiate any government remedies.

The Qajar failure widened the already wide gulf that existed between the ruling dynasty and the urban population, for the political culture of traditional Iran was formed of two contradictory themes. The ancient, pre-Islamic, culture glorified the Shah-an-Shahs as the all-powerful Shadows of God on Earth endowed with the divine responsibility of protecting their subjects from external dangers and distributing 'justice' among the social orders. As the 'Mirror for Princes' literature invariably stressed, the monarch's main duty was to preserve a 'just' balance between the 'men of the pen,' 'men of the sword,' 'men of trade,' and 'men of agriculture.' The dominant Shi'i culture, however, viewed the monarch as a worldly usurper of a religious authority that had been temporarily delegated by the Hidden Imam, the Mahdi, to the leading mujtaheds. As one modern historian has aptly observed, 'the Shi'i state is a contradiction in terms.' Thus by failing to protect their subjects and balance the social orders, the Qajars further weakened their weak ideological legitimacy in the eyes of the urban middle class.

THE INTELLIGENTSIA

The Qajars built new institutions to strengthen their position. But the same institutions, by creating a modern intelligentsia with new interests, concepts, and aspirations, ultimately undermined the Qajars. In describing themselves as the 'enlightened thinkers' (munawwar al-fikr), the intelligentsia revealed much about themselves. Exposure to the ideas of the West, especially the ideas of the French Enlightenment, persuaded them that history was the March of Human Progress, not the revelation of God's Will as the Muslim 'ulamā' believed, nor the cyclic rise and fall of royal dynasties such as court chroniclers narrated. Western history further convinced them that Human Progress was not only desirable but also attainable, provided mankind broke the three chains of royal despotism, clerical dogmatism, and foreign imperialism. They viewed the first as the political enemy of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of social progress; the second as the ideological opponent of rational-scientific knowledge ('ilm-i jadid); and the third as the economic exploiter of weak states, such as their own.

The intelligentsia, therefore, came to see constitutionalism, secularism, and nationalism as the three vital means for attaining the establishment of a modern, strong, and developed Iran. These three objectives, although aimed at the same final goal, often produced shifts in immediate tactics. The intelligentsia found itself, at times, allied with the Shah against the 'ulamā'; at times, with the 'ulamā' against the Shah; at other times, with the Shah against the imperial powers; and at yet other times, as in the constitutional revolution, with the 'ulamā' against both the Shah and the imperial powers. These tactical inconsistencies, as well as

the general consistencies, can be seen in the life and work of Mirza Malkum Khan, one of the leading figures of the first-generation intelligentsia.

Malkum Khan was born of Armenian parentage in 1833 in the Christian quarter of New Julfa outside Isfahan. His father, who had studied in India, taught French and English at the royal court. An enthusiastic admirer of the West, he sent Malkum Khan on a state scholarship to France to study engineering. While in Paris, Malkum Khan developed a keen interest in Freemasonry and political philosophy, especially in Saint Simon's school of social engineering and Auguste Comte's new Religion of Humanity. Returning to Iran, he joined the faculty of the Dar al-Funūn, impressed Naser al-Din Shah with his scientific experiments, converted to Islam (probably to further his public career), and formed a secret society named the Farāmūshkhāneh (House of Oblivion) which was modeled on, but not attached to, European masonic lodges.

Winning the attention of the Shah, Malkum Khan drafted for the court a Daftar-i Tanzimat (Book of Reform). Inspired obviously by the contemporary Tanzimat movement in the Ottoman Empire, the Daftar was one of the first systematic proposals for reform written in modern Iran. It began with a general warning that the country would soon be engulfed by the foreign powers unless the Shah immediately decreed new laws for reform. Malkum Khan used the term qānūn for these laws, to differentiate them from both the religious laws (shari'ah) and the existing state laws ('urf). These new laws, Malkum Khan stressed, must be based on two fundamental principles: the improvement of public welfare and the equality of all citizens. The book then concluded with a list of specific recommendations: the separation of the government into a legislative council and an executive cabinet, both to be appointed by the Shah; the acceptance of public opinion; the codification of the previous laws; the formation of a professional army; the creation of an independent tax department; the introduction of a comprehensive educational system; the building of new highways between the main towns; and the establishment of a state bank to finance economic development.

Naser al-Din Shah at first listened to the proposals and even considered accepting the post of grandmaster in the Farāmūshkhāneh. But once the religious authorities in Tehran denounced the concept of qānūn as a 'heretical innovation' (bi'da) and accused the Farāmūshkhāneh of having connections with the 'atheistic republican' freemasons in Europe, Naser al-Din Shah banned the society, shelved the Daftar-i Tanzimat, and exiled Malkum Khan to the Ottoman Empire.53

It was probably during this period of exile that Malkum Khan wrote his satirical work on the traditional literati entitled A Traveller's Tale. In this work.

52 For detailed biographies see Adamiyat, Fekr-i Azadi, pp. 100–120; H. Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan (Berkeley, 1973).
53 I. Ra'in, Faramuskhkaneh va Freemasumi dar Iran (The House of Oblivion and Freemasonry in Iran) (Tehran 1968) I, 525. The religious authorities also spread rumors that the Faramuskhkaneh was organizing sex orgies for the 'beardless youth of the Dar al-Funūn.'
he parodied, on one hand, the court intellectuals, scribes, and poets for their obscure language, meaningless phraseology, obsession with trivia, and flattery of the powerful; and, on the other hand, the religious authorities for their pomposity, ignorance, intolerance, distrust of modern science, use of incomprehensible Arabic, resort to esoteric mumbo jumbo, enfaming of sectarian passions, and financial exploitation of the faithful community. In addition to being one of the very first anticlerical satires to be circulated in Iran, A Traveller's Tale was also among the first literary works to be written in clear Persian prose free of the traditional ornamental phraseology.

While in exile in Istanbul, Malkum Khan befriended Mirza Hussein Khan, the liberal-inclined ambassador from Iran, and obtained, through him, the post of consul-general in Cairo. The years of exile, however, ended in 1871, when Naser al-Din Shah, again toying with the possibility of reform, appointed Hussein Khan chief minister and named Malkum Khan special adviser with the title of Nizam al-Mulk (Regulator of the Realm). But no sooner had the new government cut the court budget, divided the administration into an executive cabinet and an advisory legislative council, and raised funds with the sale of the Reuter concession than it was confronted by an aristocratic and clerical reaction. Whereas Hussein Khan was dismissed, Malkum Khan was sent off to London as the new Western-educated ambassador.

As ambassador in London, Malkum Khan continued to petition the Shah for reforms, established contact with the exiled 'al-Afghani,' and encouraged his colleagues in Tehran to seek further administrative improvements. Malkum Khan, however, turned more radical after 1889, as soon as he lost his ambassadorship as a result of selling a nonexistent gambling monopoly to a group of British concession-hunters and refusing to share the spoils with courtiers in Tehran. His dismissal changed Malkum Khan from an insider petitioning reform into an outsider advocating revolution; from a mild liberal seeking the protection of the Shah against the 'ulama' into an outspoken radical alloying with the 'ulama' against the Shah; and from a royal administrator drafting proposals into a radical journalist presenting the ideas of modern Europe, especially Saint Simon's positivism and Auguste Comte's Religion of Humanity, in forms acceptable to traditional Iran. In a public lecture 'Persian Civilization' delivered in London soon after his dismissal, Malkum Khan admitted that his main intention was to make the political philosophy of the West acceptable by clothing it in the terminology of the Koran, the Hadiths, and the Shi'i Imams. Posing the question why Iran was backward, he rejected the conventional European explanations based on race and religion. Instead, he blamed political despotism and cultural insularity. To overcome the former, he advocated laws protecting life, liberty, and property; for without these three, there could be no security, and without security, there could be no progress. To overcome the

54 Malcom Khan, 'Persian Civilization,' Contemporary Review, 54 (February 1891), 238–244.