

Chapter 2

Rethinking Iranian National Character

2.1 Iranian National Characteristics

Three main cultural groups inhabit the present terrestrial boundaries of Western Asia, commonly referred to as Near East: The Iranians, the inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula, and the Turks (the Ottoman founded in 1299). The Turks are the unseasoned of the three and geographically closest to Europe, which perhaps why they are generally perceived as less unreceptive (most open) to Western Influence. The Arab world, including the *British Protectorate Islands* in Persian Gulf (also known as Pirate Coast), is utter creation of its religion conviction created by the dynasty of caliphs of the Umayyad House as well as the post-WWII international political inventions. Iran, the oldest among the three, depicts a totally different picture in a sense that its civilization¹ is not based on ethnicity, or delineate simple as the kinship in blood, like the Turks and the Arabs but rather upon the terrain. Although in the present-day culture, the dominant formative agent is Islam, some elements of what was a uniquely Iranian civilization go back to pre-Islamic history and still have persisted today. For instance, language, mythology, and historical identity all preserve something of the pre-Islamic past that makes up the characteristics of the Iranian (National) Character.

Throughout this book there are many references to what is labeled Iranian characters and attributions. Here, I provided a framework as to what they are perceived and signify. These days, in daily newspapers' analyses, radio, and TV broadcastings, we often come across statements that start with, "If the market does not feel

¹In this book, civilization is considered as an encompassing term that represents the cumulative intellectuals, culture, and social achievements that have evolved over a considerable period and whose norms are practiced by a group of people. Similarly, a society is a more tangible term that can be viewed as a collection of people that are subject to and work under the rules of authority—A Muslim society implies that the majority of the population is living under Islamic rules.

that its needs are being met, then it will look elsewhere,” “The market behaves at All-Time High,” and “The market isn’t crazy and it’s not irrationally exuberant, it’s just happy.” I presumed no one would think that market is a living thing that either feels or behaves in a certain manner, so what all these mean? Without oversimplifying, our understanding of the so-called market is demarcated as a place in which “people” characteristically pursue their own interests. In this sense, when we say a market behaves or feels, we really mean to say people behave or feel. In the same vein, when we say that a country feels or acts in a certain manner, we do insinuate the people rather than a specific geographical territory. National characters², therefore, exhibit a way to illustrate how people feel or act as members of a historical, cultural, and political grouping of a nation. They are, therefore, subject to at least some common influences which justify the common cultural implications of the term “nation,” a real, viable, social unit. People do act as members of a particular grouping (nation), but not necessarily in the whole of their lives, not always consistently, but frequently and regularly enough to make the society and culture of the nation (or state). It should also be noted that this study neither claimed, nor should be perceived, as a study of national culture or character, but rather reiterates observations, as what they perceived by Iranian and non-national scholars who either traveled to Iran or used to work and live in the country for sometime, as well as rich Iranian literarily sources. These opinions are used to map regularities of psychological process, which sometimes inelegantly termed psyche, as characterization of Iranian as a whole.³ National characters outlined here are assumed as one kind of cultural personality that are distinguished by the fact that the group observed, Iranian, is defined by shared history and political sovereignty.⁴

Like all studies of the similar approach, I assumed that there are elements held, but not exclusively, in common by members of a particular group (Iranian), which can be traced more or less to the relatively persisting telling affects of the cultural character

²It should be noted that the notion of national character is quite different than ethnicity. Ethnic groups are not a fact of nature, like species, and cannot be defined by objective physiological attributes. They have been socially constructed throughout history, as the French historian Ernest Renan pointed out in his pioneer lecture on the origin of nation at the Sorbonne I 1882, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” (What is a nation?): “A Frenchman is neither Gaul, nor a Frank, nor a Burgundian. Rather he is what has emerged from the cauldron in which, presided over by the Kings of France, the most diverse elements have together been simmering... A Englishman is... neither the Briton of Julius Caesar’s time, the Anglo-Saxon of Hengist’s time, nor the Dane of Canut’s time, nor the Norman of William the Conqueror’s time, it is rather the result of all these... Is German an exception?... That is a complete illusion. The whole of the South was once Gallic; the whole of the east... Slavic... what is the defining features of these states? It is the fusion of their component populations.” (See Oberschall A (2007) Conflict and peace building in divided societies: Responses to ethnic violence. Routledge, p. 4.)

³For a rich literature review of the topic, see Inkeles A (2014) National character: A psycho-social perspective. Transaction Publishers.

⁴This statement is made known too well that the political sovereignty of Iranian had been broken by Russian annexations in the early nineteenth century. However, since the present study emphasis is on the contemporary period, the twentieth century onward, the issue is excluded, but not ignored.

of the group. It is further assumed that common experiences have a central effect that outweighs the centrifugal effects of all other individuals' idiosyncratic qualities. In short, I assumed collective behavior dominates individual behavior. The underlying objective is a desire to make the perception of national qualities more apparently comprehensible in light of a national cultural evolutionary process. The variables, or better to say characteristics that are taken into consideration in this study, are not selected by the author but as mentioned above are selections of commonly perceived qualities outlined by Iranians, Iranian literarily sources, and non-national scholars.

There are those who may object to either the specificity of national character or apparent generalization of these attributes, and hence reject ensued inferences. In reply, I must underline few points in the defense. First, without a generalization, all theories, notions, and observations in social science disciplines would disappear, since everything we are engaged, for instance, in economics, political science, sociology, etc. is based on ad hoc generalization. Second, while other nations may share the similar traits, inferences in this book is formed based on collection of attributes. For instance, two nations may have same characteristic X that impend their progress, but one's economy is developed and the other still struggling to step out of its backwardness. In this respect, the common trait of X must be seen in combination with others' qualities that are not common between them. Moreover, attributes per se do not bear any weight, but their perpetual presence does have direct impact on a society. For instance, Iran is certainly not the only country with extended and enduring history. However, there are obvious differences between Iranians and let us say, Greeks, Egyptians, and Chinese. The main emphasis in this study is on these distinctive differences that distinguish one group from all others. While a wide range of similarities among various cultures and histories can easily be detected, one must also admit that they do not render a universal outcome due to specificity of intrinsic cultural attributes, values, and norms in which people retain as well as adhere to. Finally, prevalence of detrimental traits in a community is one thing; persistence, denials and general indifference about them imply these attributes would exist indefinitely because there are no wills, on part of the society, to eradicate them.⁵ In short, the point is one should view this approach not as a contest that one fact counter the other but rather call attention to elements that have grounded us.

The importance of national characteristic is an obvious factor in a wide range of disciplines and school of thoughts. John Stuart Mill, the classical individualist, once wrote, "Men, however, in a state society are still men; their actions and passion are obedient to the laws of individual human nature. Men are not, when brought

⁵For instance, like many capitals of compatible countries, Tehran suffers from population extreme density, which has led to similar dire circumstances such as degradation of environment including quality of potable water and air, extreme pressure on municipality services, rapid deterioration of public services and goods, etc. And yet, and to the best of my knowledge, there is not a single plan to neither reverse, nor stop the phenomenon (except the proposal to move the capital elsewhere). Worse, the trend shows no signs of slowing down as permits for constructions continue to be issued. This sort of issues, I argue, is utterly related to cultural qualities.

together, converted into another kind of substance, with different properties.”⁶ The fallacy of Mill is where he thinks that men had any kind of substance before being “brought together.” Society and the individual are inseparable to the extent that they are necessary and complementary to each other. The corollary to this statement implies that people are distinctively different as acquisitive species, a reminiscence of John Locke’s *tabula rasa*—we are born with blank slate minds—and then molded by our surroundings.

Edward Hallett Carr shared a similar sentiment as he states, “as soon as we are born, the world gets to work on us and transform us from merely biological into social units. Every human being at every stage of history or pre-history is born into a society and from his earliest years is molded by that society. The language which he speaks is not an individual inheritance, but a social acquisition from the group in which he grows up.”⁷ Come to think of it, when the conventional wisdom intends to hammer in its logic, it usually appeals to Mill’s observation. The lasting fascination of the Robinson Crusoe [a famous character of almost all conventional intermediary economic textbooks] myth is due to its attempt to imagine an individual independent of society. The attempt breaks down once we realize Crusoe is not an abstract figure, but an English man from New York, who carries his Bible with him everywhere. However, one perhaps can erroneously follow Mill’s observation and think he can be free of society like Kirillov in Dostoyevsky’s *Devil*, who killed himself to prove his total freedom from his society.⁸

However, there are differences that accentuate who we are in a sense that they are distinctive. This statement may seem to some as assault on common sense as well as certainty that science has established for some time. In science, when attention turns to people, it always implies the entire human race or individual human being, two categories of the same realm. The scientific discoveries about all are findings about each. However, science also demonstrates that circumstances change individuals’ behaviors. Philip Zimbardo and his colleagues’ tryout in the early

⁶Mill JS (1906) *A System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive: Boeving a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*. Accessed 12 Nov 2014 at The Project Gutenberg, Ebook 27942, p. 1066.

⁷Carr EH (1961) *What is history?* Vintage Books, pp. 36–37

⁸Emile Durkheim, in relation to suicide, coined the word *anomie* to denote the individual isolation from his society, but also underlined that suicide should be viewed as a means of independent social condition. There are also other studies that shows a human society is an *Empathic* society to which people endowed with great affection and caring for each. In fact, Jeremy Rifkin used various developmental psychologists to prove this point: “infants as young as 1 or 2 days old are able to identify the cries of other newborns and will cry in return, in what is called rudimentary empathic distress... But the real sense of empathic extension doesn’t begin to appear until the age of 18 months to two and half years... when the infant is able to understand that someone else exist [sense of others] as a separate being from himself that he is able to experience the others’ condition as if it were himself and respond with the appropriate comfort.” (See Rifkin J (2009) *The empathic civilization: The race to global consciousness in a world in crisis*. Penguin, pp. 8–9.)

1970s at Stanford University provides an ample instance.⁹ The point of contention is that we are infinitely divisible: examine one group, and you find its inner character traits, and the more you search the more subcategories you will find. Military personnel, for instance, exhibit different attributes from those who are not in military service. Regarding children, motherhood has furnished women with the privilege and insights that men can only wish for.

In a broader perspective, George Dalton, in discussing how a nation's history, culture, and political tradition shape its policy goals and basic economic institution, has observed, "in 1950 it seemed to us (and them) that the Russian did what they did because they were communist following some iron law of socialist development. There are now dozen communists' economies. It seems clear to the Chinese, the Yugoslavs and the Cubans that the Russian did what they did between 1928 and 1953, not because they were communists, but because they were Russian."¹⁰ In Robert and Helen Lynd's excellent study of personality in a typical American community of the twenties, *Middletown: Study in Modern American Culture*, we learn that earning a living is the dominant preoccupation of Americans, "both business men and working men seem to be running for dear life in this business of making the money they earn keep pace with the even more rapid growth of their subjective wants."¹¹ They further underlined that the similar tendency is a similar cultural and economic setting by stating, "The French economist Say when he revisited England at the close of the Napoleonic Wars [observed]: everyone seemed to run intent upon his business as though fearing to stop lest those behind trample him down."¹²

Out of these conglomerated observations, we can say that *national character* is not illusion, as some insist, but reality. Shirley Lawrence brilliantly underlines this point when she suggests that national character is a composite reflection of those

⁹"The Stanford prison experiment (SPE) was a study of the psychological effects of becoming a prisoner or prison guard. The experiment was conducted at Stanford University on August 14–20, 1971, by a team of researchers led by psychology professor Philip Zimbardo. It was funded by the U.S. Office of Naval Research and was of interest to both the US Navy and Marine Corps as an investigation into the causes of conflict between military guards and prisoners. The experiment is a classic study on the psychology of imprisonment and is a topic covered in most introductory psychology textbooks. The participants adapted to their roles well beyond Zimbardo's expectations, as the guards enforced authoritarian measures and ultimately subjected some of the prisoners to psychological torture. Many of the prisoners passively accepted psychological abuse and, at the request of the guards, readily harassed other prisoners who attempted to prevent it. The experiment even affected Zimbardo himself, who, in his role as the superintendent, permitted the abuse to continue. Two of the prisoners quit the experiment early, and the entire experiment was abruptly stopped after only 6 days, to an extent because of the objections of Christina Maslach. Certain portions of the experiment were filmed, and excerpts of footage are publicly available." (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_prison_experiment.)

¹⁰Dalton G (1974) *Economic systems and society: capitalism, communism and the Third World* (Vol. 2). Penguin books, p. 21.

¹¹Lynd RS, Lynd HM (1956) *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*. 1929. Reprint. Harcourt Brace, New York, p. 87.

¹²*Ibid*.

factors embodied in the total development of each nation, and stated, “Individuals are born into a particular society which has institutions, customs, norms and cultural patterns which are transmitted by the family and by others in authority, which the individual internalizes but upon which he can also react, or rather, can change. This cultural heritage consists of the dominant modes of reacting over a long period of time in a dynamic continuum and includes the historical, productive and social forces in a country. National character can change with social change; therefore in some respects it is transient. Other factors, which determine national character besides the social structure, such as language, geography and various cultural traditions, can be said to be less susceptible to change and would probably continue after social changes took place. Thus there may be certain dominant social traits in the folkways of a nation, but they are never homogeneous. Inherent in the concept of national character is variation.”¹³

For example, in formation of Chinese Marxism, Mao’s January 1940 essay *On New Democracy* wrote, “in applying Marxism to China, Chinese communists must fully and properly integrate the universal truth of Marxism with the concrete practice of the Chinese revolution or, in other words, the universal truth of Marxism must be combined with specific *national characteristics* and acquire a definite national form.”¹⁴ Elsewhere, Mao also stated, “Another task of study is to study our historical legacy, and to evaluate it critically using Marxist methods. A great nation such as ours with several thousand years of history has its own developmental laws, its own *national characteristics*, its own precious things.”¹⁵

Four decades ago, Arnold Heidenheimer posed a fundamental question of comparative policy analysis. He noted that there are many discrete differences in the way nations handle the various challenges facing them, but asked to what extent these habits and experiences can be subsumed under consistent models of policy making.¹⁶ Therefore, rather than addressing the question of the differences in the politics produced by different types of policies, “it is more important for the study of comparative public policy to ask whether it is possible to identify *national char-*

¹³ Lawrence S (1974) Origins of German national Traits: Historic Roots of National Peculiarities. The New International XIII(1), January 1947. Accessed 15 May 2015 at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/ni/issue3.htm>.

¹⁴ Published originally as ‘Xin minzhu zhuyide zhengzhi yu xin minzhu zhuyide wenhua’ (‘The politics and culture of New Democracy’), Zhongguo wenhua (Chinese Culture) 1 (January 1940). An English translation is available in Mao TT, Mao Z (1977) Selected Works of Mao Tsetung: Vol II. Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, pp. 380–381. See also Carr B, Mahalingam I (eds) (2002) Companion encyclopedia of Asian philosophy. Routledge, p. 541.

¹⁵ Zedong M (1938) Lun xin jieduan (On the new stage). Speech to the Enlarged Plenary Session of the Sixty Central Committee (12–14 October 1938). In Minoru T(ed) (1976) Mao Zedong ji: Collected Works of Mao Zedong. PoWen Book Co., vol. 6, pp. 260–261. See also Carr B, Mahalingam I (eds) (2002) Companion encyclopedia of Asian philosophy. Routledge, p. 541.

¹⁶ Adams CT, Heclio H (1975) Comparative public policy: the politics of social choice in Europe and America. St. Martin’s Press, New York.

acteristics of policy processes.”¹⁷ Similarly, in his landmark text, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, Michael Porter emphasizes that nations and national character remain of prime importance, even in the age of globalization: “My theory highlights and reinforces the importance of differences in nations and of differences in national character. Many contemporary discussions of international competition stress global homogenization and a diminished role for nations. But, in truth, national differences are at the heart of competitive success.”¹⁸ Hans Kohn suggested with the Greeks and the Jew, to which I would also add ancient Iranians, it was the national character and the spiritual creative energy of the people, which endured, “The Jews and Greeks were held together, not only by the racial bond, but by their national idea and a cultural consciousness common to all. Their political bond, on the other hand, was either very weak or nonexistence.”¹⁹ And in 1932, Cumberland Clark wrote a book on how Shakespeare characterizes the national characteristics of closer to 30 nationalities including Persian.²⁰ Behavior, a social phenomenon, is not only interhuman but it also bears profound intrinsic meanings, which make one culture distinct from another.

In 1911, Max Weber described Western music, in a complete familiar western discipline of thought, as rationalized harmony that rests upon the octave (a series of eight notes occupying the interval between [and including] two notes, one having twice or half the frequency of vibration of the other) and formulated its subsequent successive subdivisions expressed by the formula $n/(n+1)$.²¹ Teaching a seminar on Persian music at the University of Illinois, one of the prominent Masters of Persian classic Music, the late Nour Ali Boroumand stated, “To understand Persian Music you must know the singing of the nightingale, because it does not repeat itself, and

¹⁷ Bevir M (ed) (2010) *The SAGE handbook of governance*. Sage, p. 702.

¹⁸ Porter ME (1990) *The competitive advantage of nations*. Free Press, New York, p. 735.

¹⁹ Kohn H (1961) *The idea of nationalism: A study in its origins and background*. Transaction Publishers, p. 28.

²⁰ As Clark explained, “There are few scattered allusion in the plays of Shakespeare to the ancient Persian race, who were united with the Medes by Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon and founder of the Medo-Persian Empire. The poet obtained his knowledge of these early civilizations in Mesopotamia from the Bible.” (See Clark C (1932) *Shakespeare and national character: a study of Shakespeare’s knowledge and dramatic and literary use of the distinctive racial characteristics of the different peoples of the world* (No. 24). Haskell House Pub Ltd, p. 289.)

²¹ The direct Weber quote is, “ALL rationalized harmonic music rests upon the octave (vibration ratio of 1:2) and its division into the fifth (2:3) and fourth (3:4) and the successive subdivisions in terms of the formula $n/(n+1)$ for all intervals smaller than the fifth. If one ascends or descends from a tonic in circles first in the octave followed by fifths, fourths, or other successively determined relations, the powers of these divisions can never meet on one ‘and the same tone no matter how long the procedure be continued. The twelfth perfect fifth (2/3) 12 is larger by the Pythagorean comma than the seventh octave equaling (1/2) 7. This unalterable state of affairs together with the further fact that the octave is successively divisible only into two unequal intervals, forms the fundamental core of facts for all musical rationalizations.” (See Weber M (1958) *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*. Translated and Edited by Don Martindale, Johannes Riedel and Gertrude Neuwirth. Southern Illinois UP, Carbondale, p. 3.)

Persian musicians are not supposed to repeat themselves.”²² What Nour Ali Boroumand underscores, in direct contrast to the Western music, is the essence of Persian music that lives through the more or less *spontaneous* recreation of the traditional repertoire in performance; the music is often described as improvised. The musicians themselves talk freely of improvisation, or *bedaheh navazi* (literally means “spontaneous playing”), a term borrowed from the realm of oral poetry and which has been applied to Persian classical music since the early years of the twentieth century.²³ In short, the existing differences are reflective of who we are, a profound sense of our identity, and hence should be sustained and behold rather than tarnished, denied, and belittled. Now, let us return to Iran and Iranian ethos.

In 1908, Napier Malcolm wrote, “There is in Persian Hospitality a great deal more than the observance of etiquette. [Yet] Most Europeans who lived in Persia find it rather difficult to explain why they like the people ... A people who are open-handed, good-natured, affectionate, not always extravagantly conceited, and above all, intensely human, are a people one cannot help getting to like when one lives among them for any time. At the same time, their inquisitiveness, unpunctuality, intense dishonesty, frequent ingratitude, and absolute want of principle in everything, are, to say the least of it, very trying.”²⁴ Similarly, sometimes in the seventeenth century, a French traveler and merchant Jean Chardin wrote, “Persian are the most civilized of all the people of the east and the most falterers in the world.”²⁵

To understand the depth of Iranian characters, I have no choice but to consider the 1965 pioneer work of Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh on Iranian ethos and characters, *Our Iranian Character Traits*.²⁶ Jamalzadeh, which often compared to Dickens in England, was an Iranian critic and lucid writer who tried to change the adverse condition of his native land by using unsophisticated everyday language. He is an unorthodox figure in Iranian literally world, which spent all but his childhood and early youth outside Iran. Nevertheless, he remained deeply involved in Iranian affairs, cultural transformation and national consciousness of Iranians in the contemporary period. In his first short story “Farsi Shekar ast” (Farsi is sugar), Jamalzadeh ridiculed those who persist to “enriched” or “corrupt,” Persian language by loanwords. In doing so, he invited his readers to protect their identity by using their own sweet language. A year later, Jamalzadeh wrote the essay *Our Iranian Character Traits*, which neither followed nor taken seriously, and opened a Pandora

²² Nettl B (2013) *Becoming an Ethnomusicologist: A Miscellany of Influences*. Scarecrow Press, p. 116.

²³ See http://calperformances.org/learn/program_notes/2009/pn_masters.pdf.

²⁴ Malcolm N (1908) Five years in a Persian town. John Murray, pp. 185–186.

²⁵ Ferrier RW (1996) A journey to Persia: Jean Chardin’s portrait of a seventeenth-century empire. New Age International, p. 112. The same appears in baron de Montesquieu CDS, Mauldon M, Kahn A (2008) *Persian letters*. Oxford University Press, p. 238.

²⁶ The essay first appeared in a not well-known magazine *Masa’el-e Iran* (Iran’s Problem) in 1965 (1344), and later published as a book.

box of the salient features of Iranian culture and underlined Iranian's inadequacies that are revolved around peculiarities that besieged the Iranian culture for centuries.²⁷ He starts his introduction with Saadi's verse:

If Mirror reflects your flaws
break yourself, breaking the mirror is miscue

He based his discourse on account of both non-national and Iranian over the course of history, which provide us with a rich blend of the descriptive and expressive dialog that allow a reader to ease through the book. At the outset, he stated that whatever has been said or written about Iranians of "yesterday" and "day before yesterday" can be applied to Iran today.²⁸ For Jamalzadeh, this is obvious as one follows Molavi's critical approach in examining the causes of our backwardness, which is no more than our ethos that like "a hard piece of rock and painful invaders' thorns step-by-step hindered us in our path to development and prosperity,"²⁹ and has retained us back to the current state. We cannot, he warned, cure our malaises if we continue denying the cause. He then mentioned other Iranian writers like Sadegh Hedayat, Mohammed Hejazi, Ali Dashti, Bozurg Alavi, Sadegh Chubak, who also outlined our harmful characters (as the cause of our dire conditions) in their works, but to no avail.³⁰

Knowing too well how Iranians would respond to his criticism, which usually goes as follows: "almost all people in the world have the same attributes and if effects of wise and continues upbringing is absence and if fear of law and consequences were removed perhaps people's wicked mask would drop and they show they true nature,"³¹ Jamalzadeh opted a different approach and turned the tables on his compatriots. Reiterating Sir John Malcolm (which according to Jamalzadeh comprehended Iranians and Iran better than anyone) who has observed "... seldom you see a country full of beggars than Iran,"³² Jamalzadeh asked, "how is it possible that the affairs of Iranians, who think so highly of themselves and believed they can hoodwink everybody in the world, reached the point that outsiders [Malcolm] say today that in the world you can rarely find the country that has as many beggars and

²⁷ But, he also made an attempt by reminding his reader about virtues of the Iranian culture, and hence evoked we should not be dismayed and anxious about the future since "Iranian people endowed with talent and civility, affectionate and caring about others" to which others often admired and revered.

²⁸ Jamalzadeh MA (1966) *Our Iranian Character Traits*. Sharg Publisher (Fravardin 1345), p. 10. The terms "yesterday" and "a day before yesterday," we learned in the next paragraph, are references to the time frame that goes far back as Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, all others who wrote about Iranians and their attributes.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

famished individuals as Iran has.”³³ The answer is obvious as Jamalzadeh contends, “without a debut, as long as we remained witless with wobbly moral, the whole world continues to perceive us witless and wobbly moral.”³⁴

For Jamalzadeh, the main reason as to why we collectively failed to measure up to higher standards or moral and ethos is the precarious instability between our keen sense of pride and toxic aptitude and tenacity to overlook our own flaws. The evidence to support this observation is abundant in our literature and works of our most celebrated poets and thinkers.³⁵ For instance, Attar, a prominent Muslim poet and scholar of Saljug period (860–928), rhetorically asks in the following verses:

How will anyone criticizing others' faults ever find delight in divine love?
 You seek for faults to censure and suppress
 And have no time for inward happiness—
 How can you know God's secret majesty
 If you look out for sin incessantly?
 To share His hidden glory you must learn
 That others' errors are not your concern—
 When someone else's failings are defined
 What hairs you split—but to your own you're blind!³⁶

Another prominent poet, Hafiz is well known for scorning ascetic (*zahid*), a hypocrite pious rake (*rind*) who is condescending and overcritical toward anyone whom he considers to be less devoted to which is Hafiz sarcastically warns the puritan ascetic:

Don't worry so much about the rogues and rakes,
 You high-minded Puritans. You know the sins of others
 Will not appear written on your own foreheads anyway.³⁷

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Iranian literature, as Claus V. Pedersen described, “is often inspired by and reflects abstract philosophies, and in addition, expresses man's experiences of life and his interpretations thereof. By doing so, literature bridge the gap between theory and practice, conceptions and experience in a way that most other texts do not.” (See Pedersen CV (2002) World View in Pre-Revolutionary Iran: Literary Analysis of Five Iranian Authors in the Context of the History of Ideas (Vol. 10). Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, p. viii.)

³⁶ Lewisohn L (Ed) (2010) Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry (Vol. 25). IB Tauris, p. 165. In another story told by Attār, “a drunkard finds fault with the conduct of another drunk, counselling him to drink fewer glasses of wine, so that ‘you will be able to walk in a straight line like me without following anyone else’. The first drunkard, meanwhile, is unaware that he himself is blind drunk and being carried in a sack on the back of his mate. From the tale, ‘Attār draws the moral that this type of cavilling arises from not being a lover, for the lover always sees all the Beloved's blemishes as indicative of her beauty and virtue.” (Ibid.)

³⁷ Lewisohn L (Ed) (2010) Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry (Vol. 25). IB Tauris, p. 163. Lewisohn also elaborates on this note and points out, “Writing in Shīrāz a century before Ḥāfiz, Sa'dī [another renowned poet] relates the story of an ascetic who was invited to be the guest of a prince. At the royal banqueting table he ate less than was his custom, and after the meal he recited public prayers longer than was his habit at home. Upon returning home, the ‘ascetic’ asked his son to bring him something to eat ‘I had supposed you had eaten to satiety already at the King's table’, the boy wondered aloud. ‘Well, it seemed more to my benefit to curb my appetite there’, his father prevaricated. Discerning that his father's hypocritical pretence to abstinence had

Lewisohn reminded us, “Ḥāfiz’s condemnation of fault-finding is not his own personal idiosyncrasy, but is exactly in line with the teachings of the Persian *futuwwat* [roughly speaking, it means generosity and manliness] tradition, where this vice is consistently condemned by most of its foremost thinkers, and also echoes a number of verses in Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* revealing the evils of exposing the flaws of one’s neighbour (‘*ayb-jū ī*’). The key verse that best encapsulates Ḥāfiz’s teaching on the vice or virtue of fault-finding is:

I said to the master of the tavern
Which road is The road of salvation?
He lifted his wine and said
Not revealing the faults of other people.³⁸

Had we listened to the voice of these enlighten men and were true to our own *futuwwat*³⁹ tradition, we could perhaps have avoided falling into a bewildering state, and hence end chasing irrelevant thoughts. The result of this obstinacy has been nothing but mediocrities at every layer of our social and intellectual lives. And if we will continue on the same path, Jamalzadeh warned, “not only we hurt and harm ourselves but we also inflict great cruelty to our children, the country and the nation.”⁴⁰ And yet, Jamalzadeh’s message fell on deaf ears, not only in the past but even today and most likely in the future as we consciously chose to be our most potent enemy and refused to do the right things. Perhaps, this is the reason why our ancient King Darius the Great on the Bisotun Inscription⁴¹ stated, “You who shall be king hereafter, protect yourself vigorously from the Lie; the man who shall be a Lie-follower, him do you punish well, if thus you shall think, *May my country be secure!*”⁴² This is the message that has been kept repeating throughout our history by our most precious teachers, poets, writers, etc., but no one seems to hear it. In 1963 (1342), one of the two main Iranian newspapers, Ettelaat, published an article that hinted at the

eradicated all his claim to ascetic virtue, the lad quipped: ‘Then recite your prayers over again as well for your good works up to now have also reaped no benefit for you.’” (Ibid.).

³⁸ Lewisohn L (Ed) (2010) *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (Vol. 25). IB Tauris, p. 164.

³⁹ According to Lloyd Ridgeon, Farsi equivalent of the term “futuwwat” is *Jawanmardi* which has been an integral part of our folklore literature like *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi and “in the hagiographies and legends of the Shi’ite Imam [Ali] and in Sufi poetry and prose.” (See Ridgeon L (2010) *Morals and mysticism in Persian sufism: a history of Sufi-futuwwat in Iran*. Routledge, p. 1.) Literally it could be translated “manliness”; some scholars have suggested “chivalry” or “Islamic chivalry” as translations. Both of those get at some of the aspects of this term, but hardly explain it. To put it briefly (see Cahen C, Taeschner F (1965) *Futuwwa*. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 961-969), the concept of futuwwat embodies a social ethic and set of practices informed by a rigorous morality, Sufic ascetic and mystical concepts and practices, and ideas on appropriate social behavior. See <https://thicketandthorp.wordpress.com/2012/08/25/a-beginners-guide-to-futuwwat/>.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

⁴¹ It is a multilingual inscription located on Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah Province of Iran, near the city of Kermanshah in western Iran.

⁴² See line 55 (4.36-40), at: http://realhistoryww.com/world_history/ancient/Misc/Elam/Darius_beh.htm. Emphasis origin. It is noteworthy that all earlier studies of inscriptions had been conducted by non-Iranian. For more information, see <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bisotun-iii>.

ancient king's advice and cynically stated, "perhaps you have seen, and if not, have heard that Darius the Great on the Bisotun Inscription prayed to God to keep his country safe from lies. It is not clear, however, what the late king had done that God reversed his wish and brought the most awful plague of lie to his nation ... in short, lies, lies and lies covered us from head to toe, we are a nation that lied to our state so that the state left with no choice but to lie to us ..."⁴³

So, what do we mean by a lie? The discussion of lying to others and others' deception (interpersonal deceiving) may be divided into two kinds. First, related to definitional (or conceptual), which comprises the questions of how lying is to be defined, how deceiving is to be defined, and whether lying is always a form of deceiving. Second is more normative (more precisely, moral) that includes the questions of whether lying and deceiving are either morally defensible or not, whether lying is morally worse than deceiving, and whether lying and deception are merely morally optional on certain occasions, or are sometimes morally obligatory like *taqiye*h (dissimulation) in Islam.⁴⁴ In this study, it is sufficient to offer two reasonable definitions of lying: "A lie is a statement made by one who does not believe it with the intention that someone else shall be led to believe it,"⁴⁵ and "[lying is] making a statement believed to be false, with the intention of getting another to accept it as true."⁴⁶ What I would like to emphasize in these two statements is that both underlined an *intentional purpose* in which one tells a lie.

The ambiguity of the notion is also prevalent among the most influential thinkers. Montaigne in his classic work *Essays* stated, "If, like truth, the lie had one face, we would be on better terms. For we would accept as certain the opposite of what the liar would say. But the reverse of truth has a hundred thousand faces and

⁴³ Jamalzadeh MA (1966) *Our Iranian Character Traits*. Sharg Publisher (Fravardin 1345), p 34.

⁴⁴ Christian theologian St. Augustine (354–430) taught that lying was always wrong, but accepted that this would be very difficult to live up to and that in real life people needed a get-out clause. According to St Augustine, God gave human beings speech so that they could make their thoughts known to each other; therefore, using speech to deceive people is a sin, because it's using speech to do the opposite of what God intended. The true sin of lying is contained in the desire to deceive. Augustine believed that some lies could be pardoned, and that there were in fact occasions when lying would be the right thing to do. He grouped lies into eight classes, depending on how difficult it was to pardon them. Here's his list, with the least forgivable is: (1) Lies told in teaching religion; (2) Lies which hurt someone and help nobody; (3) Lies which hurt someone but benefit someone else; (4) Lies told for the pleasure of deceiving someone; (5) Lies told to please others in conversation; (6) Lies which hurt nobody and benefit someone; (7) Lies which hurt nobody and benefit someone by keeping open the possibility of their repentance; and (8) Lies which hurt nobody and protect a person from physical "defilement". See "Lying and Truth Telling" at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/lying/lying_1.shtml.

⁴⁵ Isenberg A (1988) *Aesthetics and the theory of criticism: Selected essays of Arnold Isenberg*. University of Chicago Press, p. 248.

⁴⁶ Primoratz I (1984) Lying and the "Methods of Ethics." *International Studies in Philosophy*. 16(3):35–57, p. 54, see footnote 2 in Chap. 1.

an infinite filed.”⁴⁷ Nietzsche once has observed, “There is only one world, and that world is false, cruel, contradictory, misleading, senseless ... *We have need for lies* in order to conquer this reality, this ‘truth,’ that is, in order to *live*—That lies are necessary in order to live is itself part of the terrifying and questionable character of existence.”⁴⁸ Kant, however, points to different direction and believed that it is possible to tell an “internal lie” or “inner lie” to lie to one’s “inner judge, who is thought of as another person.”⁴⁹ Since in the case of an “internal” lie, one lies to one’s “inner judge,” who is “thought of as another person,” but who is not another person, an internal lie is understood by Kant to be a lie to oneself, which like all other types of lies and insincerities caused by “mere lack of consciousness.”⁵⁰ In short, an internal lie is a lie to oneself about the motivation for one’s action, which he also considers to be a form of hypocrisy. More to the point, Kant appears to be referring to the tendency to believe that one is acting out of respect for the moral law, when one is in fact following mere inclination.⁵¹ That this is how he sees the matter is made evident by the following passage: “All homage paid to the moral law is an act of hypocrisy, if, in one’s maxim, ascendancy is not at the same time granted to the law as an incentive sufficient in itself and higher than all other determining grounds of the will. The propensity to do this is inward deceit, i.e., a tendency to deceive oneself in the interpretation of the moral law to its detriment.”⁵² In this content, it is easy to see how internal lying is an instance of heinous moral wrong.

Nevertheless, we cannot escape the fact that lying has always been ubiquitous. All you need is to open Encyclopedia of Deception and under the heading of “lie acceptability” it is said, “Many studies suggest that lying is a communication tool that is adaptive and crucial for social life... the acceptability of laying is often defined as one’s attitude toward the practice of lying. If a person considered it acceptable to lie (given specific situation), he or she tends to view the act of lying as one of several options for achieving a social or personal goal.”⁵³ In a broader perspective, we should not be surprised to be victims of falsification since we are

⁴⁷de Montaigne M, Cohen JM (1993) Essays. Translated with an introduction by JM Cohen. Penguin Books, London, p. 7.

⁴⁸Nietzsche FW, Kaufmann, WA, Hollingdale RJ (1968) The Will to Power [by] Friedrich Nietzsche. A New Translation by Walter Kaufmann and RJ Hollingdale. Edited, with Commentary, by Walter Kaufmann, with Fascism of the Original Manuscript. Random House, New York, p. 446. Emphasis origin.

⁴⁹Kant I (1996) The metaphysics of morals. Gregor M (ed). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, p. 183.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹See Szabados B, Soifer E (2004) Hypocrisy: ethical investigations. Broadview Press, p. 133.

⁵²Kant I (2008) Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone. HarperOne, p. 37.

⁵³Levine TR (ed) (2014) Encyclopedia of Deception. SAGE Publications, pp. 596–597.

all biologically vulnerable to deception, self-delusion, and bias of every kind through our senses all the time. However, as Sissela Bok points out, “We often know when we mean to be honest or dishonest. Whatever the essence of truth and falsity, and whatever the sources of error in our lives, one such source is surely the human agent, receiving and giving out information, intentionally deflecting, withholding, even distorting it at times. Human beings, after all, provide for each other the most ingenious obstacles to what partial knowledge and minimal rationality they can hope to command.”⁵⁴

In this respect, we all are familiar with falsehood: a “false argument,” a “false friend,” a “false economy,” and a “false witness” all of which apply directly to persons. We also know many other uses of false which means deceitful that apply directly to what persons have intended to be misleading, like a “false trail,” a “false clue,” a “false guidance,” etc. However, a “false person” is not a product of temporary lapse of judgment or merely inadvertent wrong or mistaken deed, or incorrectness, but rather one who is intentionally and characteristically untrustworthy, disloyal, and treacherous. A false person is the one we know well in Iran, and so when the ancient king warned us “[To] protect yourself vigorously from the Lie,” and a newspaperman writes about “lies, lies and lies,” they do not mean the act of lying but drawing attention to a false person.

The presence of a false person in Iran has been acknowledged through enormous literary works, poetries (ancient and modern), indigenous figures, satirical plays, and anecdotes.⁵⁵ However, nowhere it prevails more visibly than in Iranian’s communication principle, which does not meet the standard and fixed traditional linguistic thinking on the subject of meaning.⁵⁶ In this respect, Iranian interpersonal communication is quite different in a sense that when one is placed in a given environment, his chosen mode of communication is often “chameleon-like,” in word of Beeman, which allows him to adjust appropriately to the given surrounding.⁵⁷ Therefore, a function of all parties involved in the conversation is to figure out the correct interpretation of what is being said. As Beeman makes it plain, there is always some tension between what is said and intended by a speaker and what is

⁵⁴ Bok S (2011) *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*. Vintage, p. 8.

⁵⁵ For instance, James Morier’s *Hajji Baba* provides many precedents of Iranian a false person. Although the book is a creation of Englishman, it has been translated and a well-known work in Iran to the extent that Muhammad Ali Jamalzadeh called it a master piece and Professor Menavi called it “must read book in Persian literature.” (see Nateg H (1975) *Aaz Ma-st ki Bar Ma-st*. Aghah Publisher, p. 95). Another example is Bijan Mofid’s *City of Tales*, which the most popular play was ever written in Persian, running for 7 years in Tehran, depicted various Iranian false persons in different occupations and social status.

⁵⁶ In a standard tradition, the element of language be assigned fixed relationships to each other and hence a speaker has no choice of alternative possibilities in speech, and hence bounded to his contextual environment. For instance, a fixed response to a question of “Where are you?” is either “here” or “there” and not “here and there.” See De Saussure F, Baskin W (2011) *Course in general linguistics*. Columbia University Press.

⁵⁷ Beeman WO (1986) *Language, status, and power in Iran*. Indiana University Press, p. 6.

heard and understood by the listener that permits the more adroit speakers, in Beeman word, to exploit that tension and make use of ambiguity to get the better of others in day-to-day interaction among Iranians.⁵⁸

The Iranian notion of *zerang* (cunning, slickness) is an ample example of an adroit speaker, or as I argue a false person, to which one can effectively control an interpretation of message for one's own advantage. As Beeman observed: "[O]ne important principle of communication in Iran is that the relationship between message form (what is said) and message content (what the message is about) cannot be interpreted by a single set of criteria, then an important tension is set up between the person initiating communicative behavior and the person interpreting it... Furthermore, adroit individuals should be able to know how to *supply* those elements that create the scenes that they wish to have operative in their interaction with others. The art of counseling, the ability to be an adequate hostess, the developing of a good bedside manner for a doctor, all require communication skills that contribute to the establishment of believable and effective scenes."⁵⁹ In a more crude term, *zerang* is a crafty person who seeks to deceive another whom he gained his/her full trust just to take advantage of him/her and get what he wants. On a similar note, but in a quite different tune, Lord Curzon in 1892 has observed, "*Splendide mendax* might be taken as the motto of Persian character. The finest domestic virtues co-exist with barbarity and supreme indifference to suffering. Elegance of deportment is compatible with a coarseness amounting to bestiality. The same individual is at different moment haughty and cringing. A creditable acquaintance with the standards of civilization does not prevent gross fanaticisms and superstition. Accomplished manners and a more than Parisian polish cover a truly superb faculty for lying and almost scientific imposture. The most scandalous corruption is combined with a scrupulous regard for specific precepts of the moral law."⁶⁰

In reference to trait of *zerang*, two more features must be noted. First, Iranians highly value a *zerange* person (a false person) to the extent that they commonly equaled it to intelligence and cleverness (*ba housh*), which slick through life with-

⁵⁸ It should be noted that Beemans' *Language, Status, and Power in Iran Advances in Semiotics* has been subject of intense scrutiny and criticism to which I feel oblique to reiterate. One of the contemporary brilliant scholars of Iranian study who has earned my most respect is Hamid Dabasi. Dabasi in *Corpus Anarchicum* expressed his view on Beeman's work and stated, "This [Beemans' book] analytical ludicrous, thinly disguised racist reading of Iranian architectural practices of *biruni/anadaruni*, which are also linked to the Islamic mystical notions of *zahar* and *batan*, inevitably distorts the untheorized historical practices into substanding old-fashion Oriental reading of the Oriental as insidious, beguiling, and corrupt." (See Dabashi H (2012) *Corpus anarchicum*: political protest, suicidal violence, and the making of the posthuman body. Palgrave Macmillan, p. 98.) And yet, none of these derogatory adjectives undermined Beemans' observation, in that "It is the *birun* or *biruni*, the public reception areas of the household where strangers may be entertained without endangering the private space of the family. The *aendærun* and *birun* of the household are, to a degree, portable." (See Beeman WO (1986) *Language, status, and power in Iran*. Indiana University Press, p. 11.)

⁵⁹ Beeman WO (1986) *Language, status, and power in Iran*. Indiana University Press, p. 27 and 66 respectively.

⁶⁰ Curzon GNC (1892) *Persia and the Persian question* (Vol. 2). Longmans, Green & Co, p. 15.

out a trace. Second is an odd but recognized phenomenon that participants in this false creation, or as Ervin Goffman called it “framing,”⁶¹ are often realized the ongoing alterations, but almost always refuse to openly acknowledge it. This is perhaps due to the basic quality of Iranian society that frequently endorses “protect external appearances” (*Zaher-ra hez kardan*), so that one does not offend, and hence remains immune from possible harms of acknowledging the false that one knows.

In retrospect, a society that its principle of interpersonal communication is to shades truth and values a false person is a society that endures distrust and Janus-faced duplicity. The prerequisite to functions is insincerity.⁶² As a result, only a few in Iran believed that the concept of government exists to serve the public. Members of the public in Iran, as Baldwin points out, “... do not approach officials brandishing rights which they may expect to exercise and have acknowledged. They come as supplicants for favors which they expect to buy or to have granted.”⁶³ Perhaps now we can explain why decoding of power in Iran mainly involved individual leaders and their personalities instead of the institution of government as the primary targets of examination. On these points, Taysi and Preston stated, “In Iranian politics, nothing is as it seems. Improvisation, role-playing, and deception are key to any Iranian politicians.⁶⁴ Layer upon layer of meaning is attached to every word, every action. As a result, it is imperative for anyone hoping to be successful in Iranian politics to be a chameleon, never showing his or her true intention.”⁶⁵ Others also considered the role of personality but on a much broader scope and interests. For instance, Leonard Binder underlined, “In Iran, one of the primary political issues is precisely that of given of the administrative apparatus, from cabinet on down, a personality of its own, separate from that of the groups or interests with which its members are unofficially associated. This ‘personality’ needs to have two characteristic: the first is the obvious one of articulating the interests of bureaucrats as a class, and the second is that of identifying goals of the bureaucracy with some conception of the general welfare.”⁶⁶

I, therefore, argue that the key to understand Iranian social fabric rests in an understanding of the dynamic of interpersonal behavior. William Beeman alluded to this observation when he underlines, “It is through the intricacies of face-to-face

⁶¹ Goffman E (1969) Strategic interaction. University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 9.

⁶² Others, however, believed that the tendency to lie in Iran should be viewed in terms of insecurity and vulnerability that has been imposed on people through enduring history. In his pioneer and highly enlightening study of the Iranian political elite, Marvin Zonis’s cites numerous Western writers, who point out the pervasive, manifest insecurity of the Iranian citizenry. See Zonis M (2015) Political Elite of Iran. Princeton University Press, pp. 268–283, 295–298, and 272–279.

⁶³ Baldwin GB (1967) Planning and development in Iran. John Hopkins University, p. 18.

⁶⁴ In fact, it has been suggested that many political developments in the contemporary Iran are caused by personal rivalries, animosities, and power ambitions. For instance, see Hunter S (2010) Iran’s foreign policy in the post-Soviet era: resisting the new international order. ABC-CLIO, p. 28.

⁶⁵ Taysi T, Preston T (2001) The personality and leadership style of President Khatami: Implications for the future of Iranian political reform. In: Feldman O, Valenty LO (ed) (2001). Profiling political leaders: A cross-cultural studies of personality and behavior. Praeger, pp. 57–77, p. 72. See also Dal Seung Yu (2002) The Role of Political Culture in Iranian Political Development. Ashgate Publishing Group.

⁶⁶ Binder L (1962) Iran: political development in a changing society. Univ of California Press, p. 152.

interaction that power is negotiated, alliances are made, action is made incumbent on individuals, and choices of strategy are decided.”⁶⁷ This is where the notion of interpersonal relations, pigeonholed by mistrust, manifests itself on the larger spectrum and illustrates why in Iran we have collectively failed to build meaningful and lasting social cooperation and integration as a concomitant of nation-state in a contemporary sense of the word. Let me explain in the section below.

2.2 Lack of Togetherness in Nation-State Building

In this context, one of our most damaging attributes transpired, which is the absence of *togetherness* that weakens our unity (of purpose) and fragments our people to which the *nation*-element of the nation-state is absent.⁶⁸ This is easily observable in our persistent attempts, particularly during the contemporary period, to construct our “ideal” around a state (*doulat*) building⁶⁹ rather than a national (*mellat*) building, in which various ethnic groups are integrated into the national body in order to establish national cohesion.⁷⁰ Even when an attempt is made toward uniting the nation, as Reza Shah declared Farsi and the national language, the manner in which it is implemented resembles many other Iranian recipes that orbit around the same principle: to pursue the masses to see things as they were told, which reminds me

⁶⁷ Beeman WO (1986) Language, status, and power in Iran. Indiana University Press, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Kenneth Dyson underlined the concept of nation-state and wrote, “One major product of the late eighteenth-and nineteenth-century concern with the sense of community and solidarity was the conception of the *nation-state*. This idea was the result of marrying a new culture concept of the nation to an older legal and political concept of the state: the nation referred to a unity of culture that was based typically on common language and literature and a feeling of loyalty for a common land, the state to a unity of legal and political authority... The modern sense of nation was unleashed by the French Revolution and by the intense awareness that Revolution produced of the need to base the state on a more closely knit sense of community... In France the state was concerned to shape a nation out of an extraordinarily diverse society. Conversely, in Germany and Italy a particularistic, patchwork structure of states appeared to stand in sharp contrast to an emerging consciousness of a share culture based above all on language.” (Dyson K (2010) The state tradition in Western Europe. ECPR Press, pp. 129–130).

⁶⁹ A distinction is made here between government and state to which the latter conveys no substantial significance in Iran. Without getting involved in more detailed analysis of both notions, it is sufficient to underline their differences by stating the State has four elements like population, territory, government, and sovereignty. Government is rather a narrow concept, as an element of the State. In short, the State is an organic concept in which the government is a part. W. W. Willoughby writes, “By the term ‘Government’ is designated the organization of the State—the machinery through which its purposes are formulated and executed” (see Willoughby WW (1896) An Examination of the Nature of the State: A Study in Political Philosophy. Macmillan and Company, p. 8). In this respect, Government is an agent of the State.

⁷⁰ In respect to linguistic and ethnic diversity, “Iran is ranked sixteenth in the world with 24 % similarity, where Tanzania is ranked first, with 7 % similarity and North and South Korea have 100 % similarity.” While Persian speakers comprised of 60 % of the population in Iran, there are six major ethnic groups within the national boundary of Iran. They are: Turks, Kurds, Lurs, Baluchis, Arabs, and Turkmen. There are also others tribes (sometimes refer to as nomads) in Iran such as Qashqai, Bakhitiri, and Haft Lang. See Madadi AA (2015) The Relationship between Ethnicity and National Security in Iran. Journal of Political & Social Sciences 2(4):73–81.

that “if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.”⁷¹ It is however ironic that our disunity prevented the country from disintegrating and has made us survive so many calamities. George Simmel conceptualizes this observation in his brilliant work *Conflict* by stating, “A hostility must excite consciousness the more deeply and violently, the greater the parties’ similarity against the background of which the hostility rises... People who have many common features often do one another worse or ‘wronger’ wrong than complete stranger do... We confront the stranger, with whom we share neither characteristics nor broader interests, objectively; we hold our personalities in reserve; and thus a particular difference does not involve us in our totalities... The more we have in common with another as whole persons, however, the more easily will our totality be involved in every single to him.”⁷² Lucian Pye underlined the significance of such cohesiveness when he stated, “The art of modern government and politics requires that people work together in ways that will maximize the forcefulness of collective effort, while preserving the necessary flexibility to give scope for change and innovation.”⁷³ Indeed, Frederick Douglass, an American civil right activist who was born into slavery, signified the point of contention when he spoke of the United State as “this great nation,” in which he did not think of the ethnic group to which he belongs, nor of the variety of culture and nation that created the American nation. Instead, he thought of the country as a whole, in which collection of individuals or multiple communities live together in an imagined community of the citizens of the United State.⁷⁴

The absence of togetherness also adversely affects the rule of law in a nation. For instance, in Western legal traditions the key assumption behind the concept of rule of law, and hence legal responsibility, is of equality before the law.⁷⁵ This is due to

⁷¹ In fact, Reza Shah undertook a massive social-engineering project to turn Iran into a united Persian state, as he closed down minority schools and printing presses, outlawed traditional ethnic clothing, etc.

⁷² Simmel G (1964). *Conflict*: Translated by Kurt H. Wolff. The Web of Group-affiliations. Translated by Reinhard Bendix. Free Press, p 43-44.

⁷³ Pye LW (1966) *Aspects of political development*. Little Brown and Co., p 100.

⁷⁴ Having said that, one must admit that the absence of collectiveness (togetherness) among Iranians is rather a surprising development given the strength of Islam in the country. As Lucian Pye explained, “The collectivist ideals of the Islamic ‘brotherhood,’ which compel both reformists and orthodox to value a sense of togetherness, produces an inescapable tension for those who would stand out as leaders.” (See Pye LW (1985) *Asian Power and Politics. The Cultural Dimensions of Authority*. Harvard University Press, pp. 273–274.)

⁷⁵ One can also find the similar parity in Islam, in which “social hierarchies existed, and disparity of wealth was considerable, but, apart from a limited internal autonomy enjoyed by the whole body of the Prophet’s kin, the ‘Alids’ and ‘Abbasids,’ the Law did not recognize any legal privilege on the part of any individuals or groups; theoretically, all individuals were equal, and between them and the community as a whole the only body to be interposed was that of the family, as a result of which, by a kind of compensation, *there was often a strong though unorganized feeling of solidarity between believers (and, where relevant, between members of the same tribe)* which the historian Ibn Khaldun was to study under the name of ‘*asabiyya*.’” (See Cahen C (1970) *Economy, society, institutions*. In: Holt PM, Lambton AKS, Lewis B (eds) (2000) *The Cambridge History of Islam*, volume 2B. Cambridge University Press, p. 515. Emphasis added.)

the fact that all legal persons have the same responsibilities to each other under the law. Responsibility, therefore, is a social relationship in which individuals recognize each other's rights. In this content, the basis of rule of law and responsibility are reciprocal (reciprocity), and the defense of the rights of legal persons through practices that establish accountability for actions. Consequently, only individuals can recognize each other's rights and exercise their own. However, in the case that togetherness is absence (vis-à-vis each other), the role of law as well as legal responsibility and respect for each other's right cannot be retained. On this note, Guy Debord in *Society of the Spectacle* reminded us that a spectacle society is originated in the loss of the unity, "The spectacle is nothing more than the common language of... separation. What binds the spectators together is no more than an irreversible relation at the very center which maintains their isolation. The spectacle reunites the separate, but reunites it as separate."⁷⁶

In the section below, I will review some of the key historical phases with the purpose of explaining why the national element of the nation-state building is missing in the case of Iran.

There is no doubt that the enduring history of Iran had compelled people to develop a profound sense of how world operates in economic and political realm, and in the process learned ways of managing and manipulating the games basic to superior-subordinate relationships.⁷⁷ This social learning prevailed in Iran through three distinctive historical phases, namely, the ancient kingdom, Islamic civilization and its aftermaths, and the contemporary era of despotism. In the ancient time, power in Persia was generally associated with beliefs on the role of authority in upholding the cosmic order.⁷⁸ At the time, there was no boarder lines, or as Karl Jasper labeled *encompassing*, to control people in order to seize economic interests. The Achaemenian kings were not considered and worshiped as gods, unlike the Roman emperors, who throughout the empire had built temples to house their images. "Nowhere among their [Achaemenian kings] manifold titles in the inscriptions do they glory in their divine nature, they only assert that they have been invested by Ahuramazda [God] with the supreme power to achieve the rule of the God on earth. The divine mission of the king distinguishes the Achaemenian Empire from the Roman, which was based on the secular idea the world into one order."⁷⁹ There was no formal structure imposed on individuals to restrain their freedom and no powerful apparatus in the service of particular social groups and vested economic

⁷⁶ Debord G (1983) *The society of the spectacle*. Black and Red, Detroit, note no. 29.

⁷⁷ This observation is in direct contrast to today's populist political views of people like Charles Merriam, Robert Dahl, and Samuel Huntington who perceived power as a universal phenomenon, operating under the same laws from ancient Greece to today's system of states.

⁷⁸ This order was so important to Persians that when Alexander conquered Persia, he reassured the Persian that: "if Dara [Darius III] is no more, I am here and Iran will remain the same as it has always been since it beginning." Mojtahed-Zadeh P (2007) *Boundary Politics and International Boundaries of Iran: A Study of the Origin, Evolution, and Implications of the Boundaries of Modern Iran*. Universal-Publishers, p. 15). Emphasis origin.

⁷⁹ Haas WS (1946) *Iran*. Columbia University Press, pp. 10–11.

interests.⁸⁰ As the ancient Empire came to an end and reached an advanced stage in its downward path, Persians deviated from their old culture as they were subjected to the new power, and their expertise flowed into the Arab territory to build the Islamic Empire.

The Arab invasion had led to alteration of Iranians' cultural tendencies by the ways in which divine powers instruct people in understanding what is involved in a culture's rules about the relationships between guardian leaders and loyal followers.⁸¹ As Edward Mortimer has noted, "By the eleventh century A.D., most of the *ulama* were teaching that obedience was an absolute duty, even to an unjust ruler, since an unjust ruler was better than none at all."⁸² Moreover, as Lucian Pye explained, "The image of the Prophet and of those who spread the Word of Allah by the sword suggests that the deeds of the individual should command admiration and respect; yet the culture also accentuates the communal values of a brotherhood in which no one person's views should be imposed arbitrarily. The standards of personal conduct set by the Koran and the Hadith are severe in the extreme, and much is forbidden declared to be *haram* [forbidden]. Hence he who is seen as exemplary is likely to command instant deference. At the same time, however, immediate access to Paradise is given to one who sacrifices his life for the brotherhood, for *ummat* Islam."⁸³ However, as political unity of Islam began to crumble and Arab's hold on the mainland of Iranian plateau loosens, patch tribal dynasties rose that resembled musical chair of reign where one dynasty replaces another, only to be replaced by yet another tribal family. On this note, Nikki Keddie has observed, "Nearly all the dynasties that ruled Iran from the eleventh centuries to the twentieth century have been tribal in origin, and even the Safavids (1501–1722), who originated in a Sufi order, not a tribe, came to power due to tribal military forces. The tribes have had a profound impact on the nature of Iranian social structure and development. With the growth in the tribal element of the Iranian population, beginning in the eleventh century, there was a rapid spread of military-feudal forms of landholding, in which large holding were given over tax free by the government in return for military or other service... It might be possible to dub the Iranian polity from the eleventh

⁸⁰ This inclination was not particular to Persia as Karl Jasper stated, "In China the small States and cities had achieved sovereign life under the powerless imperial rulers of the Chou dynasty; the political process consisted of the enlargement of small units through the subjection of other small units. In Hellas and the Near East small territorial units even, to some extent, those subjected by Persia enjoyed an independent existence." (See Jaspers K (1965) *The origin and goal of history*. Yale University Press, p. 4.)

⁸¹ However, gradually Islam, as a political phenomenon, was associated with the sultans and local rulers, some of whom in time became partners of the British and Dutch in a system of indirect rule. With remarkable ease, such rulers sought out their assigned niches in the hierarchies of Europe's aristocratic rankings. As individuals, the sultans, nizams, and princes took on a form of upper class Westernization which suggested that they, but not their subjects people, were "modernists," fitting comfortably into Europe's class-ridden society.

⁸² Mortimer E (1982) *Faith and Power: The Politics of Islam*. Random House, p. 37.

⁸³ Pye LW (1985) *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimension of Authority*. Harvard University Press, p. 273. Emphasis origin.

through the nineteenth century as one of *tribal feudalism*—a system which had a feudal type of service fief, even it lacked a feudal hierarchy—but was strongly colored by powerful and essential autonomous tribal enclave within the polity.”⁸⁴

The significance of tribal⁸⁵ rule in Iran cannot be overlooked or underestimated in a sense that the most persistent elements in Persian society have been the villages and tribes, as Ann Lambton states, “The most widespread group organization in time and place are the tribal group and the village group, both of which have played an immensely important role in Persian history.”⁸⁶ For one thing, the tribal interventions (invasions) explained the dynastic cycle in Iran in the post-Arab period to which Reza Arasteh claimed, “Tribal groups were responsible for all major invasions of Iran, except for the Greek conquest.”⁸⁷ Their successes, however, rarely reached beyond the military phase due to their inadequacies to control and manage vast territories with a relatively highly structured society like Iran, and the fact that their primary objective was revenue rather than governing.⁸⁸ Moreover, they lived separately from the rest of the population, and hence have trivial consideration for the rest of the population of the country. William Haas reiterated his conversation with a Lur [a man from the Lur tribe] in city of Khoramabad who “proudly asserted that he had killed fifteen Persian ... Now that such deed are no longer possible, he had taken to be more peaceful profession of dallal, an agent for everything, with which he was apparently well satisfied.”⁸⁹ In not so distant past, it is not uncommon in Iran that defenseless villagers suffered dreadfully from tribal raids. For instance, Richard Cottam states, “In 1907 the Turkoman tribe broke into revolt and engage in orgy of raiding and depredation ... After the Majlis had been close in 1908, the absolutist government of Mohammad Ali suffered the same tribal lawlessness that had been oppressed the earlier constitutional regime.”⁹⁰ On a similar note, Charles

⁸⁴ Keddie NR (2013) Iran: Religion, Politics and Society: Collected Essays. Rutledge, pp. 140–141.

⁸⁵ According to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, “There is no agreement, even today, on the precise criteria to define tribes and distinguish them from other groups. The effort to find a definition began long ago. One of the first thinkers to discuss the social characteristics of bedouin was the historian Ebn Ḳaldūn (732/1332–808/1406). In his analysis, they are ‘people who make their living by rearing animals ... and are obliged to move and roam in search of pastures ... and water.’ The cement which holds such people together in a tribe is the *‘aṣabīya* (communal pride) which springs from shared ancestry (*elteḥām*) and affinity (*ṣela-ye raḥem*) and finds expression in confederacy (*walā’*) or alliance (*ḥelf*). Consequently these peoples, unlike sedentary peoples, attach more importance to descent than to domicile.” See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asayer-tribes>. Also see Tapper R (1991) The tribes in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Iran. In: Avery P, Hambly G, Melville C (eds.) The Cambridge History of Iran Vol. 7. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that one-sixth to one-fourth of the Iranian population in 1950 were members of tribes. (See Murray J (1950) Iran today. An economic and descriptive survey. Teheran, 57–60, p. 29.)

⁸⁶ Arasteh AR (1964) Man and society in Iran. Brill Archive, p. 12.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸⁸ Jamalzadeh MA 1333 (1954) Sar va Tahe yek Karbas.

⁸⁹ Haas WS (1946) Iran. Columbia University Press, p. 55.

⁹⁰ Cottam RW (1979) Nationalism in Iran. University of Pittsburgh Press, p. 53.

Issawi noted that tribes in the highland like “Kurds, Lurs and Turkomans and others—who until recently defied the strongest governments in their mountain fastnesses and could usually raid at will and with impunity.”⁹¹

Another significance of tribal role in this book is related to the notion of as *Muluk Al Tawaif*, or roughly translated as Party Kings (kings of the factions) to imply the multitude of patch kingdoms that sprang up by the Abbasids’ dynastic policy to distinguish themselves from their predecessor (Umayyads).⁹² In doing so, they posed as the protagonists of Islam that manifests itself in the development of office of *qadi* (qazi in Farsi; a judge who investigates complaints and rule in accordance with Islamic law [sharia], which was the adoption of the Sassanian “investigation of complaints” by Islamic law).⁹³ This office evolved into one of the most forceful institutions of Islamic society. As J. Schacht noted, “*Qadis* were often made military commanders, and examples are particularly numerous in Muslim Spain and in the Maghrib [East] in general. They often played important political parts... They even became heads of principalities and founders of small dynasties from the fifth/eleventh century onwards, when the central power had disintegrated.”⁹⁴ Indeed, *Muluk Al Tawaif* is one of the vigorous outcomes of this development, which more distinctly prevailed in the Persian provinces around the ninth century that lasted until twentieth century Iran.⁹⁵ However, as a result of history (Arab subjectification of Iranian) as well as composition of the population, *Muluk Al Tawaif* took on a tribal (or kinship) form of autonomous governing entity that opposed the Caliphate authorities. For instance, in the ninth century, the Saffarid

⁹¹ Issawi C (ed) (1971) *The Economic History on Iran 1800–1914*. University of Chicago Press, p. 4.

⁹² Schacht J (2000) Law and Justice. In: Holt PM, Lambton AKS, Lewis B (eds) (2000) *The Cambridge History of Islam*, volume 2B. Cambridge University Press, p. 555.

⁹³ According to Schacht, “The *qadi* was not any more the legal secretary of the governor [like the Umayyads’ era]; he was normally appointed by the caliph, and until relieved of his office, he must apply nothing but the sacred law, without interference from the government. But theoretically independent though they were, the *qadis* had to rely on the political authorities for the execution of their judgments, and being bound by the formal rules of the Islamic law of evidence, their inability to deal with criminal cases became apparent. (Under the Umayyads, they or the governors themselves had exercised whatever criminal justice came within their competence.) Therefore the administration of the greater part of criminal justice was taken over by the police, and it remained outside the sphere of practical application of Islamic law.” (Schacht J (2000) Law and Justice. In: Holt PM, Lambton AKS, Lewis B (eds) (2000) *The Cambridge History of Islam*, volume 2B. Cambridge University Press, p 556). In term of “the adoption of the Sasanian ‘investigation of complaints’ by Islamic law” see *Ibid.*, p. 558.

⁹⁴ See Schacht J (2000) Law and Justice. In: Holt PM, Lambton AKS, Lewis B (eds) (2000) *The Cambridge History of Islam*, volume 2B. Cambridge University Press, p. 558.

⁹⁵ Others provided a different perspective. For instance, Homa Katouzian suggests that *Muluk Al Tawaif* could be described as, “any multiethnic or multi-national state or empire, although the decentralized character of the Arsacid state may have something to do with it.” (Katouzian H (2006) *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajar and the Emergence of the Pahlavis*. I. B. Tauris, p. 16).

reign, founded by Yaqub b. al-Laith (the son of a coppersmith in Sijistan [Sistan in Farsi]), “openly contested the political supremacy of the Abbasid Caliphate in Persia.”⁹⁶ From a broader historical perspective, since the death of the last king of the Sassanid Yazdgerd until the downfall of Qajar, Iran endured more than 150 families of independent or semi-independent reign. Overall, there were only five clans who ruled Iran, namely: Seljuq (1050–1199) and Ilkhanid (1200–1375), Safavid (1499–1736, a only native dynasty that ruled the country in eighth centuries), Afshar (1736–1750), and Qajar (1789–1925). It should be noted that while the development of office of qadi eventually had led to the fragmentation of the Islamized Iranian territories, in Spain such development produced utterly different outcome called *reconquista*, which implies a conquest of Islamic Spain by the Christians.⁹⁷ It is therefore not surprising that As J. Schacht noted, “Islamic law and justice as applied in Spain should have diverged in some respects (not very essential ones, it is true) from their counterparts in the East. Whereas the *qadi* was always in principle a single judge, it was taken for granted in Spain that he should sit ‘in council’ (*shura*).”⁹⁸

The historically rooted tribal role and development of Muluk Al Tawaif in polity of Iran underlined significant issues. For one thing, tribal role in Iranian polity is reminiscence of the two edged sword metaphor. On the one hand, various dynasties have come to power by tribal supports to which “all except the strongest government have delegated responsibility in the tribal areas to the tribal chiefs.”⁹⁹ On the other hand, the tribes intrinsically are inept in organization of governing, e.g., various administrative tasks, and hence proven an unstable basis on which to build a stable governmental institutions. In addition, the tribesman’s being orbits around his tribe and its vicinity that he had daily contact. In this respect, it is plausible to assume that his loyalty is, first and foremost belong to his clan, which is the major obstacle to the acquisition of a higher loyalty to either the nation or the state.

Furthermore, the prevalence of Muluk Al Tawaif conveys a clear signal of instability of Iranian monarchs, in which a success ascent to throne formula comprises the following; be from the family of a dominant tribal leader and value power above all and retain it with vengeance; mobilize your tribal fighting forces to subdue rival tribes or make alliance with them to establish your power over them; and finally, run

⁹⁶ Siddiqi AH (1942) Caliphate and kingship in mediaeval Persia. Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, p. 30. Siddiqi elaborated on this point and stated, when Yaqub was asked by Muhammad b. Tahir [a messenger of the Abbasid Caliphate] for a deed of investiture from the Caliph at the time of his conquest of Khurasan, Yaqub drew his sword under his prayer mat and told the messenger that was his deed and authority. (Ibid., p. 32).

⁹⁷ For instance, see Wasserstein D (1985) The Rise and Fall of the Party Kings. Princeton.

⁹⁸ See Cambridge History of Islam, volume 2B. Cambridge University Press, p. 558.

⁹⁹ Ann K. S. Lambton, *Islamic society in Persia*; an inaugural lecture delivered on 9 March 1954, p. 6.

over as many provinces as you can and then decline to acknowledge legitimacy of the incumbent ruler.¹⁰⁰ This is a scenario that occurred and reoccurred repeatedly in Persian history from the medieval time onward; in every instance ousting one tribal dynasty replaced by another tribal dynasty only to be replaced by other. Therefore, our kings, particularly in the post-Arab invasion period, were mere tribal men of dominant status, in which credentials were hereditary. The bonds between the king and his subjects were personal and based on exchange—the granting of favor, land, title, etc. by the king against the performance of services by the *subject*. In Persia, wrote Jean Cardin in his travel account, “Nothing is done without advantage being taken that is to say without expectation or fear.”¹⁰¹ Here lies a foundation of a servitude to power in Iran in which panegyrics prevailed and manifested in prevalence of a false person quality. Moreover, since hereditary often used to seal ineptness, Iranian monarchs through history were often instructed by numbers of genre of advice literature, or in Louise Marlow word *andarz* literature.¹⁰²

Moreover, Muluk Al Tawaif does not only convey a clear signal of dire status of monarchs, but it also illustrates a damaged configuration of Iranian nationhood. On the former, Adnan Mazarei claimed, “Ongoing struggles between central authorities and tribal powers was one of the key historical, political and sociological attribute in the post-Islam in Iran. Manners as well as ranges of struggles often determined the faith of various central government.”¹⁰³ Manifestation of the latter can be traced back to tendencies of some Iranian sovereigns who decided to hire “private army” in order to keep the country intact (as well as defend the country or conquer new territories). For instance, Jonas Hanway suggested that the 200,000

¹⁰⁰ Agha Muhammad Khan Qajar, the founder of Qajar dynasty, followed this recipe down to its smallest details. As an eldest son of the Qajar chieftain, Muhammad Husain Khan, Agha Muhammad came under protection of the Lur chieftain, Karim Khan Zand, founder of Zand dynasty who married Agha Muhammad’s aunt. As rumors of Lur chief death spread, Agha Muhammad fled to his tribal grounds, where he assembled an army of his kinsmen. He killed his own half-brother and then went on to take control of the vicinity provinces and soon ascended the throne.

¹⁰¹ Ferrier RW (1996) *A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin’s portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire*. I. B. Tauris, p. 113.

¹⁰² See Marlow L (2009) Surveying Recent Literature on the Arabic and Persian Mirrors for Princes Genre. *History Compass* 7(2):523–538. An ample example of such literature is the eleventh century *Qabus Nama* (Qabus’s treatise) of Kai Ka’us Ibn Iskandar, who was a prince of the Ziyarid dynasty in the South Caspian provinces. In the preface, the author has begun with a fatherly advice with these words: “Be quick of understanding therefore, my son to appreciate the value of your birth and not to disgrace it. Know then this world is plough land; as you sow, be it good or ill, you reap... now in this present world virtuous men are imbued with the spirit lions, where wicked men have the spirit of dogs, for while the dog consumes his prey where he sizes it the lion takes it elsewhere. Your hunting-ground is in this fleeting world and your quarry is knowledge and virtues conduct. Carry through your pursuit to the end here, so that when the time comes for enjoyment in the everlasting Adobe it may be with the greater degree of pleasure.” (See Arasteh AR (1964) *Man and society in Iran*. Brill Archive, p. 17.)

¹⁰³ Mazarei A 1348 (1969) *Economic and Social History of Iran and Iranian: From beginning to Safavi*. Dehkhoda Publisher, p. 289.

standing forces of Nader Shah¹⁰⁴, the founder of Afshar Dynasty, comprised mercenaries from different tribes including Abdalis (50,000) Afshar (20,000), Uzbek Tartars (6000), Turkmen (6000), and Baluch (6000).¹⁰⁵

As we arrived at the age of enlightenment, Iranian rulers in one way or another were forced to make attempts to move slowly out of the country's prolonged hibernation that lasted 600 years to which schooling and institutional organization were most notable among them. And so, a search for way out inevitably led us to the West and its development path. Fereydoon Adamiyat in the opening of the first chapter titled "Subjective evolution: rational theory" of his book *Andish-ye taraqqi va hokumat-e qanun: Asar'i Sepahsala* (the Notion of Progress and Role of Law: Sepahsalar era) reflected this sentiment as he wrote, "The new history of Asia, is the history of Western civilization's domination over the ancient Eastern land, whether we perceived it as productive or destructive factor makes no difference in the presence discourse. The point is, recognition of one of the profound historical phenomenon. The history of evolution of the West to the modern era began by its subjective (rational) evolution. Its main course was scientific certainty of knowledge and originality of mind; its subject was search in Natural law and Human endower in conquering nature; its goal was betterment of life."¹⁰⁶ This phase (or the contemporary period) will be examined briefly on two fronts, namely individualism of modern man and Oriental despotism (*mostabdeh-i sharqi* in Farsi).

The distinction between the object and subject (or awareness and appearance) that German transcendental philosophy fully puts into place has assisted our foresight and ends our cognitive seclusion, even though momentarily. Our sages finally recognized that the trembling ground in which we were standing is the outcome of our own doing, and hence come to realization that we have placed ourselves outside the history. The distinction between awareness and appearance also underlined the need for *self-knowledge*, which allowed people to see themselves not as a subject but rather by their proper name, citizens (figures in a political realm of the state). After all, Eric Hobsbawm reminds us that traditions are made: they are discovered and constructed.¹⁰⁷ The modern era changed our traditional perception of king in a sense that we

¹⁰⁴ Nader Shah is a controversial figure in contemporary Iranian history. It has been suggested that he was a mere bandit who took control of the country. Nevertheless, as observed, "The mere fact that the dynasty he founded and the country managed to survive into the twentieth century free of official colonial status say something of his ability." (See Ghani C (2000) *Iran and the Rise of Reza Shah: From Qajar Collapse to Pahlavi Rule*. I. B. Tauris, p. 2.)

¹⁰⁵ Potts DT (2014) *Nomadism in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era*. Oxford University Press, p. 256. Also see Hanway J (1753) an historical account of the British trade over the Caspian Sea: With a journal of travels from London through Russia into Persia; and back again through Russia, Germany, and Holland to which are added the revolutions of Persia during the present century, with the particular history of the great usurper Nader Kouli. London. Another example is Karim Khan Zand, of Zand Dynasty, "who was able to weld together an army from the different Iranian pastoral tribes of the Zagros." See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zand-dynasty>.

¹⁰⁶ Adamiyat F 1351(1970) *Andish-ye taraqqi va hokumat-e qanun: Asar'i Sepahsala* (The Politics of Reform in Iran 1858–1880). Karazme publication, p. 13. Translation by the author.

¹⁰⁷ Hobsbawm E, Ranger T (Eds) (2012) *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–14.

were no longer his subjects as his *children*. Fatherhood was different for a modern Western bourgeois society, which rose to power and recognition in the second half of the eighteenth century. A male citizen of early-nineteenth-century Western society would have recognized the ruling sovereign as his *Landesvater* but still insisted on his own ruling power at home. Speechless and subjectified Iranian individual has learned a power that enables him to either question or confirm as he sees fit.

The idea of the empowered *individual* is a contradictory offspring of both Enlightenment and romantic thought. Still a subject of the absolutist Brandenburg-Prussia king Fredrick II, “Immanuel Kant declared that each person was free to express himself and decide on his action—within limit, of course.”¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Western writers began to explore these limits as part of their inner life. To understand who and what each person was, individuals had to extend their being and reflect their past as a fictional continuity of self. This is the main reason why flourished autobiographical writings of late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the West were more about imagining of one’s self than customary accounts of famous kings or illustrious family. For instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau declared his independence in *Confession*, in which he considered himself neither famous nor important, but simply as different from any other man. In a similar vein, from the nineteenth century onward writing an autobiography thrive and signified local imagined self-knowledge and individual’s self-realization in Iran.¹⁰⁹ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, a well-known novelist, expressed a similar sentiment when he stated, “my intention in writing ethnography was to achieve a self-realization and a new evaluation of the native environment according to our own measures.”¹¹⁰

And yet, Iranian individualism appears quite different than those transpired in the West. This is mainly due to the fact that the notion of individual self-knowledge transpired in the West as cultural enlightenment to which its essence lay in a unity of community that formed consciousness of social relations among individual members. To clarify the point let considered, for instance, one of the celebrated notions of eighteenth century, namely individual pursuit of self-interest. Adam Smith, a key figure in the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment, was able to demonstrate the condition under which the common good would prevail in a society of individu-

¹⁰⁸ Ben-Amos D, Weissberg L (Eds) (1999) Cultural memory and the construction of identity. Wayne State University Press, p. 9. It should also be noted that when Fredrick II ascended to the throne of Brandenburg-Prussia in 1740, he immediately announced that every subject might now “seek his salvation after own fashion,” lifted all censorship of newspapers in Berlin, and recalled Christian Wolf from exile. (See Jones D (2015) Censorship: A world encyclopedia. Routledge, p. 1084.)

¹⁰⁹ In this study, I am mainly pointing to autobiography (*zendeginameh* in Farsi), rather than other types of ethnography writings like travel accounts (*safarnameh*), chronicles (*vaqayehnameh*), or written documents based on scholarly trends such as Abu Reihan Biruni’s studies of India and Iran, which is dated back to the eleventh century. For an excellent and informative study of ethnography writings in Iran and self-knowledge aspect of such writings, see Fazel N (2006) Politics of Culture in Iran: Anthropology, politics and society in the twentieth century. Routledge.

¹¹⁰ Fazel N (2006) Politics of Culture in Iran: Anthropology, politics and society in the twentieth century. Routledge, p. 116.

als pursuing their own interests centered around the limits of behavior considered legitimates by those actors. Converted (viewed) in term of “enlightened self-interest,” these limits have been accepted as the basis for retaining a social optimum from individuals attempting to maximize their own interests. From this example, one can outline a vivid picture that is missing in Iranian individualism, namely, the absence of greater sense of social optimal and civic virtue, which cannot be planted through borrowed notions but rather must prevail and establish in men’s hearts.

On this note, Alexis de Tocqueville had much to say on the relevancy of these absences in the pre-Revolutionary France than any fashionable Western notions such as freedom and democracy, or teaching of Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, etc. For instance, in case of individuals’ self-interest, Tocqueville identifies a crucial difference between the citizens of the United State and those of his own France: “I do not think, on the whole, that there is more egotism (selfishness) among us than in America; the only difference is that there it is enlightened—here it is not. Every American knows when to sacrifice some of his private interests to save the rest; we want to save everything, and often we lose it all. Everybody I see about me seems bent on teaching his contemporaries, by precept and example, that what is useful is never wrong.”¹¹¹ To attain the spirit of this sacrifice, we must collectively realize that our future can no longer be sustained by the memories and narratives of the past, but through liberated grandchildren from the condition of over-administrated society that mutated all of us into a vindictive community with bizarre whims.

The second point which I would emphasize in the phase III is the notion of Oriental despotism (*mostabdeh-i sharqi*).¹¹² Let us begin from the time that the French gazed

¹¹¹ Tocqueville AD (1990) Democracy in America: vol. 2. Vintage Books, p. 67. Prior to that, Tocqueville explained, “The principle of self-interest rightly understood produces no great acts of self-sacrifice, but it suggests daily small acts of self-denial. By itself it cannot suffice to make a man virtuous; but it disciplines a number of persons in habits of regularity, temperance, moderation, foresight, self-command; and if it does not lead men straight to virtue by the will, it gradually draws them in that direction by their habits. If the principle of interest rightly understood were to sway the whole moral world, extraordinary virtues would doubtless be more rare; but I think that gross depravity would then also be less common. The principle of interest rightly understood perhaps prevents men from rising far above the level of mankind, but a great number of other men, who were falling far below it, are caught and restrained by it. Observe some few individuals, they are lowered by it; survey mankind, they are raised.” The page that contained both passages is accessible at: http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_08.htm.

¹¹² My position is that the term Oriental is pseudo-concept that was popularized by European discourse (e.g., traveler accounts) about “the East” especially those concerned with such sweeping concepts as “oriental despotism,” and hence did not respond to a desire to understand Eastern. They were mainly concerned with European issues and debates, i.e., the monarchy of France under Louis XIV. Nevertheless, I am also convinced that a sheer belief that these impulses were formed for purpose within a purely European domestic context does not necessarily discredit various explanations and analyses as long as they convey issues that are *compatible* to those in the East. In fact, by assessing, for instance the way travel accounts, helped transform the concept from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, of which I argue that oriental despotism is rather a compelling tool for interpreting information gathered about the orient, one which served a common intellectual purpose, despite important differences of opinion in Europe, about the nature of royal power and the way in which it had transformed into a decadent order in the East.

toward the turqueries and the menace of Oriental despotism was irritating political idea in Europe, as Alain Grosrichard has noted.¹¹³ At the time, the term Oriental despotism, as a system of total domination and political brutality was a standard theme in the French Jansenist-constitutionalist discourse.¹¹⁴ The core philosophical debate on French monarchy was centered on the notion of despotism, as thinkers like Rousseau, Montesquieu, and Voltaire made use of the concept in promoting their own distinct version of a monarchy. For instance, for Montesquieu, the idea of despotism is “When the savage of Louisiana are desirous of fruit, they cut the tree to the root and gather the fruit.”¹¹⁵ It is important to note that while Orient is geographically far removed from the continent, its attraction for Europeans can be explained by Freud’s words, “That class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.”¹¹⁶

To understand the concept of despotism, one must first recognize its common form, namely a regime. If Montesquieu’s vision is taken as the premise, then all governments may be reduced to three kinds: (a) republican, in which the people, or part of the people, possesses sovereign power; (b) monarchic, or the government by one person by fixed and established law; and (c) despotic, in which the ruler is unrestrained by any other law than of his own will.¹¹⁷ Within these categories, the fundamental laws of democracy chiefly lie in ancient Greece to which the rights and methods of suffrage establish. In short, the people should make the laws and elect its magistrates, but should not govern. They should leave the execution of the laws to their representatives. Based on this delineation, Iranians never experienced these rights since for a majority of the history, the country had been ruled by some sort of monarchical state, be it an ancient nobility (but not in a sense of European aristocracy)¹¹⁸, Caliph’s

¹¹³ Grosrichard A (1998) *The Sultan’s court: European fantasies of the east*. Verso, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ For French perceptions of the Ottoman Empire as the realm of Oriental despotism and for the use of this image in French Politics of the Period. (See Kaiser T (2006) *The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture*, in *Early Modern Europe: Issues and Interpretations*. In: J. B. Collins and K. L. Taylor (eds). Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Oxford.) Moreover, Jansenism was a Catholic theological movement, founded by Dutch theologian Cornelius Jansen. It primarily prevailed in France and emphasized on original sin, human depravity, the necessity of divine grace, and predestination.

¹¹⁵ de Secondat C baron de Montesquieu (2011) *The Spirit of the Laws*. (Trans: Thomas Nugent). Cosimo Classics, p. 66. See also de Secondat C baron de Montesquieu (2011) *The Spirit of the Laws*. (Trans: Thomas Nugent). Cosimo Classics, p. 70.

¹¹⁶ Royle N (2003) *The Uncanny*. Manchester University Press, p. 41.

¹¹⁷ de Secondat C baron de Montesquieu (2011) *The Spirit of the Laws*. (Trans: Thomas Nugent). Cosimo Classics, pp. 30–35. See also http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_03.htm.

¹¹⁸ According to *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, a class of Iranian nobility called Azad, which rooted back to the “Aryan conquerors, who adapted the term to distinguish themselves from the indigenous population. The Fourfold division of the nobility is attested in inscriptions from the Sasanian period, which show that in Sasanian times the *azāds* constituted the fourth and last rank of nobles. They were preceded by the *šahryārs* (Mid. Pers. *šhrd’r*, Parth. *hštrdr*) ‘kings’ or ‘dynasts,’ the *wispuhrs* (*BRBYTA[n]*) ‘princes of the royal blood, members of the great families,’ and the *wuzurgs* (*LBA[n]*, *RBA[n]*, Mid. Pers. plur. obl. also *wcl’k’n*) ‘grandees’ (qq. v).” See <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/azad-older-azad>. While Queen Victoria also known as the Grandmother of Europe since her offspring ruled the continent exemplifies the European aristocracy.

appointees, clam rulers, etc. In fact, throughout the history, the country has continually reasserted itself, and hence has acquired distinct political and cultural characters`. This is the main reason why a emergence of despotism in Iran appeared to be solidified when Iranians, unlike Europeans, e.g., British, have failed to remove all the intermediate, subordinate, and dependent powers that formed their monarchy, and hence have failed to break out of the stereotyped Iranian monarchy.¹¹⁹ Moreover, in Europe and unlike Iran, the leaning in favor of as large a measure of popular control as possible appeared in the remarks on the aristocratic form of government, of which Venice furnishes an ample example.¹²⁰ However, a most compatible European monarch to that of Iran was in Poland, which according to James Mackinnon, "the greater part of the people was in a state of slavery to those who rule."¹²¹ Ironically, it has been suggested that the absolute Polish monarchical power was a precursor to modern concepts of democracy,¹²² constitutional monarchy,¹²³ and federalism.¹²⁴

The next step to understand despotism is an answer to the following question: how a monarchical system turns into despotism? Among a few responses to this question, Montesquieu's reply is more revealing in the content of the present discussion since he begins with how a democracy is undermined: "...democracies are subverted when the people despoil the senate, the magistrates, the judges of their functions, so monarchies are corrupted when the prince insensibly deprives societies or cities of their privileges. In the former case the multitude usurp the power, in the latter it is usurped by a single person. 'The destruction of the dynasties of Ts'in and Soui,' says a Chinese author, 'was owing to this: the princes, instead of confining themselves, like their ancestors, to a general inspection, the only one worthy of

¹¹⁹For instance, by the eighteenth century, the new position of prime minister in England began to assume greater power while the monarchy represented by the most influential European aristocrat, Queen Victoria, sank into a largely ceremonial role. (Chilcoat L, Acciano R (2005) *Western Europe*. Lonely Planet, p. 132).

¹²⁰For instance, the Great Council of Venice, a political organ of the Republic of Venice between 1172 and 1797, was anything, but a primitive institution composed of the prince on the one side and the people on the other. Its members "were each of them the assembly of a privileged class, an assembly in which every member of that class had a right to a place, an assembly which might be called popular as far as the privileged class was concerned though rigidity oligarchic as regarded the excluded classes ... The nobility which thus formed at Venice is very model of a civic nobility, a nobility which is also an aristocracy." (See *The Britannica E* (1890) *A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature* Vol. 17. R. S. Peale & Company, p. 528.)

¹²¹Mackinnon J (1902) *The growth and decline of the French monarchy*. Longmans, Green, and Company. New York and Bombay, p. 705.

¹²²Janowski M (2001) *Polish Liberal Thought*. Central European University Press, p. 3.

¹²³Schroeder PW (1996) *The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848*. Oxford University Press, p. 84; Ludwikowski RR (1997) *Constitution-Making in the Region of Former Soviet Dominance*. Duke University Press, p. 34; Sanford G (2002) *Democratic Government in Poland: Constitutional Politics Since 1989*. Palgrave, p. 11.

¹²⁴Gella A (1998) *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and Her Southern Neighbors*. SUNY Press, p. 13.

a sovereign, wanted to govern everything immediately by themselves' ... Monarchy is destroyed when a prince thinks he shows a greater exertion of power in changing than in conforming to the order of things; when he deprives some of his subjects of their hereditary employments to bestow them arbitrarily upon others; and when he is fonder of being guided by fancy than judgment. Again, it is destroyed when the prince, directing everything entirely to himself, calls the state to his capital, the capital to his court, and the court to his own person. It is destroyed, in fine, when the prince mistakes his authority, his situation and the love of his people, and when he is not fully persuaded that a monarch ought to think himself secure, as a despotic prince ought to think himself in danger."¹²⁵

This observation outlines an account of Iranian despotic monarchies. The government of Persia wrote Jean Chardin almost 300 years ago, "is a monarchy—despotic and absolute, since it is entirely in the hands of a single man who is the sovereign chief both in spiritual as well as in worldly affairs; the complete master of the life and goods of his subjects. There is certainly no other sovereign in the world who is as absolute as the king of Persia; for one completely and faithfully heeds his orders without examining his reasons or the circumstances, even when one sees as plainly as day that there is rarely any sense of justice in his injunctions and that they often lack even common sense ... Nothing can hinder the extravagant nature of his capriciousness—not honesty, not merit, not devotion, not past service. It takes nothing more than a change in his fancies, suggested by a single word from his mouth, to overthrow in a second people who are well established and most deserving of their status; to deprive them of their possessions and their life; and all of this can occur without any type of trial and without an obligation to verify the crime of which they are accused."¹²⁶

Montesquieu's remark appears to be based mainly on Oriental history, and hence his diagnosis of despotism rooted in the ancient Orient, and to some extent by the medieval Europe, e.g., monarchy of mediaeval France. And yet, Joan-Pau Rubies claimed, "Few examples within the history of ideas seem as likely to fit within the controversial 'orientalist' thesis popular in post-colonial historiography as the concept of 'oriental despotism,' especially as it was famously formulated by Montesquieu (albeit ultimately on the basis of Aristotle) as central to the political thought of the Enlightenment."¹²⁷ Montesquieu's interpretation of the term is therefore formed as a distinction between European monarchy, e.g., the Petrine reforms in Russia, and an intact status quo Oriental despotism.¹²⁸ In this sense, despotism is

¹²⁵ de Secondat C baron de Montesquieu (2011) *The Spirit of the Laws*. (Trans: Thomas Nugent). Cosimo Classics, pp. 125–226. The quotation can also be access at: http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol_08.htm.

¹²⁶ de Secondat CL, de Montesquieu B (2008) *Persian Letters* (trans: Margareta Mauldon). Oxford University Press, p. 238. The similar quote appears in Ferrier RW (1996) *A journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's portrait of a seventeenth-century empire*. New Age International, p. 70.

¹²⁷ Rubiés JP (2005) Oriental despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu. *Journal of Early Modern History: Contacts, Comparisons. Contrasts* 9(1-2), p. 109.

¹²⁸ Ram H (2006) *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire*. University of Wisconsin Press, p. 103.

merely an abuse of monarchy, “as demagogy is of democracy, and oligarchy of aristocracy.”¹²⁹ In its most organic form, and unlike its European counterpart, an Oriental despotic state refers to the entity in which all subjects of the empire serve to the *pleasure* of a single person, the ruler.¹³⁰ The Oriental despot, observed Alain Grosrichard, “does not experience *jouissance* of power. He has *jouissance* only on condition that his power is exercised by someone else, and he hands over this exercise of power only because he gives all his time to his *jouissance*.”¹³¹ This is a state in which education (not schooling) hardly exists because knowledge jeopardizes a despot and ignorance sustains him. The primary purpose of an Oriental despotic state is to have an oblivion subject, and hence men are thought to be “good slaves,” as Jean Chardin observed, [in Persia] “Bodies and fortunes are complete slaves to a despotic and arbitrary power, as are spirit and courage also.”¹³²

An Oriental despotic state is a form of government, abandoned to the vicious caprice of a lazy, hedonistic, and decadent ruler, who is himself the slave of his realm, while loading millions with no care other than that of gratification of vulgar self-well, and without a council to enlighten him in affairs. In contrast with the majority of European monarchies, Oriental despots restrain their confines, so Chinese built the wall; Ottomans sanctioned public clock because “the authority of their muezzins [a man who calls Muslims to prayer from the minaret of a mosque] and their ancient rites would thereby impaired.”¹³³; and Iranian suspicious of all European infidels whom “they look upon to be some little island in the North Sea, where there is nothing to be found that is either good or handsome; this explains why, they say, the Europeans travel all over the world in search of fine things, and of those which are necessary, since they are destitute of them.”¹³⁴ They tighten their grip over power in concentric and centralized space, in which “All the wealth the country contains flows towards the despotic City, which will swallow it up in its

¹²⁹ Mackinnon J (1902) *The Growth and Decline of the French Monarchy*. Longman, Green & Company, p. 711.

¹³⁰ Another example that outlined the difference between these two of system has been noted by X. DE Planhol: “The system of state ownership [in oriental system] was accompanied by the organization of the land into *iqta'* [a practice of tax farming concessions granted to soldier-officials in return for military service. The peculiarity of the *iqta'* is that the grant is practically detached from the land, which owes no duty in service or labour, but merely a fixed payment determined by the central authority. Thus the possessor has no real interest in the improvement of the working of the soil; the Oriental system of lordship displays hardly any of those personal bonds which constitute the better feature of the Western feudal system, the lord's interest in his vassal, and use of him as a worker and not simply as a payer of taxes. On the other hand, the system of inheritance does not recognize primogeniture, another guarantee against state absolutism.” See de Planhol X (2000) *The Geographical Setting [of Islamic Society and Civilization]*. In: Holt PM, Lambton AKS, Lewis B (eds) (2000) *The Cambridge History of Islam*, volume 2B. Cambridge University Press, p. 460.

¹³¹ Grosrichard A (1998) *The Sultan's court: European fantasies of the east*. Verso, p. 76.

¹³² Ferrier RW (1996) *A journey to Persia: Jean Chardin's portrait of a seventeenth-century empire*. New Age International, p. 113.

¹³³ Lewis B (2001) *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. Oxford University Press, p. 41.

¹³⁴ Montesquieu reiterating Jean Chardin's comment. (See de Secondat CL, de Montesquieu B (2008) *Persian Letters* (trans: Margareta Mauldon). Oxford University Press, p. 238.)

center, from where it will never emerge. This is an absurd economy, its only goal the *jouissance* of the One, not the country's enrichment; its principle is *coupure*, the cutting-off of all that circulates (blood, merchandise, currency)."¹³⁵ Referring to the King of Persia's treasure, Jean Chardin states that it is "a true abyss, for everything in it is lost, and very few things come out of it."¹³⁶

In closing comment, the reader should note that I am well aware that uncovering the history of the idea of despotism, and its application to Iranian history entails going beyond European travelers' accounts or related political and philosophical thoughts in Europe since various sources, e.g., empirical or theoretical, may have related to different kind of objectives. Having said that, one must also admit that discussing the extent to which oriental despotism was anything other than a European pretense is extremely telling in respect to the European political thoughts and ideas to which Iranian zealously pursue, on the one hand, and observations of foreign travel of what were most observable, on the other hand. In this content, my examination presented above is that while it is accurate that much of what was written about the despotism of oriental monarchies was ill-informed and trapped within an internal European perception at the time, and while much was also vulnerable to political manipulation and demagoguery, there are abundant lessons to be learned about ourselves. This is due, first, to the fact that the eighteenth-century Europeans were often genuinely concerned with understanding their world, including East; second, they developed empirical methods to which the interaction between direct observation and conceptual development was the primary key of investigation in addition to intellectual and practical discourses; third, and as a consequence, notions such as the "oriental despotism" were not imagination bounded to their pretend, but rather, convincing methodology for interpreting the observation collected about the orient lands. The point is not that the Ottoman, Persian (as well as Mughal, and Chinese) states *were* despotisms at the time, but rather that it *made sense* to define them as such, and hence the definition was not always, nor even primarily, arbitrary.¹³⁷ Various accounts of Iranian's attributions that presented above reaffirmed this claim. As a corollary, what is most important about the concept is not precise and formalized formulation given by Montesquieu or any other observers, but rather the existing condition in which the people tolerated, endured, and most importantly perpetuated.

In retrospect, we are inheritors of the splendid civilization in the world that none but Italy "can pretend to have been so deeply interlaced with the fate of humanity ... never ceased to be *dramatis personate*, important participants of the world drama whatever their role, actor or spectator, agent or victim."¹³⁸ We are successors

¹³⁵ Grosrichard A (1998) *The Sultan's court: European fantasies of the east*. Verso, p. 68.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See Rubiés JP (2005) Oriental despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu. *Journal of Early Modern History: Contacts, Comparisons*. Contrasts 9(1-2), p. 113.

¹³⁸ Haas WS (1946) *Iran*. Columbia University Press, p. 1.

of disciples that regarded obedience of the Prophet message as absolute duty, but disunited in our national unity that manifests in our pluralistic union in which “All” is periphery and margin, and “We” are held together by that absence. And finally, sponsors of the divine mission of despot that endure paternalistic reigns (which once was prevailed in medieval European thought) in a sense that “Iranians passively endured or actively avoided and manipulated *doulat*’s [government’s] intrusions, rather than questioning them.”¹³⁹ In this light, one can plausibly assert that we have a history in which one could draw valuable lessons and form ones’ whereabouts in human civilization.

However, this is as far as the role of history can take us mainly due to the fact that we failed to attain what our history offered. Iranian history made its mark on the notion of gratification in which people justifiably tend to see themselves as a *proud people*; the sentiment that is generally shared by the rest of the world.¹⁴⁰

This, nonetheless, does not explain how Iranians have come into “being” as “We” are today. For one thing, in Iran, the pronoun “we” conveys a rather vague connotation in that it has no direct guidance as to whom the reference is made. “We” can be assigned referential meaning only when one knows who is using it. More precisely, the referential meaning of “We” is different for every speaker of a different clan background such as Kurds, Turks, Fars, and Baloch. This outcome, as mentioned before, is mainly due to the fact that Iranians have failed to form a united and cohesive nation in a sense of a contemporary formalization of nation-state.

Moreover, “We” failed to constitute a united stand against threats to our nationhood, and precariously averted facing them. For instance, the Qajar concessions, which acknowledged Russian sovereignty over the entire area north of the Aras River (territory comprising present-day Armenia and Republic of Azerbaijan) as well as the 1857 Treaty of Paris, are indications of how the public remained indifferent.¹⁴¹ There was neither recorded resistance in annexed territories, nor any uproar or indignation in the country as a whole against these humiliating

¹³⁹ De Groot J (2000) Religion, culture and politics in Iran: From the Qajars to Khomeini. IB Tauris, p. 141.

¹⁴⁰ Perhaps this may provide a reason that some of us deal with our past history through what Svetlana Boym calls *restorative nostalgia*, in which “stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a trans-historical reconstruction of the lost home... [It] does not think of itself as nostalgia, but rather as truth and tradition.” (Boym S (2001) *The future of nostalgia* Basic Books. New York, p. xviii).

¹⁴¹ It should be noted that a lack of resistance against occupation also prevails in other countries. For instance, “In highly nationalistic France, resistance to the German occupation [during the WWII] developed late, grew slowly, and was never a threat to German aims. French patriots voluntarily led Vichy France into collaboration with Germany... Collaboration with Germany was widely supported by French elites and passively accommodated by the mass of nationalistic Frenchmen.” (Kocher MA, Lawrence A, Monteiro NP (2013). *The Rabbit in the Hat: Nationalism and Resistance to Foreign Occupation*. APSA 2013 Annual Meeting Paper). The difference between us and majority of others, however, appears when one intends to open the discussion of the topic!

surrendering.¹⁴² And yet, in approximately the same period, we witnessed the tobacco uprising (1891–1892), in which the monarch was forced to revert his position and complied with the popular demand. Indeed, Iranians seldom engaged in ventures that encompassed the whole, and instead they often valued novellas that painted with flavor that only resemble such undertaking. Thus, permanently remained in the stigma of our own doing to which proclaimed utopia-like fables turned into dystopian experiences. To confirm this observation, we do not even need to search hard through history since the ample proof stands tall in our recent past.

At the dawn of constitutional revolution of 1906–1907, as the ancient structure fall “without a voice being raised on its behalf,”¹⁴³ Iran allegedly broke away from the yoke of despotism and subjectification, to the extent that Edward Browne described the Constitutionalist “party” as one that stood for progress, freedom, tolerance, and above all for national independence insisted and “Persia for the Persians.”¹⁴⁴ Yet, there are evidences that refute this century old claim. First, the country was still largely run by landlords, merchant guilds, and aristocrats as the makeup of the first Majlis (assembly—the term took on the meaning of an elected, representative legislature, not simply a traditional advisory council¹⁴⁵) clearly indicated.¹⁴⁶ In fact, during the first decade of constitutional era the government had changed 36 times and only in 1 year the executive power (cabinet) hanged from one group to another 6 times. Second, and despite the fact that almost all of the constitutional text was formed on borrowed ideas from secular constitutions elsewhere, the adopted text was far from being secular. This clear contradiction begs the question

¹⁴² Another example of a nationwide lack of response was during the last year of occupation of the country by the Soviet Union and Britain, in which the Soviet provided support to the autonomists Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and helped to create the Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan in 1945. However, the episode ended as the Soviet conceded the United Nations Security Council demand, and pulled its troops out on May 6, 1946. On the similar note, Shahrokh Meskoob claimed that “after the World War II ended, even before the allies armies existed Iran, several provinces and eras declared their independence. Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Luristan, Azerbaijan, Khorasan and Baluchistan declared their independence. At every opportunity, Bakhtiari and Qashqais moved toward Isfahan and Shiraz and Nuyib Hussian in Kashan begun looting and slaughter. Near Tehran in Zargandeh and Qholhak the national government had no power, Russian embassy and British Embassy has appointed their own personal in order to take care of daily work and no one have security over his lives or properties.” (See Meskoob S 1386(2007) *Tales of Literature and Social Story*. Farzan Publisher, p. 7. Translated by the author.)

¹⁴³ I borrowed the phrase from Louis Francis Salzman. (See Salzman LF (1901) *The History of the Parish of Hailsham: The Abbey of Otham and the Priory of Michllham*. Farncombe, p. 9.)

¹⁴⁴ Brown E (1910) *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*. Cambridge University Press, p. xx.

¹⁴⁵ Thompson EF (2013) *Justice Interrupted*. Harvard University Press, p. 79.

¹⁴⁶ According to Reza Arasteh, the members of Majlis in 1906–1907 comprised merchant guild, aristocrats, landlords, and clerics. It is noteworthy that many in the first Majlis affixed titles like *Haji* or *Sayyad* to their name, which indicated their religiosity and social distinction. In direct contrast, many delegates of the national assembly in 1947–1948 were designated the title *Doctor*, which illustrates they were most likely the product of Western higher education. (See Araste R (1962) *Education and Social Awakening in Iran: 1850–1960*. E. J. Brill, p. 32.)

of how do the religious laws coexist and be compatible with the laws opted by the people representatives.¹⁴⁷

Moreover, the text is clearly a manifestation of the conflict of interest between the role of the monarchy, government, parliament, political factions and their vested interests, and the role of the Shi'it authorities.¹⁴⁸ For instance, the first Article of the supplementary law of 1906 confirmed that the Shi'i character of the nation was accentuated over and above the diverse national characters of the Iranian people by stating, "The official religion of Persia is Islam, according to the orthodox Ja'fari doctrine of the *Ithna Ashariyya* (Church of the Twelve Imams), which faith the Shah of Persia must profess and promote."¹⁴⁹ The second Article follows by calling for creation of a permanent council of ulama with veto power over the legislative body, Majlis. According to this Article, laws ratified by the Majlis must be in accordance with Shati'a.¹⁵⁰ The end outcome, the supplement of the 1906 Constitution, appeared

¹⁴⁷For an informative and a critical review of the 1907 constitution, see Bakhtiari B (1996) Parliamentary Politics in Revolutionary Iran: The Institutionalization of Factional Politics. University Press of Florida, Chapter one. For an excellent comparative discussion of the 1907 constitution, see Afary J (2013) The place of Shi'i clerics in the first Iranian Constitution. Critical Research on Religion 1(3):327–346, December 2013.

¹⁴⁸Of course this contradiction was not hidden from those who campaigned for secular reforms. The paper *Sur-i Israfil* instigated a major scandal by suggesting that the "ulama" should keep their hands out of politics and by satirizing the mullas as "money grabbers" who concealed their slimy interests with sublime sermons. "This was the first anticlerical article to be published in Iran, but it was not to be the last. *Habl alMalin* [newspaper published in Calcutta, Tehran and Rast] ridiculed the authors of the constitution for having instituted a supreme committee to judge the religious legitimacy of all bills introduced into the National Assembly: "This makes as little sense as having a supreme committee of five merchants to scrutinize the commercial validity of all laws deliberated by the people's representatives." The same paper started uproar when it placed the whole blame for the decline of the Middle East on clerical ignorance, superstitions, petty-mindedness, obscurantism, dogmatism, and insistent meddling in politics." (See Abrahamian E (1982) *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Princeton University Press, p. 92.)

¹⁴⁹Brown E (1910) *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*. Cambridge University Press, p. 372.

¹⁵⁰Here is the entire Article 2, "At no time must any legal enactment of the Sacred National Consultative Assembly, established by the favour and assistance of His Holiness the Imam of the Age [the Messiah] (may God hasten his glad Advent!), the favour of His Majesty the Shahinshah of Islam (may God immortalize his reign!), the care of the Proofs of Islam (may God multiply the like of them!), and the whole people of the Persian nation, be at variance with the sacred principles of Islam or the laws established by His Holiness the Best of Mankind (on whom and on whose household be the Blessing of God and His Peace!) It is hereby declared that it is for the learned doctors of theology (the '*ulama*')—may God prolong the blessing of their existence!—to determine whether such laws as may be proposed are or are not conformable to the principles of Islam; and it is therefore officially enacted that there shall at all times exist a Committee composed of not less than five mujtahids or other devout theologians, cognizant also of the requirements of the age, [which committee shall be elected] in this manner. The ulama and Proofs of Islam shall present to the National Consultative Assembly the names of twenty of the '*ulama*' possessing the attributes mentioned above; and the Members of the National Consultative Assembly shall, either by unanimous acclamation, or by vote, designate five or more of these, according to the exigencies of the time, and recognize these as Members, so that they may carefully discuss and consider all matters proposed in the Assembly, and reject and repudiate, wholly or in part, any such proposal which is at variance with the Sacred Laws of Islam, so that it shall not obtain the title of legality. In such matters the decision of this Ecclesiastical Committee shall be followed and obeyed, and this article shall continue unchanged until the appearance of His Holiness the Proof of the Age (may God hasten his glad Advent!)." Ibid., pp. 372–373.

to endorse two separated sets of law, one of which is “institutionalized clerical authority,” while the other restrained clerics influence in daily operation of governing the county.¹⁵¹ Mangol Bayat also noted the similar observation when he states, “per-modern Shia Iran witnessed the gradual emergence of two distinct but interdependent centers of legitimate authority, religion (*din*) and temporal (*daulat*).”¹⁵²

The 1979 Iranian revolution shared some commonality with the Constitutional Revolution as it officially disclosed Shi’ism as the collective national ideology. The main principle of 1979 revolution, its declaration if you would, was to end Monarchy in Iran. It was a precarious objective but nonetheless accurate. Precarious because it is easier to denounce the past (history) than it is to do without it; accurate because the Pahlavi monarch has been drifted for some time into oblivion and seemed out of touch with the reality. In addition, Iranians appeared to perceive monarchical mechanism of governance historically obsolete and irrelevant. The revolution declaration was characterized as precarious because it was conceived by a *system of alliances*¹⁵³ with incompatible interests framed into ambivalence. It was divided along dichotomous axes such as modernity/tradition, nationality/religiosity, and petty-bourgeoisie/left ideologues, and hence did not exceed beyond a mere coalition in a sense that there was no genuine unifying ideology¹⁵⁴ to constitute a coherent force—those who wanted to establish Islam as the pillar of a national government and those who had come to nurture a certain desire for an idol, or sought neither absolutism nor national despotism but a certain series of righteousness fetishized by “Western thoughts.”

It is obvious now, as it was then, that such divided coalition is doomed to fail at its inception because it erroneously presupposes the absolute unity among those who constituted it. More importantly, the absence of unifying ideology compounded by conflicting interests has driven the coalition into irredeemable division. As a result, one group became dominant over all others because of two distinct but inter-related factors: (a) the dominant group was able to mobilize and reach the masses to gain legitimacy and support; and (b) others, the petty bourgeoisie intellectuals most notably among them, discovered that their connections to the mass was either non-existence or extremely thin, at best.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ For instance, the article 46 of supplementary laws stated, “The appointment and dismissal of Minister is effected by virtue of the Royal Decree of the King,” and subsequent articles granted the king the right to grant “military rank, decoration and other honorary distinction” (Art. 47), “the choice of officials as heads of various government department, whether internal or foreign” (Art. 48), “The supreme command of all the forces” (Art. 50).

¹⁵² Bayat M (1991) Iran’s first revolution: Shi’ism and the constitutional revolution of 1905–1909. Oxford University Press, p. 5.

¹⁵³ A *system of alliances* is a term proposed by Gramsci for a coalition with an aim to mobilize masses against the ruling state (capitalism and the bourgeois state). In Gramsci thoughts such a coalition succeeds in gaining consent of the board masses of who might have been adversaries and have conflicting interests but joined forces to dispose of the despotic establishment.

¹⁵⁴ In this study, an ideology is perceived as a doctrine with two dimensions: (a) objectives: how society should be organized and (b) methods: the most appropriate way to obtain such objectives.

¹⁵⁵ Domination, in this study, perceived both as a process and an idea—as one of the most intrinsic attributes of human to politics and political philosophy, and hence conveys no negative insinuation to it.

And yet, like everything in life, domination is finite and therefore bears on time itself in a sense that the time of imposing one's will is not permanent, but rather in an immobile time. This is due to the fact that domination is only possible for what *is* rather than what *becoming*. This static attribution, therefore, transforms politics into planning schemes for short, medium, and long terms. Occasionally, these may appear as tacit collusion between various groups, or manifest in the form of a coercive measure, and yet there are times when innovative approaches are needed to *meet* new and unpredictable challenges. In this context, the post-1979 Iran is an intriguing showcase that fits well in all of the above. Proponents of Islamic principles, as the dominant group, have retained, rather successfully, their position of domination. In the early years of 1980s, they were able to establish their domination over others with blessing of the overwhelming majority of population through various referendums and endorsements to create Islamic Republic.¹⁵⁶ Consequently, preservation of Islamic identity (consolidated by widespread disapproval of the state of the contemporary West) has been recognized as the central ideological principles of Islamic Republic State. Around the same time, astonishing 98 % of population approved the new constitution, in which its Article 4 declared: all laws and regulations in civil, criminal, political, and other aspects shall be based on Islamic Principles.¹⁵⁷

As concluding remarks to this section, I argue that inhabitants of Iran do not share a distinctive national consciousness or the politicization of that consciousness as related to the nation-state. However, Iranians have been put to test by various external threats and perpetual subjugations (repression) over the course of its enduring history, and when it succeeded, I argue, it was a result of innate religion solidarity rather than specific integrity attached to a particular piece of territory, or tribal pledges.¹⁵⁸

Thus, this book argues that Islam, and to the great extent Shi'ism, should be viewed as the main component in shaping of extraordinary political events in the nation's contemporary era, and hence the crucial factor in revealing the national consciousness of Iranians. In short, *Iraniyat* (being Iranian) and *Islamiyat* (being Muslim)¹⁵⁹, in word of Shabnam Holiday¹⁶⁰, are one and the same—two adverbs that describe a single noun, an identity, or more precisely the Iranian national identity.

¹⁵⁶ This, however, should not be viewed as a patronage of the incumbent government in a sense that supports were aimed at Islamization rather than democratization of the Iranian society.

¹⁵⁷ Some may dispute such a high approval rate; nevertheless, for those who lived in Iran during that time this rate seems still low!

¹⁵⁸ By "tribal pelages" I mean to imply for instance, that Safavi Dynasty kept the country intact not as a result of their Iranian attributes but rather as an imperative to retain its power over the territory.

¹⁵⁹ It is extremely important to note that the adherent of Islam, among Arabs, is usually designated by the corresponding adjective Muslim (of which Moslem is a Western adaptation). The Iranians adopted a different adjective Muslim, which is derived from the Anglo-Indian *Mussulman* and French *Musulman*. See Gibb HAR (1970) *Mohammedanism*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁶⁰ Holiday SJ (2013) *Defining Iran: politics of resistance*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., p. 54 and 79. Relevant to the issue of identity, Holiday also, correctly, points to the prevailing confusion among contemporary Iranian intellectuals like Al-I Ahmad in which he, on the one hand, described Alexander as the Great, who represents the manifestation of occidentosis that razed Persepolis and on the other hand accused Muhammad Reza Shah, who often perceived as modern patron of Iranian historically identity of the similar misdeed (Ibid., p. 57). Of course, bewildering of contemporary Iranian intellectuals does not end here, which I will come back to when it is required throughout this book.

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