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Religion, modernization and politics in Iran: An analysis of clerical political behavior during the Pahlavi monarchy, 1925–1979

Yazdi, Majid, Ph.D.
Rice University, 1989

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RELIGION, MODERNIZATION AND POLITICS IN IRAN:
AN ANALYSIS OF CLERICAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
DURING THE PAHLAVI MONARCHY, 1925-1979

by

MAJID YAZDI

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Dr. Fred von der Mehden, Director
Professor of Political Science

Dr. Robert Dix,
Professor of Political Science

Dr. Niels C. Nielsen,
Professor of Philosophy and Religious Thought

Houston, Texas

May 1989
RELIGION, MODERNIZATION AND POLITICS IN IRAN: AN ANALYSIS OF CLERICAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOR DURING THE PAHLAVI MONARCHY, 1925-1979

MAJID YAZDI

ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the political behavior of the clergy in Iran during the Pahlavi monarchy (1925-1979) within the context of the interrelationship between religion and modernization. This period itself has been divided into three eras: the Riza Shah era (1925-1941), the nationalist era (1941-1953), and the post-nationalist era (1953-1979). The analytical framework adopted here is based on three behavioral motives for clerical political involvement: religious, national, and clerical corporate interests. Within this framework, various patterns of clerical political behavior are identified, each reflecting a different order of priority of interests and motives for political action. The main point emerging from this approach is that at no time throughout this period did the clergy act as a politically monolithic group. Such distinct patterns are particularly discernable during the nationalist era (1941-1953) because of the presence of greater socio-political freedom relative to the other two major eras.

A major theme developed in this study is that while the greater functional differentiation and specialization caused by modernization resulted in the clergy’s loss of influence and official power in the educational and legal systems, the popular base of their political power vis-a-vis the state increased because of the clerical institution’s disengagement from the government. Furthermore, the emergence of a new religious intellectual class in the process of modernization led to the ideologization of Islam which in turn was a major causal factor behind the Islamic revolution and legitimization of clerical leadership. Concurrent with this development, the core of the clerical institution underwent a process of politicization through the rise of Ayatullah Khomeini in the 1960s. The
Islamic revolution of 1979 represented the mutual reinforcement of these two developments and their convergence in the direction of the establishment of an Islamic system of government.
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My greatest thanks go to my wife, Bahareh, whose love and devotion kept me going during the many lonely hours spent on this study.

Small as it is, I like to dedicate this work to the people of Iran, who have suffered and sacrificed so much in their quest for freedom and justice and unfortunately will have to continue to do so, as a gesture of my deep love for them, and to my three children--Habib, Hamed, and Haleh--and their generation, as a token of my sincere hope that their's will be a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world.
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INTRODUCTION

The Islamic revolution of 1978-79 represents the most dramatic episode of socio-political change in twentieth century Iran. It ended more than half-a-century of rule by the Pahlavi dynasty, and even more significantly, a long tradition of monarchy which, dating back to pre-Islamic Iran, seemed deeply embedded in Iranian culture. Perhaps even more dramatic than this historic revolutionary change, especially in the eyes of the western observers, was the rise of the religious class to power and the establishment of a clerical regime in the post-revolutionary era. With its own long tradition of separation of church and state and strong faith in the universality of the processes of modernization and secularization, the West viewed the replacement of a "modernizing" monarchy with a "reactionary" theocratic regime as a move against the flow of history. However, although neither the present clerical regime nor its religio-political philosophy of the absolute guardianship of the jurisprudent (vilayat-i mutlaqih-i faqih) has precedence in the history of Iran or Islam, clerical involvement in politics is not a novel phenomenon in Iranian history, even in its modern phase. Thus, the Islamic revolution and the role of the clergy in it must be understood in terms of the broader historical perspective of the political role of the clerical class in Iran.

The present study is an analysis of clerical political behavior within the context of the socio-political changes associated with modernization and secularization which took place in Iran during the Pahlavi era. With respect to the Islamic revolution, this work attempts to explain only one aspect of this multi-faceted phenomenon, namely, the emergence of religion as a major social force behind socio-political change, and more specifically the rise of the clergy to political leadership in the process of revolution.

In the first chapter, a brief discussion of various theoretical positions concerning the impact of modernization on religion is presented. While not intended as a critical review of all the major works and schools of thought within the literature of modernization, this
section presents a discussion of some of the theoretical problems relevant to the case of Iran and places the Islamic revolution within the perspective of the impact of modernization on religion. An analytical framework, designed to facilitate a systematic analysis of clerical political behavior, is also introduced in this chapter. In this framework, three types of behavioral motives for clerical political action are distinguished: religious, clerical corporate, and national. Our discussion of clerical political behavior throughout this study is presented within this framework and with reference to the above-mentioned theoretical points, although the emphasis changes according to the period under consideration. This shift of emphasis is necessitated by the changing socio-political circumstances throughout this period.

The second chapter examines some of the important aspects of the Shi'ite clerical institution in Iran. The main point emerging from this discussion concerns the absence of a rigid hierarchical organization within the clerical establishment. An important implication of this institutional characteristic for the analysis of clerical political behavior is the possibility of the coexistence of various and even opposing political orientations during each period. From this perspective, an analysis of the political role of the clergy within the framework of church-state relations—that is, implying the existence of a politically monolithic religious establishment—would represent a serious distortion of the reality of the clerical institution in Iran.

The next three chapters examine the political behavior of the clergy during the Pahlavi monarchy, which is itself divided into three periods: the Riza Shah era (1925-1941), the nationalist era (1941-1953), and the post-nationalist era (1953-1979). Chapter III, focusing on the Riza Shah era, examines the position of the clergy with respect to the modernizing reforms implemented in this period. The main point made in this chapter is that the clergy remained neutral with regard to most of the reform measures since they were not affected by them. Of those reforms directly affecting the clergy, only the most superficial ones (e.g., forced unveiling of women) caused serious clerical opposition. Finally,
some of the reforms associated with secularization (e.g., educational, judicial) which predated this era were actually supported by clerical leadership.

The nationalist era (1941-1953) is discussed in Chapter IV. The main characteristic of this period is the relative restoration of social and political freedoms, following nearly two decades of Riza Shah’s dictatorial rule. As a result, the existence of different patterns of clerical political behavior becomes even more manifest in this period. Three such patterns, characterized as conservative, pragmatic, and radical, represented by the Qum establishment, Ayatullah Abul-Qasim Kashani, and the Fada’iyan-i Islam, respectively, are identified and examined here. The 1953 coup d’etat, overthrowing the government of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq brought the nationalist era to an end.

Chapter V is devoted to the post-nationalist era (1953-1979) and the religio-political developments leading to the Islamic revolution of 1978-79. The emphasis here is on the ideologization of Islam among the educated and intellectual classes and its significance for the clergy’s assumption of political leadership in the process of the revolution. This chapter also discusses the role of Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni in the politicization of the clerical establishment and integration of religious and religio-political leaderships which was crucial for the success of the Islamic revolution.

The concluding chapter summarizes the main arguments developed in this study and offers some thoughts on the implications of post-revolutionary developments for the future of the clerical establishment in Iran.
CHAPTER I

MODERNIZATION, SECULARIZATION, AND THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

The most distinctive feature of the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 was undoubtedly its religious aspect. The significant role of religion was manifested in various forms throughout the process of the revolution: mosques and other religious institutions became centers of revolutionary activities; religious language and symbols acted as primary modes of expression of revolutionary messages and slogans; religious occasions and ceremonies functioned as effective means for the mobilization of millions of people; and, perhaps most important of all, religious personnel became the spokesmen and leaders of a mass-based revolutionary movement. While it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to assess the role of religion as an independent variable in all these developments, its consistent and pervasive presence during and after the revolution makes the dismissal of religion as purely tactical and symbolic questionable. Moreover, even as simply a tool and symbol in the process of the revolution, the high degree of effectiveness and appeal of religion still remains a significant phenomenon given the prevalent descriptions and predictions concerning the diminishing role of religion in modernizing and developing societies. From a theoretical point of view, the Iranian revolution questions the conventional wisdom on the processes of social and political change, particularly the emphasis placed on secularization as a basic aspect of modernization. Thus an examination of current theories of modernization in light of the Iranian experience could be helpful in identifying their shortcomings and contribute to their refinement and improvement.

The Impact of Modernization on Religion: Theoretical Approaches

Given the absence of a consensus even on the very definition of the concept of modernization, it seems only natural to find a variety of positions concerning the impact of
modernization on religion. The task of reviewing the literature is even more complicated, however, because of the commonly used concept of secularization, which is no-less ambiguous than modernization itself.\(^1\) Nonetheless, it seems three general positions representing the major trends in the theoretical development on this subject can be identified. The prevalent position which is also most representative of earlier works on modernization, but by no means exclusive to that phase, is that secularization is a basic component and even a defining characteristic of the process of modernization or a fundamental product of it. The essence of this position is that as the society experiences the changes associated with modernization, the relevance and significance of religion diminishes both at the societal level and that of the individual. At the societal level, the process of functional differentiation and specialization would lead to the elimination of religion as a social and political force by delimiting its domain to the narrowly defined realm of ethics and morality. This is also the essence of what has been characterized by Robert Bellah as the transition from the prescriptive traditional to the principal modern society.\(^2\) This phenomenon of "privatization of religion," however, does not represent the only way that secularization takes place in a modernizing society, since even at the individual level one's behavior would become more determined by "rational" thinking than religious beliefs and convictions, which by implication lack rational basis. In other words, religion loses its role as a mode of thinking and behavioral motive as the society becomes modernized. A few examples from the major works of the theorists of this approach to the relationship between modernization and secularization would illustrate the point. Almond and Powell viewed secularization as the cultural aspect of political development--differentiation representing its structural aspect--and defined it as "a process of attitude change, whereby people become more oriented to cause-and-effect relationships they see in the world around them."\(^3\) Secularization also assumes an important position in Daniel Lerner's theory of modernization. In his scheme, secularization is a component of the "system of modernity" along with industrialization, urbanization, literacy and
participation. Thus according to him, a major characteristic of the Transitionals, that is, the modernizing individuals who are in between the Traditionals and the Moderns, is their becoming secularized, which he defines as "acquiring a common concern with problems identified as socio-economic rather than religious." In a later article, Lerner regarded "a diffusion of secular-rational norms in the culture understood approximately in Weberian-Parsonian terms" as one of the five "salient characteristics (operational values) of modernity." Similarly, Lucian Pye stressed the diffusion of a "world culture" which was based in part "upon a secular rather than a sacred view of human relations, a rational outlook, and acceptance of the substance and spirit of the scientific approach." This view on systemic nature of the phenomenon of modernization seems to be reflective of a more general theory of cultural encounter in the West, whose most famous expression can be found in one of Arnold Toynbee's "laws of cultural radiation." In his study of the impact of western civilization on non-western societies, Toynbee theorizes that if one element of an alien civilization, even a purely technological one, is admitted into another culture, it will draw after it the rest of the cultural elements of the radative civilization, including the religious ones. Citing the case of Turkey as his example, Toynbee makes the general point that "in the game of cultural intercourse, one thing is bound to go on leading to another until the adoption of Western weapons, drill, and uniforms will inevitably bring in its train not only the emancipation of Muslim women but the replacement of the Arabic by the Latin alphabet and the disestablishment of an Islamic Church which, in Muslim countries in the past, has reigned unchallenged over the whole field of life." While there is definitely an element of truth in Toynbee's observation of the interrelatedness of many aspects of social and cultural change, its characterization as a wholesome and inevitable process is not supported by the experience of most of the Muslim countries and especially the Islamic revolution of Iran.

Such general theoretical views, nevertheless, found specific applications in area studies, including the Middle East and the case of Iran. Dankwart Rustow, in his analysis of
political development in the Middle East, considered "secularization in thought and social and legal organization" as one of the "most important elements of social dynamics resulting from . . . [the] process of modernization."

Suggesting a strong link between urbanization and secularization, Rustow further stated that ". . . there is no doubt the overwhelming majority of the urban population--both upper and lower class--live in an increasingly modern and secularized context." As for the case of Iran, it has been suggested that "The process of urbanization reduces the luster of religion as a guide to human conduct. The educated urban classes progressively will seek to find answers to moral and ethical questions elsewhere."

Perhaps nothing captures the essence as well as the spirit of this approach to the question of the impact of modernization on religion better than Lerner's following statement about the plight of Islam, in which he attempts to claim the authority of the Islamists for his position as well: "Whether from East or West, modernization poses the same basic challenge--the infusion of 'a rationalist spirit' against which, scholars seem agreed, 'Islam is absolutely defenseless.'" From this perspective then, both religion and the religious class are incapable of change. It is ironical that at the same time that the advocates of this approach attribute such a pervasive role to secularization, they basically exclude the clerical institution and the religious class from such social influences and thus implicitly rule out their potential for change and adaptation to new conditions. These segments of society, however, while they may indeed be slower than other segments in their response, still cannot and will not remain in total isolation from the rest of the society. As will become clear from this study, the clergy and the clerical institution experience significant changes in terms of religious and social thinking and political orientation.

While the emphasis on secularization reflected the predominant view in the field of modernization, some voices of caution concerning the vitality and resilience of religion has been expressed as well. Advocates of this approach were not so eager and ready to write
off religion as a social and political force as the proponents of the mainstream approach were. Robert Bellah, for instance, while accepting the notion that modernization "involves changes in the value system as well as economic, political, and social changes," warned that "the process of secularization . . . does not mean that religion disappears." Rather, he argued, religion assumes a new function which "is not necessarily less important." The continuous significance of religion in modernizing and secularizing societies was suggested by other observers as well, although they mostly regarded it as either a manipulating tool for secular purposes rather than a motivating source for political action, or the ultimate loser to the forces of secularization. James Coleman, for example, noted the challenge posed by religion to the forces of modernization:  

Wherever the modernization process has had an impact, it has contributed to secularization, both social and political. But in most countries religion is still a factor of great significance in the political process. In the daily lives of the masses living in the traditional sector, religion is still a vital force. The new secular elites frequently feel compelled, for various reasons, to respect, or even to use, religion as a political force. In most countries there are political parties having a religious basis. The politicization of religion . . . perpetuates the struggle between those demanding a greater role for religion in the state and those demanding a secular polity.

Donald Smith similarly argued that ". . . behind many religious conflicts there are essentially secular political interests. Politicians, clerical and lay, are engaged in manipulating religious symbols as one technique in the struggle for power, sometimes cynically but more often through the same process of rationalization by which interests become disguised as principles in politics everywhere." Of course, neither as a manipulating nor a rationalizing tool would religion necessarily lose its significance as a political factor. But Smith went further by predicting the eventual and complete demise of religious influence: ". . . it is increasingly doubtful that religious ideologies will be convincing to Third World man as this century draws to a close." Thus while admitting that "Both processes, the secularization of politics and involvement of religion in politicization, are taking place simultaneously," Smith maintained that "secularization is
by far the more fundamental process, and it will in time devour the phenomena of religious parties and ideologies.\textsuperscript{16} "In the long run," according to him, "particularistic ideologies such as Islam give ground before universalistic ideologies such as socialism."\textsuperscript{17} Again such general observations concerning the role of religious ideologies and Islam were applied to the case of Iran. In his study of nationalism in Iran, Richard Cottam considered it "most unlikely that religious influence on Iranian nationalism would ever again reach the proportion it experienced in 1951-52," and went on to conclude that "there seems little doubt that a long-term trend is in motion in the direction of granting national values precedence over religious values."\textsuperscript{18}

A third approach to the question of religion and modernization which contrasts in some important ways both of the previous approaches, is one which has been least developed. As a result of the Iranian revolution more attention has been given to this approach recently, although its origins can be traced to some earlier works on modernization. This approach may be regarded as a revision or dissent in that it challenges the assumptions of the mainstream approach and goes much further than the second approach in making religious revivalism a likely product of modernization. Two completely different explanations, however, have been given for this development. According to one view, modernization contributes to the revitalization of religious forces by creating "group consciousness" and "political consciousness." Samuel Huntington's description of this process well summarizes this view:\textsuperscript{19}

\ldots modernization induces not just class consciousness but new group consciousness of all kinds: in tribe, region, clan, and caste, as well as in class, occupation, and association. Modernization means that all groups, old as well as new, traditional as well as modern, become increasingly aware of themselves as groups and of their interests and claims in relation to other groups. One of the most striking phenomena of modernization, indeed, is the increased consciousness, coherence, organization, and action which it produces in many social forces which existed on a much lower level of consciousness identity and organization in traditional society. The early phases of modernization are often marked by the emergence of fundamentalist religious movements, such as the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt and the Buddhist movements in Ceylon, Burma, and Vietnam, which combine modern organizational methods, traditional religious values, and highly populist appeals.
A similar point was made by Manfred Halpern in his study of social change in the Middle East. Writing on the relative potential strengths of nationalist and Islamic movements, Halpern saw the revival of the latter after initially losing to the former in the nationalist era of the 1950's: "The potential following for such movements, however, continues to grow as nationalist reformers speed the process of modernization and thus inescapably incite the political consciousness of ever larger number of tradition-bound men by involving them in untraditional and unresolved problems." The mechanisms for this development, according to Halpern, are literacy and communication: "For many Moslems, especially in provincial towns, modernization in fact provides the first opportunity to turn to the past. The spread of literacy and communication gives a larger number than ever before the chance to read the traditional literature—and so grow attached to pre-modern ideas and values." The same point has been put forward more recently by Howard Wiarda: "In much of the Middle East... urbanization and the growth of a literate middle class are prime causes in the growth of interest in Islam."22

Another view, which has become increasingly popular since the Iranian revolution, is that religious revivalism may develop as a negative reaction to, or a "revolt" against, modernization. Said Amir Arjomand, for example, has offered the following explanation for the emergence of religious fundamentalist movements in modernizing societies: "As attempts to extirpate alien norms and to overcome the normative disturbance caused by their intrusion and by urbanisation, these movements advocate the restoration and rigorous enforcement of Islamic norms. They are, to use Hofstadter's phrase, the latest and most striking, albeit non-Western, manifestation of "the fundamentalist revolt against modernity.""23
Theoretical and Methodological Problems

The approaches discussed above, despite their differences with respect to their theoretical positions, share to different degrees some theoretical and methodological problems. The most common and serious problem is perhaps the ambiguity of theories on the exact mechanisms through which modernization would have its major impact and influence on religion. Although there are frequent references to such developments as urbanization, literacy, education, and media exposure in relation to secularization, how exactly these would lead to the latter are not clearly spelled out. Why and how, for example, urbanization necessarily "reduces the luster of religion as a guide to human conduct" is not clear at all. The same point can be said about the relation between other variables such as literacy, education, or media exposure and secularization. Almond and Powell, for instance, simply assert that secularization "is closely bound up with the development of technology and science and the spread of education and communication media," without elaborating on the logical linkages between these variables and secularization. Such ambiguities made it all the more convenient for different authors to take opposing theoretical positions without any need to justify their departure from previous theorists. Thus while for the authors of the first approach urbanization, literacy, and education all lead to secularization, for the authors of the third approach they cause the opposite development of religious revival. It must be mentioned, however, that arguments presented by some theorists of the third approach (e.g. Huntington's and Halpern's reference to "group consciousness" and "political consciousness") were more specific than the ones offered by those of the first approach.

The problem of theoretical ambiguity was also present in the works belonging to the second approach. Bellah, for example, as cited before, maintained that secularization means religion assumes a new function which "is not necessarily less important" without spelling out in what ways the new functions of religion would be as important as the ones prior to secularization. Bellah's assertion is especially difficult to support since he accepts
the notion that modernization involves the transformation from the "prescriptive" society to the "principal" one and that in the latter "the religious system does not attempt to regulate economic, political, and social life in great detail, as in prescriptive societies." Does this not leave religion with a definitely less significant role to play in a modernizing society than in the traditional one?

Some of the studies done by social anthropologists, however, may be helpful in this regard by at least bringing to our attention the theoretical assumptions upon which general proposition of the mainstream approach are based. In her analysis of the relationship between rural-to-urban migration and politicization of migrants in Egypt, for example, Janet Abu-Lughod points out the importance of other intervening variables such as migrant status (i.e., level of stratification from which one leaves), initial motivation for migration and the path to the city (pursuit of higher education, military recruitment, conscription, employment opportunities), type of urban life adopted, and degree of contact sustained with the village. All these, according to Abu-Lughod's study of the Egyptian case, could have an impact on the level of politicization among migrants. Thus some may become highly involved in politics and participate in government bureaucracy following their educational achievements, while others "although physically resident in the city, really 'live' in their home village and its urban-transplanted network," and remain completely apolitical except for being used for demonstrations and rallies. What Abu-Lughod posits concerning the importance of intervening variables in the relationship between urbanization and politicization is equally valid and applicable to the question of the relationship between urbanization and secularization. Another anthropological study which can be helpful in this regard shows how, contrary to theoretical assumptions of modernization theorists, urbanization may enhance the political significance of religion. In his study of Lebanon, Fuad I. Khuri demonstrates the increased importance of sectarian politics among the Shi'ite and Maronite residents of two Beirut suburbs following the migration of villagers to these areas. While village politics were dominated by family
alliances, after their migration to the suburbs of Beirut, the villagers began "to use sect instead of family as a frame of reference in politics."27

The question of mechanisms of change in the process of modernization is significant in another way, although it has been given little attention in the literature of modernization. Most of the studies, theoretical as well as empirical, focus on certain dependent variables without taking into account the process by which they are produced. One aspect of this problem relates to the question of the difference between a development that takes place more or less spontaneously or as a result of the general consensus of the community, and one that is imposed on society by policy makers. For example, if the same degree of secularization is found in the educational systems of two modernizing societies, does this have the same meaning and significance for both societies as far as their future developments are concerned? It is conceivable that in the society in which secularization has been imposed through "modernization from above," the resentment on the part of the people would lead to the opposite outcome of religious revival while the one which has experienced it more spontaneously would not face such a reaction. As noted above, the same distinction could be made between voluntary and forced urbanization in the process of modernization.28 The important point, however, is that the specific process of social change must be taken into account in analyzing its meaning and significance for other aspects of societal or political change.

A second common problem in the approaches to the impact of modernization on religion may be identified as unidimensionality. At the heart of this problem is the fact that each author focuses only on one way that a major aspect of modernization may affect religion and its role in society. Thus the multi-dimensionality of such a phenomenon as urbanization in its impact on religion--e.g., exposing the people from the villages to secular ideas and life styles, while at the same time creating alienation and anomie which could then lead to religious revival as was suggested by authors of the third approach--is basically ignored. Another example of this important point concerns the impact of
functional differentiation and specialization, which are important aspects of modernization, on religion. While it is true, as authors of the mainstream approach have correctly emphasized, that as a result of such institutional and functional differentiation the scope and domain of direct religious influence on governmental policies would decrease, the same process could also contribute to the politicization of religion by strengthening the position of the religious establishment as a political rival to the government. This is all the more important in developing countries in most of which the state lacks sufficient popular basis of legitimacy and thus is vulnerable to counter-mobilization by rival forces. Indeed it is a major argument of the present study that this is precisely what happened in Iran in the development of the widespread support for the political leadership of the clergy. Thus an important point which emerges from the analysis of the case of Iran is that while clerical social influences in the areas of public education and judiciary may be diminished due to greater functional differentiation and specialization brought about by the forces of modernization and secularization, at the same time, the greater autonomy achieved by the clerical institution increases its potential for political action against the state.

The same point is also true with respect to the multidimensional nature of the impact of literacy and education. On the one hand, the literate and educated people are more exposed to new ideas and life styles and thus may be attracted to secular ideas as well. On the other hand, however, as Halpern has suggested, literacy and education may also provide the individual with means and incentives for rediscovering his heritage and tradition, including his religion. The educated person may well discard some traditional beliefs and practices as meaningless and superstition, but he is also more capable of transforming religion into an ideology which in turn can become an active socio-political force and compete with other ideologies such as liberalism, or communism. Again this is an important development which took place in Iran as Muslim intellectuals, such as Mehdi Bazargan, Ali Shariati, and the founders of the Organization of People's Mujahedin of Iran, committed themselves to formulating a progressive Islamic ideology as an alternative
to the non-Islamic ones. In fact, this development among the educated class in Iran was another major factor contributing to the assumption of political leadership by the clergy as will be discussed more fully later in this study.

The third problem common to different theoretical approaches to the question of the impact of modernization on religion is nonempiricalism. Rather than testing their theories, most theorists simply applied them in their studies of modernizing societies and concluded their validity. Even for those few who attempted to produce empirical studies, it seems the theoretical bias was such that their studies showed what they expected to see and not what was there to be seen. Thus Lerner, who produced one of the pioneer empirical works on this subject, paid little attention if any to religious developments which were taking place at the time.²⁹

The Islamic Revolution in Theoretical Perspective

How can theoretical approaches to modernization discussed above, despite their problems and shortcomings, contribute to our understanding of the Islamic revolution in Iran? What can the Iranian experience contribute to theories of modernization and social change? Although none of the approaches reviewed here seem to be able to provide a fully convincing explanation of what has taken place in Iran, some have important elements that can be helpful in placing the Iranian experience within a more general theoretical perspective. Before examining some of these elements, however, it may be useful to consider how some of the theories discussed here may be saved despite their apparent failure to explain the Islamic revolution. One possible theoretical response, particularly favored by advocates of the first approach, could be that the revolution and the religious resurgence accompanying it represent an aberration in the long process of modernization and secularization. As one observer put it, "even the clerics cannot set the clock back."³⁰ Such arguments, however, even if proven right in the future, simply fail to explain why
such an aberration has occurred and how it would come to an end. Rather than explaining the phenomenon, they explain it away and thus avoid its theoretical challenge. Another response would be to regard the revolution as a proof of pseudo-modernization taking place in Iran instead of "genuine" modernization; a result of the absence of modernization rather than an outcome of it. Indeed the existence of such a phenomenon as "ruralization" of urban areas instead of urbanization lends support to such a view. However, it raises the question of the applicability of the model of Western modernization to the developing countries since they all seem to have experienced pseudo-modernization instead of the "genuine" one. Besides, it is undeniable that in some important aspects, especially in terms of economic and technological changes and material progress, Iran has moved in the direction of the West and has experienced the same changes that are associated with modernization in the West. This could lead to another possible response which would view the revolution as the result of incomplete or partial modernization. The implication of this position, however, would be that the process of modernization, rather than being systemic as theorists of the mainstream approach have suggested, is nonsingular and nonlinear. Of course this would not be a new challenge to the classical theories of modernization, since on this point they had been successfully challenged long before the Iranian revolution by works of Huntington and other writers of the revisionist school.

The last theoretical response brings us to the argument put forward by theorists of the third approach discussed above, namely, that modernization may lead to religious revivalism. How well does Iran’s Islamic revolution fit into the models proposed by authors of this approach? It seems each school within this approach provides an important explanation for one aspect of the revolutionary process. The position advanced by Huntington and Halpern on the initial contribution of modernization to "group consciousness" and "political consciousness" is supported by the role of the educated classes in the religious movement leading to the Islamic revolution. This ideologization of Islam, as will be discussed later in this study, was a crucial factor in the revolution. On the
other hand, the emphasis placed on the negative reaction to the cultural and social
dislocations caused by modernization and imposition of secularization by the state explains
both the participation of the masses in the final stages of the revolution and some of its
anti-Western features. In other words, the two positions complement each other and
provide the two major elements of the process leading to the revolution.

The significance of the impact of modernization and secularization on religion for the
Islamic revolution may be summarized as follows: (1) ideologization of Islam and its
transformation into a major socio-political intellectual movement, (2) resurgence of Islamic
traditionalism as a manifestation of cultural alienation among the masses, and (3) creating
for the clerical establishment the potential for revolutionary action against the regime by
denying it any stakes in the political system. While all of these developments were
important in bringing about the Islamic revolution, in the final analysis what gave the
revolution its distinctive religious characteristic was the role played by the clergy. Without
the clerical leadership it would have been impossible for religion to play such a dominant
role both during and after the revolution. Thus what needs to be examined more carefully
is the role of the clergy in the revolution which itself must be placed within the broader
context of clerical political behavior in the Pahlavi era. Such a historical perspective would
enable us to appreciate the significance of the changes in religious, social, and political
circumstances which made it possible for the clerical class to assume the leadership of the
revolution. To facilitate such an analysis of clerical political behavior, the following
analytical framework will be adopted throughout this study.

Clerical Political Behavior: An Analytical Framework

The underlying assumption of the approach adopted here is that the clergy, like any
other social group, become involved in politics to promote or protect some interests which
they consider vital. What constitute such interests and what order of priority they have,
however, may vary from one clerical faction to another. This variation in motivational interest in turn may well explain the variation in actual clerical political behavior. For analytical purposes, it is possible to distinguish three types of interest that may motivate members of the clergy to become involved in politics: religious, clerical corporate, and national.31

Religious interests act as motives for clerical political involvement by inspiring reaction to socio-political developments which are perceived as threats to the foundations of religious beliefs (e.g., communism or other anti-religion ideologies) or to governmental policies which directly affect some religious principles or practices (e.g., sale and consumption of alcohol, women’s enfranchisement or unveiling.) In such cases the clergy, acting as guardians of Islam, view their involvement as part of their religious duty and obligation since the primary function of their class is to protect the religion from being threatened or undermined. This determinant role assigned to the factor of religion is highly important and needs to be stressed since, as one observer has noted, there is a tendency to dismiss or deprecate the motivating power of religion itself and to try to uncover the "real" causes behind religio-political phenomena.32

Clerical corporate interests represent another type of motive for clerical political involvement. Despite the absence of a formal and rigid organizational structure within the Iranian clerical institution, members of the clergy do exhibit, to a considerable extent, a sense of community identification and group solidarity which is reinforced through uniformity in appearance and dress code. This being the case, it is only natural for such a distinct and relatively closed community to develop interests of its own. Religiously sanctioned through their own interpretations of Islamic principles, and historically justified, such clerical corporate interests have become clerical rights and prerogatives, capable of generating strong motivation for political action. Thus the political behavior of the clergy in instances involving issues that directly affect clerical vested interests (e.g., control over religious endowments or theological seminaries) may be viewed as that of an
interest group engaged in aggregation and articulation of demands upon the political system. More specifically, in terms of different types of interest group that are distinguished in political science, the clergy may be placed in the category of the "permanently organized interest," as contrasted with the "issue-oriented, ad hoc organization" type.  

National interests, the widest type in scope, would involve the clergy in politics on issues that affect the political community as a whole, and almost always have an anti-foreign dimension (e.g., nationalization of oil). In such instances the clergy act as what may be characterized as "natural leaders" of the society, and attract the support of secular and even leftist political forces which realize the mobilizing power of this class. By the same token, the clergy may become more susceptible to secular and leftist influences as they become politically involved in issues of national significance. The presence of a nationalistic element in clerical political behavior is partly due to the fact that the majority of Iranian Muslims are Shi'ites, and even more importantly, Iran is the only country in which Shi'ism is recognized as the official state religion. This has led some observers to conclude that the Iranian clergy "may also be regarded as among the most ardent nationalists, since the establishment of the Shi'i faith as the state religion has always set Persians somewhat apart from their co-religionists." Such a characterization of the clergy as "ardent nationalists" is an exaggeration of the significance of the nationalistic aspect of clerical political behavior. Yet it is important to point out that clerical nationalism is not wholly based on the identification of the state with Shi'ism. As will become clear from this study, there is also an element of pre-Islamic nationalism present in the behavior of the politically involved clergy.

These three categories of interests, however, are not mutually exclusive and may all be relevant to one single issue or political development. Thus, in determining the type of a given issue, its most salient aspect needs to be identified. Of course, the politically active clerics, as might be expected, are inclined to relate every issue to religious interests in
order to justify their involvement and strengthen their position vis-a-vis the government or other rival political forces. For example, a government policy or a socio-political phenomenon detrimental to the authority or power base of the clergy may well be portrayed as a disguised attack against religion per se. After all, the identification of the interests of Islam and those of the clerical institution has been a recurring theme throughout the history of the clerical institution, the most recent and significant manifestation of which may be found in Ayatullah Khumayni’s views and statements. Nevertheless, setting clerical rhetoric aside, in most cases it is the perceived immediate impact of an issue which inspires political action, and hence can be identified as the most salient aspect of that particular issue.

Within this framework, different patterns of clerical political behavior can be identified on the basis of the type of interest, or more precisely the order of priority of interests, that motivate and guide the politically involved clergy. Before examining the various patterns that have emerged during the Pahlavi era, however, the main features of the Shi’ite clerical institution in Iran needs to be examined.
NOTES

1 For a review of different meanings in which secularization has been used, see Larry Shiner, "The Concept of Secularization in Empirical Research," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 6, 2 (Fall 1967), pp. 200-220.


4 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, p. 165.


7 Arnold Toynbee, *The World and the West*, p. 79.


9 Ibid., p. 389.


11 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of the Traditional Society*, p. 45. It must be pointed out, however, that the statement that Lerner quotes and wrongly attributes to von Grunebaum is more reflective of his own views than a consensus of scholars of Islam, which he claims it to be. In fact, that statement, which appears in the introduction of a book edited by von Grunebaum, is itself a casual and inaccurate summarization by Jacques Duchesme-Guillemin of a lecture on "Western Impact and Islamic Civilization" by Werner Caskel. Analyzing the impact of Western thought on Islamic
theology and the consequent development of reformist movements among Muslim scholars such as Muhammad Abduh, Caskel observed: "The reformers encountered Western thought not in the shape of theology but in historical works that carried the stamp of rationalism or positivism, in textbooks of the same character, in popular scientific presentations, and, furthermore, in the criticism meted out to Islam both by scholars (E. Renan) and by missionaries. Islam faced all of this completely unprepared, for dogmatic theology was frozen in its last rationalistic stage." G. von Grunebaum, ed., *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, p. 342. This observation was summarized by Duchesme-Guillemin, from whom Lerner quotes, as follows: "Against European culture, and especially against the Universal Histories of a rationalist or positivist spirit, or the like, Islam is absolutely defenseless." (Ibid., p.12)

Obviously the specific context of Caskel's remark, Islamic theology, and his reference to its being "unprepared" in meeting the challenge of rationalism or positivism posed by Western thought, were seriously distorted by Duchesme-Guillemin's generalization to Islam as a whole and his characterization of it as being "defenseless." Lerner's usage of Duchesme-Guillemin's inaccurate summarization, his attributing it to von Grunebaum, and his characterization of it as the consensus of scholars, are all significant in that they reveal the eagerness of the theorists of the mainstream approach to find proof for the demise of religion under the onslaught of modernization.


This view, however, as will be discussed below, is contradictory to the notion of transformation of the traditional prescriptive society society into the modern principal one which Bellah proposes.


14 Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Political Development*, p. 145. Such statements concerning the manipulation of religion by politicians should not be taken as simply a
manifestation of Western bias against developing countries. Indeed some Muslim scholars have been even more critical than their Western counterparts on this point. Fazlur Rahman, for example, deplores the subjugation of Islam to politics by Muslim politicians and considers it a major obstacle to educational reform in Islamic countries:

\[\ldots\text{an important problem that has plagued Muslim societies since the dawn of democracy in them is the peculiar relationship of religion and politics and the pitiable subjugation of the former to the latter. }\ldots\text{instead of setting themselves to genuinely interpret Islamic goals to be realized through political and government channels--which would subjugate politics to interpreted Islamic values }\ldots\text{what happens most of the time is a ruthless exploitation of Islam for party politics and group interests that subject Islam not only to politics but to day-to-day politics; Islam thus becomes sheer demagogy.}\]


18 Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, pp. 156-57.


21 Ibid., p. 138.

22 Wiarda, *New Directions in Comparative Politics*, p. 144.

23 Said Amir Arjomand, ed., *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, p. 21. The popularity of this theme is reflected in the fact that a work on the al-Jihad, a religio-political movement in Egypt, has been entitled *Revolt Against Modernity*, although it lacks any theoretical framework.

24 Almond and Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics*, p. 19.


26 Janet Abu-Lughod, "Rural Migration and Politics in Egypt," in Richard Antoun
and Iliya Harik, eds., *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East*, pp. 315-334.

27 Khuri, "Sectarian Loyalty Among Rural Migrants in Two Lebanese Suburbs: A Stage Between Family and National Allegiance," in Richard Antoun and Iliya Harik, eds., *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East*, pp. 198-213. Khuri’s explanation is that the modern civil state and the rule of law provided the security for the expression of religious identity which in the village environment had to be suppressed as a means of social accommodation and achievement of harmony among sects. His thesis, however, that the change of political loyalty from family to sect is a positive step toward acquiring national allegiance is not supported by the political developments in Lebanon in the last decade, although external factors have played a significant role in this respect.

28 The study by Janet Abu-Lughod cited before, indeed finds this distinction to be important in determining the level of politicization. She distinguishes between selective and nonselective, or positively selective and negatively selective, migration.

29 Lerner did not address the question of empirical evidence even in relation to his central point about the systemic nature of modernity, which meant that urbanization, secularization, literacy, and media exposure were all integral parts of the same modernization process. Thus he failed to explain why Turkey had one of the lowest levels of urbanization despite being considered as one the most modern states in the Middle East. See V.F. Costello, *Urbanization in the Middle East*, p. 35.


31 Personal motives undoubtedly play some role in the political behavior of individual members of the clergy and hence must be taken into account when there is sufficient evidence of their direct influence on specific political actions. However, as a type of behavioral motive, they cannot be systematically analyzed since they may influence one's general behavior at a deeper level of behavioral motivation and
without any identifiable outward manifestations. This and the fact that they can be easily disguised, would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to assess the strength and significance of personal motives relative to other types of motive unless one is ready to pass judgement on the sincerity of an individual's behavior in general. Furthermore, the level of analysis for which the present model is being proposed is basically the group level and not that of the individual; the role of individuals, nonetheless, may become the focus of analysis to the extent that they influence significantly the behavior of a larger group or movement, as in the case of Ayatullah Kashani which will be discussed in Chapter IV.


33 This type of interest group "consists of those interests that are more or less permanent components of society and, conscious of their distinctiveness, are continuous competitors in the political process. Their status and objectives require repeated efforts to further and protect them. Each group in this category has to pay constant attention to its political fortunes. Gains won during one political season can be lost in the next unless the group's representatives remain alert." From a behavioral point of view, an important characteristic of the permanent type is that "its specific aims will vary as time passes." M.A. Krasver, S.G. Chaberski, and D. Kelly Jones, American Government: Structure and Process, pp. 205-212.

34 Joseph Upton, The History of Modern Iran: An Interpretation, p. 111.

35 American foreign policy makers seem to have evaluated the developments in the process of the Islamic revolution within a theoretical framework similar to the one presented here, only without making a distinction between religious and national motives, and more importantly, implicitly viewing these motives as being mutually exclusive. Gary Sick, "the principal White House aide for Iran during the Iranian revolution," has described the U.S. perception of the events as follows: "I suggested two opposing theories: either the religious leaders, who had previously been defeated
by the shah, represented an interest group whose demands could be diffused by some accommodation to their special concerns, or, alternatively, the religious leadership had uncovered a deep layer of hostility to the abuses of modernization." Gary Sick, *All Fall Down*, p. 50.
CHAPTER II

RUHANIYYAT: THE CLERICAL INSTITUTION OF SHI'ISM

Despite all the attention that the religious class has received after the Islamic revolution, no thorough study of this segment of Iranian society has been made yet. Consequently our understanding of the clerical institution in contemporary Iran, especially its internal functioning, remains as little as it was before the revolution. This is partly due to the relative isolation of the religious class from the rest of the society and its resistance toward being opened up to outsiders. Becoming the ruling political elite in the post-revolutionary era, of course, has made the clergy more exposed to the public, while at the same time its group loyalty has continued to act as an effective clerical palladium. Even those clerics who have politically defected from the clerical regime have shown some reluctance to provide detailed and specific information on the internal relationships and workings of this institution. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to analyze some of the important aspects of the religious establishment in Iran, including its doctrinal bases in Islam and Shi'ism, its historical development in Iran, its social position in contemporary Iranian society, and its organization and stratification. Before taking up this task, however, some remarks on the definition of the religious establishment, as used in this study, are in order.

Definition: Who Is a Ruhani?

Ordinarily, providing a definition of one’s subject matter would ordinarily hardly require any justification; indeed, it may be considered as a prerequisite for any analysis. Given the failure of almost all studies on the present subject to follow this principle, however, a brief discussion of why a definition of the religious establishment in Iran may
be helpful and even necessary seems to be needed. The first reason for the need to define what exactly is meant by the religious class is a linguistic one. As has been pointed out by some western scholars of Islam and many Muslims, the term clergy, properly speaking, has no precise analogue in the Islamic religion. Because of its strong association with the Christian tradition and its concept of priesthood, the term clergy presents problems when applied to the religious class in Muslim societies. To remedy this problem, recent scholars have substituted the Arabic term ‘ulama’ (plural of ‘alim: learned, scholar) for clergy in reference to the Islamic religious class. This, of course, represents a definite and significant improvement, especially in light of the fact that it is used quite widely in most Muslim societies themselves. However, with respect to the case of Iran, it has certain important limitations and thus is still inadequate. In contemporary Iranian culture, the term ‘ulama’ signifies those who have achieved a high level of religious erudition and are regarded as authorities on matters of religion, an application which comes fairly close to the lexical meaning of the term. In western literature, however, it is used as a designation for the collective body of religious personnel, not all of whom may qualify as ‘ulama’. Given the ambiguities associated with such terms as clergy or ‘ulama’, the necessity of defining one’s terminology and scope of analysis becomes quite clear.

Besides helping to clarify the terminological ambiguity, a definition of the concept of religious class or ruhaniyyat serves two other purposes. First, by establishing the social boundaries of this class, it differentiates between the clergy and other religiously oriented groups which may share some of the characteristics of the clergy but are not part of it. In other words, it distinguishes between members and non-members of the religious class. This is an important distinction since studies on the political role of the clergy usually contain discussions of the role of individuals, the clerical membership of some of whom is open to question.³ By taking into account the social function and status of the clergy, a definition would also provide a basis for understanding the place of the clergy as an integral part of the society and for evaluating the impact of social, economic, and political
changes on this aspect of the clergy. In short, a definition would ideally reflect how the religious class is differentiated as well as integrated within its social setting.

Defining the clergy, however, is not a simple task. The real difficulty is how to avoid imposing one's own values and standards through a normative and completely arbitrary definition. A useful approach which would help us avoid this problem is to search for a social and cultural definition rather than a strictly religious one; after all our main concern is with the social and political role of the clergy and not their religious legitimacy. Such a definition and terminology, would ideally meet two criteria: (1) it must reflect a general consensus on the part of the public, and (2) it must be accepted by the religious community itself. With respect to the question of terminology, ruhaniyyat (from ruh: spirit, soul) has acquired such a wide currency in contemporary Iranian society, both among the public and the religious class, that it has almost completely replaced all other designations. Thus it fairly well meets the criteria set above and may be taken as the most appropriate term in referring to the Iranian religious class in general. There are other advantages in using this term as well. First, it has a far broader scope and encompasses all sectors within the religious class and not simply its leadership, as the term 'ulama' would imply. This broadening of the scope of analysis is very important since the role of the lower ranks of the religious class has been almost completely neglected although they are more directly involved with the people and thus in some cases may have greater political influence on the public than the leadership of the religious institution. Second, it reflects the institutionalized characteristic of religion in Iran better than any other term while at the same time preserving the ideologically based class status of the clergy. In this sense, it has a connotation similar to that of the term "church," although because the Shi'ite clerical institution lacks the kind of formal, hierarchical structure of authority which is so closely associated with the concept of church, it cannot be referred to as such. Finally, ruhaniyyat also more accurately reflects the cultural and social position of the religious class in Iran, namely, that of "spiritual" leadership, a meaning which is completely missing in the term
'ulama'.

As for the question of who is to be considered a ruhani, three clerical requirements seem to meet the above-mentioned criteria for definition of the clergy: (1) life-style, (2) education and training, and (3) professional career. Of the three, life-style is undoubtedly the most distinctive feature of members of the ruhaniyyat. In the broadest sense, it encompasses many aspects of the life of a ruhani, such as familial relationships, social behavior, language and so on. Indeed one may properly speak of clerical culture as a distinct subculture within Iranian culture, a subject which has yet to be fully studied. For our purposes, however, the most socially visible aspect of clerical life-style, namely physical appearance—characterized by turban, beard, and cloak—is taken as the key requirement. While this may seem to represent an oversimplification of the matter, in fact the social and cultural significance of this clerical requirement can hardly be exaggerated. Not only in the eye of the public does it represent the essence of being a member of the clergy, but from the perspective of the religious community itself it is the symbol of religious and social status and must be protected as such. Long before the revolution, in his call for the punishment of those clerics who in his view had violated the principles represented by the "sacred clerical apparel" (libas-i muqaddas-i ruhaniyyat), Ayatullah Khumayni stated:

... the turbans of these clerics (akhund-ha) who in the name of Islamic jurists (fiqaha), and in the name of Islamic scholars ('ulama') create such corruption in Muslim societies must be removed... Our zealous youths in Iran are obliged to prevent this type of clerics from appearing turbaned in public... They need not to beat them up badly, but must remove their turbans... This apparel is noble, not everybody should be wearing it.

Thus after the revolution, taking away the privilege of wearing the clerical garb (khal'-i libas) from members of the clergy as a form of punishment for their violations became a common practice. In short, today the clerical garb has become an exclusive feature of members of the clergy and as such a necessary and in many aspects even a sufficient condition for being considered a ruhani. Likewise, abandoning clerical garb, either
voluntarily or by force, would be tantamount to giving up one's clerical identity and status.  

A second requirement for clerical membership is religious education and training. What precisely such education entails varies from one level of clerical ranking to another, and generally speaking it serves as the most important basis of stratification within the religious establishment. At the highest level, it means having received extensive religious education in a major religious center (hauzih-i 'lmiyyih) and permission from a recognized religious authority to use one's own judgement in deducing specific religious ordinances (ijtihad). At the lowest level, it means simply being familiar with and able to quote verses of the Qur'an, sayings of the Prophet and Imams, opinions of a major religious authority (marja-'i taqlid) on various aspects of Islamic duties and rituals, and significant episodes of the lives of the Imams for the purpose of commemoration of special events in the Islamic calendar. Between these two extremes, various levels of religious education which are associated with different functions and titles, exist. All these various levels of religious education and training, however, have one essential feature in common, namely some knowledge of the Arabic language. As the language of the Islamic scripture and a requirement for performing prayers, it is quite natural for Arabic to become the official language of religious scholarship even among non-Arab Muslims. It was precisely this aspect of the Arabic language which led Ataturk to replace Arabic with Turkish for sermons and calls-to-prayer (adhan) in his attempt to undermine the religious class in Turkey. Among the Iranian clergy, the prestige enjoyed by Arabic was such that Farsi was almost completely neglected. Viewing it as the language of the unlearned public, the clergy regarded speaking Farsi as being beneath their social and religious status. Indeed not knowing any language but Arabic became a virtue and a sign of piety. In one of his criticisms of clerical leaders, Ayatullah Khumayni spoke of their isolation from the society and cited their distaste for making simple conversations with the public as evidence. The same point has been echoed by Gibb in his criticism of the ulama's traditionalism: "Even
the very language which they generally use has an antiquarian flavor that strikes curiously upon the ear and eye and strengthens the feeling that they have no message for today." For the lowest ranks, however, this clerical requirement has come to mean simply being able to pronounce Arabic words correctly and hence give the impression of being a true religious scholar. In a sense, the significance of the Arabic language for the education requirement is similar to that of the clerical garb for the life-style, with the important and obvious difference that it is by no means a sufficient condition.

Professional career constitutes the third requirement for clerical membership in our definition scheme. Compared to the other two, this requirement is both less specific and less essential, while still being important. What is meant by this requirement is very similar to the basic element of the definition that Leon Carl Brown proposes in his study of the Tunisian case. According to him, the religious establishment is composed of those who are "professionally concerned in several different capacities as spokesmen for Islam." The main idea here is to take into account the fact that for almost all members of the clergy religion occupies a central place in their careers and for the majority in earning their livelihood. Whether functioning as a teacher of religion, a preacher (va'iz), a researcher (muhaqqiq), a propagator (muballiq), or a prayer leader at a mosque (pishnamaz), the majority of the clergy depend on religion for their income. Even for the highest religious authorities (maraji' taqlid), who, properly speaking, do not receive an income as their financial needs are met by that part of the religious taxes known as the share of the Imam (sahm-i Imam) which is given to them by their followers voluntarily, religion still plays, in a different way to be sure, a crucial role. Of course, there have been rich clerical families, whose wealth came from landholdings, and for whom religion was more a basis of social status than source of income. The professional career requirement also does not apply to those religious leaders, such as Siyyid Hasan Mudarris or Ayatullah Kashani, who have become full-time politicians. For such individuals, their religious role becomes completely overshadowed by their political role both among the public and within
the religious community, although they do not lose their clerical status. Such ambiguities associated with this clerical requirement notwithstanding, it seems the career requirement is still significant. Its significance, however, has an inverse relationship with the level of education: the lower the level of a cleric’s religious education, the more essential it will be for him to pursue a career which is directly and closely related to religion. The career profession is also significant in a negative sense, that is, in the sense that mundane professions, especially those involving physical labor, more and more have come to be regarded as improper and socially unacceptable occupations for members of the clergy, and hence could adversely affect one’s clerical status.\textsuperscript{16}

Together these three requirements help us identify more properly members of the religious class and avoid some of the confusion that is usually associated with this subject. This, however, does not mean that all the problems in assessing the role of the religious community will be solved. There still remains, for example, the question of the true religious beliefs of those appearing as clerics. It has been argued, for example, that Malik ul-Mutkallimin and Siyyid Jamal ud-Din Isfahani, the two most famous preachers involved in the constitutional movement, did not adhere to Shi‘ism. The former is suspected of having been an Azali, one of the two main divisions within the Babi movement, which according to the religious authorities represented a religious heresy. The latter is said to have held no religious beliefs at all in the later period of his life.\textsuperscript{17} Such questions, of course, are significant for the assessment of the position of many active clerics within the clerical institution and the extent to which they represent the core of the clergy in their beliefs and behavior. As far as the social position and public influence of the clergy are concerned, however, the religious beliefs of individual clergymen become insignificant since they still act as clerics and are perceived by the public as such. Indeed, the very fact that these individuals may have used their clerical status to achieve their political goals illustrates the significance of the social position of the clerical class.

Having discussed some important social and cultural aspects of the clergy in
contemporary Iranian society, we may now turn to their religious aspect and examine briefly the doctrinal bases as well as historical developments which contributed to the institutionalization of religion and formation of the clerical establishment in Iran.

**Doctrinal Bases and Historical Developments**

Whether there is doctrinal justification in Islam for the existence of a clergy may be regarded as an irrelevant question since no matter how it is answered it will have little effect on religious realities of contemporary Islamic societies. True as this may be, there are still several reasons why this question merits some consideration. First, there seems to be some disagreement among the orientalists and other observers of Muslim societies as to whether there is a clergy in Islam. A discussion of this point may help to clarify some of the confusion on this matter. Second, and far more important, is the fact that, due to the emergence of Islamic revivalism and a politically more assertive clergy, this issue has increasingly become a real source of conflict and division between Muslim traditionalists and modernists. Indeed one could even say that denying doctrinal validity to the clerical class has become a defining characteristic of Islamic modernism. Thus an examination of this question will help us understand an important aspect of religious developments in Muslim societies. Third, to the extent that the future direction of Islamic countries is determined by the outcome of the confrontation between the traditionalists and modernists, and to the degree that the victory of each side depends on its ability to score on this point, the question of doctrinal bases of the clergy becomes a critical issue with important social and political implications for the future of Muslim societies.

It has become a common practice among orientalists and scholars of Islam to contrast the positions of the religious classes in Islam and Christianity. Bernard Lewis, for example, has noted:  

\[18\]

\[\ldots\] Islam has no clergy and no orthodoxy in the Christian sense. There is
no pope, no bishops or bishoprics, no hierarchy, and no councils or synods to
determine and impose an approved creed and to condemn deviations from it
as heterodoxy. Such authorities were never constituted in Islam, and few
attempts to do so failed utterly. The ulema are men of religious learning,
not priests; they receive no ordination, have no parishes, and perform no
sacraments.

In a similar fashion, another observer notes that "there is an important difference of
organizational form between Islam and Christianity. Islam has no church and no
priesthood—the 'ulama' are simply those learned in the Islamic sciences, a clerisy, not a
clergy."19 There are several points to be made regarding these and similar observations
made by western scholars. First, while it is quite valid and informative to compare and
contrast the status of the religious classes in Christianity and Islam, it may lead, and
indeed has led, to a serious problem, that is, making the notion of clergy in Christianity a
standard against which all the other religious traditions are to be judged. Thus such a
limited comparative framework may be counter-productive and lead to more confusion than
understanding concerning the nature of the religious class in Islam. Second, it is typical of
these statements to use "Islam" and "Muslim society" interchangeably and thus confuse
the doctrinal question with the historical and sociological one. Obviously what Islam is, or
may be interpreted to be, and what exist as realities of Muslim societies are not
necessarily the same and hence the two must be distinguished explicitly and clearly.
Finally, whether referring to doctrinal justifications or historical and social realities, like
other general statements, these observations fail to take into account the variation in
interpretation within Islam, such as between Sunnism and Shi'ism, as well as differences
across Muslim societies.

From a purely doctrinal point of view, the most essential characteristic of an official
clergy in a religion is its place and role in the relationship between man and God. In every
religion, no matter how transcendent its God is believed to be, and almost by definition,
this relationship is mediated since otherwise there would only be personal relationships
with God(s) and no religious traditions, prophets, scriptures, rituals, etc. Thus the main
difference among religions in this regard is not the presence or absence of such mediation but rather its degree and nature. The higher the degree to which a religion allows mediation in the relationship between God and man by a certain group of individuals, the stronger the doctrinal basis and justification for the existence or eventual development of a clergy will be. More specifically, two aspects of such clerical mediation are of particular significance: (1) the exact functions of the clergy in their role as mediators between God and man (e.g., interpreting God’s revelations and commandments, forgiving sins, blessing, etc.); and (2) the type of qualification that they must have to perform such functions (e.g., ascribed or achieved attributes). Thus in analyzing the doctrinal bases of the clergy within each religion as well as comparing them across different religions, the two aspects of this class, clerical "function" and "qualification," may serve as guidelines.

With these remarks in mind, we may now turn to the question of doctrinal bases of the ruhaniyyat in Islam and Shi’ism. A fundamental point which has been emphasized by the modernists, and basically not disputed by their traditionalist opponents, including members of the clergy themselves, is that as a doctrinal principle, there is no clerical class in Islam to mediate between God and man. The position of the modernists on this point may best be represented by Dr. Ali Shariati. Taking a scheme developed by the Egyptian scholar Farid Vajdi as his guideline, Shariati presents what he considers as the fundamental principles of Islam. The first such principle is "the establishment of immediate relationship between God and man," an important corollary of which, according to him, is the absence of any official religious class to function in that capacity.¹⁰

Islam destroyed the mediation between man and God, and for the first time announced the establishment of an immediate relationship between these two poles. Therefore, an official clerical organization (saziman-i rasmiiy-i rhuani) does not exist in Islam. The various clerical positions are not recognized in this religion, and the acceptance of faith and devotional actions of individuals are not contingent upon the supervision and mediation of particular officials . . . The God of the Qur’an . . . is close to man, within the reach of everybody, and friend of those who are His friends. [He] announces, in an effective and unambiguous manner, His strong desire for man to be very close to Him, and even considers Himself closer to man than man himself. Thus Islam has intended to prevent the development of a
kind of "religious aristocracy" and class based society, of group
discriminations and privileges, of stagnation, of a resistant system and an
official center which would become the agent of suppression and reaction,
and the formation of (in the words of the late Na'ini) religious and clerical
tyrranny" (istibdad-i dini va ruhani).

21 In support of his position, Shariati cites verses from the Qur'an which state the
closeness of God to man, and offers the example of leadership of public prayers, a function
for which, from a doctrinal viewpoint, no official position exists as any (male) Muslim who
qualifies as a just person can perform this task. Shariati, nevertheless, concedes to the
practical necessity, brought about by the expansion of social relations and hence of
religious issues, for the existence of a group specialized in matters of religion, that is
"religious scholars" ('ulamy-i madhhabi), whose function is in no way different from that of
those specialized in other fields of science. He then goes on to emphasize the critical
difference between "necessity" (zarurat) and "officiality" (rasmiiyat) as the bases of
existence of social groups, and that stagnation and monopolization are characteristics of
the latter type only.

This fundamental principle of Islam that Shariati and other modernists stress in
support of their denial of doctrinal legitimacy to an Islamic clergy is not basically disputed
by those taking the opposite view, including members of the religious class themselves.
They, too, reject the idea of a privileged clerical class in Islam which could monopolize
religion and use it as a basis of social, economic, and political power.22 For them, however,
the legitimacy of the clerical class is still based on firm Islamic grounds and not simply on
practical necessity. They base their arguments on the Qur'an as well as the sayings of the
Prophet (ahadith) and the Imams (ravayat), especially on the latter. The following verse
from the Qur'an (9: 122) is cited in all such arguments:

Nor are the Believers to go forth all together; why does not a group from
every community of them go forth to acquire understanding in religion
(yatafaqqahu fi al-din) and admonish their own people upon returning to
them, that they may beware.
This is interpreted as meaning that in each Muslim community there must be a group of individuals who would devote themselves fully to the study of religion so that they can guide the rest of the society, a clear prescription for the division of the society between the religious class and laity. Moreover, the meaning of religious learning implied by the verb *tafaqquh* (comprehension, understanding) is commonly narrowed down to the science of jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Subsequently, the verse is interpreted as a commandment for the creation of a group of professional jurists. Such an interpretation, of course, is not accepted by either the modernists or even Qur'anic commentators and exegetes. As such great religious figures as Ghazzali, Mulla Sadra, Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzivari, and even the major Shi'i jurist, Shahid-i Thani have all noted, *fiqh* in its original meaning, has a broad connotation and includes comprehension of any aspect of religion, especially its fundamentals, and not necessarily jurisprudence or any other branch of religious knowledge. And as a western scholar has correctly pointed out: "Early Islam made no distinction between law and religion. It is significant that the word for the legal system of Islam--the Shari'a or 'way'--was relatively late in making an appearance, and the somewhat earlier word, *fiqh*, as 'understanding,' was used at first equally for the study of law and theology, though it has come to have an almost exclusively legal connotation."\(^{23}\)

Indeed, as some modernists have argued, the fact that the verse mentions admonishing people (*indhar*) as the end purpose for this religious learning indicates a different kind of knowledge than jurisprudence, which as a legal science has a different purpose. At the same time, it is the development, or rather overdevelopment, of this branch of religious studies which has provided the main framework for the emergence and continued existence of the clerical class. Given this fact, it is not surprising that many clerics have preferred to confuse the meaning of *tafaqquh* in the above verse with today's highly specialized and narrow science of *fiqh*, and thus provide Qur'anic basis for their profession. Of course, the Qur'an is not the only source used to provide doctrinal justification for a clerical class. Many sayings of the Prophet and Imams are also used in this respect which cannot be
discussed here. But even more important than these are some of the doctrinal developments within the Shi‘ite religious thinking that have become the pillars of the clerical institution. Thus the remainder of this section will be devoted to the presentation of an outline of the development of some important concepts of religious authority in Islam and Shi‘ism and their relationships with the emergence of the clergy.

There seems to exist a general consensus on when and how an Islamic clergy emerged within the mainstream of the Muslim community. According to Petrushevsky: "During the life of the Prophet and the four caliphs (the rightly guided caliphs) and in the Umayid period no special clerical class existed . . . The class of fuqaha and ulama came into being under the Abbasids."\textsuperscript{24} In Gibb’s view the development of the concept of \textit{ijma‘} (consensus of the community) as a basis for determining Islamic principles, in addition to the two primary sources of the Qur‘an and \textit{sunnah} (Prophetic tradition) was the beginning of the formation of a clerical class in the mainstream of the Islamic tradition:\textsuperscript{25}

As their authority became firmly held and more generally conceded by the community the class of Ulama claimed (and were generally recognized) to represent the community in all matters relating to faith and law, more particularly against the authority of the State. At an early date--probably some time in the second century--the principle was secured that the ‘consensus of the community’ (which in practice meant that of the Ulama) had binding force. \textit{Ijma‘} was thus brought into the armoury of the theologians and jurists to fill up all the remaining gaps in their system. As the Tradition was the integration of the Koran, so the consensus of scholars became the integration of the Tradition.

While taking the same position regarding the time of the emergence of the clergy within the Sunni community, Shariati considers the establishment of the four official schools of jurisprudence (\textit{madhahib-i arba‘ii}) as the key step in this development: "From the time of the Abbasids--through officialization of the Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi‘i, and Maliki schools, and suppression of the schools and views which were not compatible with these four schools--a centralized clergy was officially founded."\textsuperscript{26}

Such general agreement, however, does not exist with regard to the emergence of the clerical class in the Shi‘ite communities. Nikki Keddie, for instance, considers the
development of the concept of *ijtiḥad* as the main step in the emergence of a Shiʿite clergy. According to her, "The institution of mujtahids who could interpret certain aspects of Shiʿi law developed gradually beginning considerably after the twelfth imam’s disappearance."²⁷ Hamid Algar similarly views the emergence of the concepts of *ijma* and *ijtiḥad* among the Shiʿis as being after "the Greater Occultation" (*ghaybat-i kubra*).²⁸ S.A. Arjomand takes the position that *ijtiḥad* was "firmly rejected by the early Imams," and that it was only in the eighth Islamic century that it was accepted by the famous Shiʿite jurist, Allamah al-Hilli (d. 1326/726), a development which "constitutes a crucial step in the enhancement of the juristic authority of the ‘ulama’."²⁹ But this view of the development of the concept of *ijtiḥad* among the Shiʿites has been challenged by some religious scholars. Ayatullah Mutahhari, for example, states: "Some people think that *ijtiḥad* appeared among the Sunnis in the first century and among the Shiʿis in the third. This delay of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) among the Shiʿites has been attributed to their not being in need of *ijtiḥad* due to the presence of the Imams. But this view is incorrect . . . the first Shiʿite book on *fiqh* has been written during the time of Amir al-Muʿminin Ali (peace be upon him) [the first Imam] which is the book by Ali Ibn Rafiʿ."³⁰ Similarly, M. Ramyar argues that *ijtiḥad* among the Shiʿites can be traced to the period of the fifth and sixth Imams, who are quoted as encouraging some of their students to answer the religious questions that people brought to them by issuing *fatwa* (religious decree).³¹ Still another view is presented by Ali Shariati who attributes the development of the clergy among the Shiʿites to the social and political circumstances that they were facing as a minority rather than to any particular doctrinal concept: "Shiʿism--because of the special circumstances that it was facing throughout its life--from the very beginning of its emergence had clerical organization. The reason for this being that since the Shiʿites were a revolutionary minority under pressure from the Islamic government, it was necessary for them to have a unified organization and specific central leadership, and since their basis and goal were religion, willy nilly their institution of political leadership was viewed as spiritual (*ruhani*).
Later this organization evolved into an almost official clerical class."32

The picture that emerges from these various accounts and from other aspects of Shi‘ite history is that two important developments in the early period of Shi‘ism have contributed to the emergence of the Shi‘ite clergy. The first is the foundation of the Shi‘ite school of law during the life of the sixth Imam, Ja‘far al-Sadiq, who is said to have trained four thousand students. The significance of this development is well reflected in the fact that the Shi‘ite school of law has taken its name from the sixth Imam as it is called fiqh-i Ja‘fari. During the life of the Imams, however, whatever legal authority the ulama had was perhaps overshadowed by the authority as well as the charisma of the Imams themselves. The second development in the early period of Shi‘ite history which enhanced the doctrinal position of Shi‘ite religious scholars was the emergence of the concept of ghaybat (occultation) of the twelfth Imam in the third century. The absence of the Imam meant the end of imamat (divinely inspired leadership) and the beginning of a new phase in Shi‘ism and its concepts of religious and political leadership. Gradually the Shi‘ite ‘ulama’ developed the concept of vilayat-i ‘amm-ih (general vicegerency), according to which during the period of the Greater Occultation, which will last until the end of time, the twelfth Imam will have no specific deputies—in contrast to the period of the Lesser Occultation (ghaybat sughra)—and consequently this gap must be filled by all religious scholars who will be able to determine indirectly his views and wishes.

Far more important than all these doctrinal developments in the early period of the Shi‘ite history, however, was the establishment of Shi‘ism as the state religion in Iran under the Safavid dynasty at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This represented a turning point in the evolution of the Shi‘ite clerical institution. As part of their efforts to legitimize their rule through religion, the Safavid kings organized and institutionalized the group of ulama who were functioning individually prior to this time. Thus many scholars consider the Safavid era as the true beginning of the formation of the clerical institution in Shi‘ism. In his major study of the role of religion and the religious class during the Safavid
period, Arjomand divides the history of the Shi'ism into "the sectarian phase" which is the pre-Safavid period and the Orthodoxy phase which dates from its establishment as state religion under the Safavids. During the sectarian phase, he observes, "the Shi'ite 'ulama' (theologians and jurists) were a distinct social group but did not constitute a recognized institution, a hierocracy," while the Safavid period marks "the transition of the Shi'ite 'ulama' from a privileged sodality to a hierocracy." Algar similarly suggests that it is "from the Safavid period onward that one may meaningfully talk about the existence of a body of Shi'i ulama." Henry Corbin even goes further by asserting that Safavid Shi'ism gave birth "to something like an official clergy, exclusively concerned with legality and jurisprudence, to such a point that original Shi'ism, in its essence gnostic and theosophic, has, so to speak, to hide itself." Although the religious establishment owed its existence to the Safavid state and was subordinated throughout most of this period to the state, it gained a significant degree of institutional independence especially during the weak shahs. Thus during the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn, the last Safavid monarch, the religious establishment became so powerful that some sort of theocracy is said to have existed. The independence of the clerical institution is well reflected in the fact that it survived the collapse of the Safavid empire in the early eighteenth century, and continued its existence against hostile forces. When the Qajars came to power in the late eighteenth century, the clerical institution was strong enough to become a rival power of the state.

Along with the political developments of the Safavid period which firmly established the social basis of the Shi'ite clerical institution, some important doctrinal developments also took place. The most significant concept which began to take root in this period was taqlid (imitation of a religious authority). Of course, as a complementary concept to ijihad, taqlid was discussed among the Shi'ite religious authorities since the earlier periods. However, until the Safavid time it was either firmly rejected, as done by Shaykh al-Kulayni (d. 940), or was considered as permissible, as reflected in the views of Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 1022). During the Safavid period, the incumbency of taqlid began to become
accepted by the Shi'ite jurists such as Allamih al-Hilli, although the full significance of this concept emerged in the nineteenth century. Similarly the concept of vilayat-i ‘ammih (general vicegerency) assumed a more definite position by the advancement of the argument that the Imams have appointed the jurists, in a general manner, as their deputies.

The doctrinal developments during the Safavid period, however, were undermined by the akhbari school, a strong movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which totally rejected ijtihad and hence taqlid, and took the position that only the sayings of the Prophet and Imams are valid sources for determining religious rulings since only they were infallible and able to understand the true meanings of God’s words. Eventually this school of Shi'ite religious thinking was defeated by the opposing movement, the usuli, which reasserted the validity of ijtihad and taqlid even firmer than before and has continued to dominate religious thinking among the Iranian Shi'ites until today. Religious authority, according to this school, is invested in the office of marja’-i taqlid (source of immitation). Thus while for the Akhbaris the Shi'ite community was divided between the Imams and the rest of the population which had to follow them, according to the Usulis the community of the believers is divided between those few who have reached the highest level of religious education (i.e., jurisprudence) and hence are qualified to deduce religious laws and ordinances, and the vast majority of people who are ignorant (‘avam) and have to follow one of the religious authorities or all their religious acts would be invalid.

That these concepts and what Shariati and other modernists have emphasized as a fundamental principle of Islam—that is, immediate relationship between God and man—are irreconcilable is apparent enough. This fact illustrates how such fundamental yet abstract principles such as immediate relationship between God and man may so effectively be undermined by the more specific concept of religious authority. The almost universal acceptance of these concepts of religious authority among the Shi'ites reveals what a formidable task the modernists have in convincing their co-religionists, especially the
masses, that (1) they are entitled, based on their knowledge of Islam, to have their own views on religious matters and principles, and (2) their views may be even closer to the true spirit of Islam and Shi‘ism than those of a traditionalist and even reactionary religious authority. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that many modernists, including Shariati, while being critical of the clerical institution and even questioning its legitimacy, themselves believe in such principles as the obligation to follow a religious authority (taqlid) which is the very foundation of the clerical establishment. Such internal contradictions and the external opposition of the traditionalist forces go a long way in explaining the failure of the modernist movements to become popular in Iran.

The concepts of religious authority discussed here show how far from the reality are, at least with respect to the Shi‘ite situation, the remarks made by Bernard Lewis and others in characterizing the religious class in Islam as being simply comprised of religious scholars who do not possess any authority or privilege. H.A.R. Gibb’s observation in this regard, with some qualifications, may well summarize our discussion on this point: 38

It is one of the boasts of Islam that it does not countenance the existence of a clergy, who might claim to intervene between God and man. True as this is, however, Islam, as it became organized into a system, did in fact produce a clerical class, which acquired precisely the same kind of social and religious authority and prestige as the clergy in the Christian communities . . . Given the sanctity of Koran and Tradition and the necessity of a class of persons professionally occupied with their interpretation the emergence of the Ulama was a natural and inevitable development . . .

Two qualifications to this conclusion must be made. First, with respect to the inevitability of the emergence of the clerical class, as was suggested earlier in our discussion, one may argue that it is true, indeed almost by definition, for most religions. The real question, however, concerns the degree of authority which such a class may possess and the functions that it may perform in society. It is conceivable that had the Akhbarai school of thought triumphed over the Usuli one, the emerging religious class would have had far less authority, given that its role would have been limited to merely quoting the Traditions of
the Imams, without much interpretation. Second, Gibb’s statement that the ‘ulama’ in Islam achieved "precisely" the same kind of authority that the clergy in Christianity had, seems an exaggeration of the fact, especially with regard to Sunni Islam. The Shi‘ite religious authorities (maraji‘i taqlid), however, as has been shown, possess a degree of authority which far exceeds that of their Sunni counterparts and in some aspects is similar to that of the Christian clergy. More importantly, religious power in Shi‘ism is far more institutionalized than is the case in Sunnism. The Shi‘ite clerical establishment is the embodiment of the institutionalization of religious authority in Iran, and as the following examination of its organization and stratification shows, it resembles the Christian clerical institution more than its Sunni counterpart does.

**Organization and Stratification**

Organizationally, the Shi‘i clerical institution in Iran possesses some characteristics which set it apart from its counterparts in both Sunni and Christian religious traditions. As it has become clear from our discussion so far, through both historical and doctrinal developments following the establishment of Shi‘ism as the state religion in Iran, the Shi‘i clergy have been able to institutionalize their religious and social status to a degree that no clerical community in Sunni societies has been able to do. At the same time, this process has not led to the creation of a formal and rigidly structured religious hierarchy which is characteristic of the clerical organization in the Christian tradition. Even the highest Shi‘ite authority does not have the kind of disciplinary power and apparatus that the Pope possesses, and consequently no clergyman can be technically deprived of his clerical status. As it will become clear from the following description, the structure of authority within the Shi‘i clerical institution resembles more the pyramidal model than the hierarchical one. In a hierarchical structure of authority power is monopolized at the top of the organization and distributed to the lower levels through delegation, while in a
pyramidal model the direction of the distribution of power is upward.\textsuperscript{40}

In terms of clerical and social status, however, there are various strata within the clergy which are associated with different religious functions and titles. At the apex of the clerical pyramid is the position of the single most important religious authority which is variably referred to as \textit{marja'-i taqlid-i mutlaq}, or \textit{amm} or \textit{kull}. As its titles suggest, this office represents the consensus of the clerical community as well as the society at large concerning who among all the religious authorities is the most knowledgeable (\textit{a'lam}) and just (\textit{a'dal}), and hence can command the universal following of all the Shi'is. There is no formal body to elect or appoint an individual to this office and, given the competition and rivalry that naturally develops among all qualified clerical leaders, it is not surprising that it has been mostly vacant. In recent Iranian history only Ayatullah Burujerdi (d. 1961) was able to achieve this status.\textsuperscript{41} But even when occupied, this office represents the first among equals and should not be mistaken as implying absolute authority. Indeed other religious authorities (\textit{maraj'-i taqlid}) must follow their own judgements and are forbidden to become followers of any other authority.\textsuperscript{42} Next to this highest office is the position of \textit{marja'-i taqlid} (source of imitation) which is usually occupied by a few individuals who are technically all at the same level of religious erudition and piety and hence equally qualified to be chosen as one's religious authority. The power of each of these individuals, however, is limited to his own followers. The promotion to the position of \textit{marja'-i taqlid} is similarly informal and through natural selection by followers. In a development which is fairly recent, writing a religious manual in the form of providing answers for various problems which one might face in carrying out his/her religious duties and rituals, has become a sign of qualification for this position. Also there is some campaigning done by people close to a religious leader to promote his position by gathering more followers, especially influential and wealthy ones. For the majority of the followers, however, the most important factors seem to be familiarity with a religious leader through family exposure, his reputation, and the degree of strictness or leniency of his decrees. In terms of
social status and prestige, these members of the clergy are held in high regard by the public and are given the epithet of *ayatullah ul-'uzma* (the great sign of God).\textsuperscript{43}

An important point which must be mentioned here concerns the constraining influence which may be exerted by the followers upon the religious authorities in performing their crucial task of *ijtihad*. Ayatullah Murtiza Mutahhari has characterized this problem of the Shi'ite clerical establishment as *'avam-zadigi* (being under the corrupting influence of the vulgar masses).\textsuperscript{44} In support of this point, he cites as high a religious leader as Ayatullah Burujirdi, who was the *marja'-i taqlid-i mutlaq* from the early 1940's until his death in 1961. According to Mutahhari, in one of his lectures, Ayatullah Burujirdi made a reference to the fact that some of the Twelve Imams had to observe *taqiyyih* (concealing one's true beliefs and opinions) even with respect to their own followers, and complained about his own problems as the highest religious authority of his time by saying: "... I myself, at the beginning of my assumption of universal religious authority [*marja'iyyat-i 'ummih*], was under the impression that my duty was derivation [of religious decrees] [*istinbat*] and that of the people observation [*'amal*], and that they would follow whatever I decreed. But in the course of some decrees, I realized that was not the case."\textsuperscript{45} As another example, Mutahhari cites the opposition that Ayatullah Haji Shaykh 'Abdul Karim Ha'ri Yazdi, the founder of the Qum religious center (*haouzih-i 'elmiyyih*), faced when he decided to arrange for a number of clerics to learn some foreign languages so that they can propagate Islam in other countries. According to Mutahhari, responding to this news, a group of merchants from Tehran's bazaar went to Qum and stated unequivocally: "the money that we pay as the share of the Imam [*sahm-i Imam*],\textsuperscript{46} is not for religious students to [*tullab*] learn the language of the infidels [*kuffar*]. If this situation continues, we will not give you the share of the Imam."\textsuperscript{47} Ayatullah Mutahhari considers such influence, which is exerted by the masses through their direct payment of the sahre of the Imam to religious authorities, as the most fundamental reason why there is no "freedom of thought" in the clerical institution. This absence of freedom of thought, in his opinion, has resulted in the
stagnation of the clerical community and accounts for the fact that the Shi'ite clergy, "instead of leading the society and being at its forefront, have always followed it." While Mutahhari's point is indeed important for understanding the relationship between the clerical leadership and the public, it fails to address the more fundamental question of how the masses acquire such reactionary and xenophobic religious attitudes. It seems fair to conclude that the main fault lies within the ruhaniyyat itself, if not with those authorities who hold the same views which Mutahhari criticizes, then at least with the lower rank clerics who constitute the main source of influence on people's religious beliefs and practices. It is perhaps indicative of Mutahhari's own clerical bias that he places the blame for the clergy's failure to play a more progressive social role on the public rather than on the ruhaniyyat and its internal functioning.

Immediately below the maraji'-i taqlid are the mujtahidin (plural of mujtahid) who are defined as those who have reached that level of religious education which qualifies them to apply their own judgements in deducing religious ordinances and form their own legal opinions using the standard sources available for this purpose: (1) kitab (Book, i.e., the Qur'an), (2) sunnat (the sayings and acts of the Prophet), (3) 'aql (reasoning), and (4) ijma' (consensus of religious scholars). These religious doctors occupy a unique position between the high-ranking religious authorities (maraji'-i taqlid) and the followers (muqallidin), for while they are not yet qualified to become religious authorities, it is impermissible for them to follow a religious leader, either. As far as their social status is concerned, however, they are respected as religious dignitaries and enjoy the title of Ayatullah (sign of God).

Next in rank are the professors of seminaries (mudarrisin-i hauzih), who in terms of religious education are considered to be at the threshold of becoming religious doctors. As religious teachers and scholars, they enjoy the respect of the clerical community while their social status largely depends on their individual recognition and reputation through their public activities and involvements. The clerical ranks below the religious professors are mainly located outside the clerical community itself, except for the rank of the religious
students. They are composed of clerics who at various levels of their religious education and training have left the religious centers to pursue a more public career. One may become a preacher (va'iz) a religious lecturer (khatib), a religious teacher or writer, a prayer leader at a mosque (pishnamaz), a missionary (muballiq), marriage performer ('aqid), or ruzih khawn (one who chants afflictions of the Imam's and members of their households, especially the dramatic martyrdom of the third Imam and many of his relatives at Karbala, in order to make people cry.) In terms of social status, the ranking of these professions roughly corresponds to the order in which they were cited, although it is quite possible for a prayer leader of a major mosque to acquire more prestige and recognition than an average preacher. It must also be pointed out that the distinction made among these various professions does not mean that each religious function is exclusive to that profession. A prayer leader at a mosque may perform a marriage or preach himself after leading a prayer, although typically he would invite a professional preacher for major religious occasions. Particularly in villages and small cities these religious functions are usually performed by the same clergyman who may be at the rank of a religious student (talabih) at a nearby seminary.

Our discussion of the doctrinal bases of the clergy in Shi'ism and the organizational characteristics of the clerical institution lead to two important conclusions which have also significant implications for our analysis of clerical political behavior. The first point is that doctrinally religious authority in Shi'ism has been institutionalized in the office of marja'-i taqlid. This doctrinal basis has been the most important factor in enabling the clerical class to maintain a significant degree of institutional, economic, and political base of power independent of the state. In terms of its organizational structure, however, the Shi'ite clerical establishment lacks rigid stratification and hierarchical authority which is characteristic of the Christian clergy. The amorphous nature of the internal organizational structure of the clerical establishment has allowed the existence of various centers of political power. As our discussion of clerical political behavior in the following chapters will
demonstrate, the existence of such political pluralism in turn has led to the development of different and even opposite political orientations within the religious class.
NOTES

1 Such a guarding and cautious attitude can be seen in the writings of Ayatullah Jalal Ganjihi who has joined the main opposition coalition, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (Shuray-i Milliy-i Muqavimat-i Iran), and has written several articles on the clergy in Rah-i Azadi (Paris). Similar attitudes are reflected in the comments of Shaykh Ali Tehranl, who has launched strong attacks from his exile in Iraq against Ayatullah Khumayni, his former teacher, without either criticizing the clergy as a whole or giving information on the internal relationships of the clerical institution. This strong sense of group identity and loyalty, of course, is highly significant for understanding the political behavior of the clergy.

2 John Locke's remarks on this point are quite relevant: "We should have a great many fewer disputes in the world, if words were taken for what they are, the signs of our ideas only; and not for things themselves . . . And if men would tell what ideas they make their words stand for, there could be half that obscurity or wrangling in the search or support of truth that there is." John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, vol. 2., p. 135.

3 The confusion resulting from this problem may be seen in numerous works on the political role of the clergy. Shahrough Akhavi's study on the clergy-state relations in Iran may be taken as an example. In his discussion of the 'ulama's behavior in the 1960's, Akhavi distinguishes four factions within the clergy as "radical," "conservative," "willing to cooperate with the court," and "social reformers," and includes Ali Shariati in the last category. Elsewhere, on the subject of "the two clergy reform movements" of the same period, he again extensively discusses the role of Shariati and the Husayniyih Irshad, a non-clerical religious educational and cultural institution where Shariati's activities were centered. (Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, pp. 100-105, and 143-158.) These, of course, are obvious cases since no meaningful definition of the clergy or the clerical institution would
include Shariati or the Husayniyih Irshad. There are, however, other instances, such as Akhavi's inclusion of Yahya Dawlatabadi and Hasan Rushdiyih in the category of modernist clerics (Ibid., p. 35), where the problem is much more subtle. One could argue that neither of these two individuals would quite qualify as members of the clergy. Dawlatabadi, for example, states in his autobiography that he specifically decided not to pursue his father's career as a clergyman. (Yahya Dawlatabadi, *Khatirat-i Yahya*, vol. I, p. 176.) Another example would be Nikki Keddie's reference to Ali Shariati's father as a clergyman, again a contestable point. (Nikki Keddie, *Religion and Politics in Iran*, p. 13.) Such problems arise especially on the subject of the "reformists" and "modernists" within the clergy.

Although the term is derived from the Arabic root *ruh*, it does not exist in the Arabic language, which is quite significant in indicating the special position of the clerical class in Iran as compared to Arab Muslim countries.

This point will be elaborated bellow in our discussion of the organizational characteristics of the *ruhaniyyat*.

For the sake of convenience, and given the absence of a better English translation, the term clergy will be used throughout this study in referring to the *ruhaniyyat*.

To make it more complete, one may add being male as the first essential requirement since clerical membership is open only to men. Although there have been women who were qualified on the basis of their religious education and professional career, none is considered as member of the religious class. Moreover, the highest office within the clerical institution, i.e., *marja'iyyat-i taqlid* is technically closed to women. This requirement, nevertheless, has not been included as part of the definition for being both obvious enough and reflected in the life-style requirement.


Needless to mention that this supposedly harsh punishment in fact reflects the favoritism of the regime toward this class and the significance of group loyalty among
the clergy, since the same violation would undoubtedly bring a far more severe punishment on non-clerics.

10 It must be pointed out that this exclusive association of turban and cloak with the clergy is a relatively recent development and reflects one aspect of Westernization of Iranian society. Prior to the introduction of western clothes, the turban and cloak represented the standard traditional dress of Iranian men. It was only after Riza Shah’s enforcement of a universal dress code for all men while excepting members of the clergy in the late 1920’s that this apparel became exclusive to the clerics. This was an important step in the process of full differentiation of this class from the rest of the society. Also some members of the clergy have admitted the novelty of this development and have been critical of it. Ayatullah Bihishti, another religious figure who became a prominent clerical leader after the revolution, in discussing the state of the clergy in the early 1960’s, observed: "In our society the garb is regarded as the essence of the ruhaniyyat." However, unlike Ayatullah Khumayni, Bihishti not only did not attribute any nobility to the clerical outfit but even deplored its being regarded as an essential feature of clerical identity, although after the revolution he made no objection to the regime’s policy on this issue. See S.M.H. Bihishti, "Ruhaniyyat dar Islam va darmiyan-i Muslimin," in Marja’iyyat va Ruhaniyyat. pp. 152-3.

11 See Ahmad Ahmadi Birjandi, Ayandih (Farvardin-Khurday, 1358/March-May 1979), pp. 85-91.

12 Ayatullah Khumayni, Hukumat-i Islami, p. 196.


15 This is the case despite the fact that, according to many clerics themselves, in Islam religion and religious knowledge cannot serve in any way as one’s means of earning a livelihood. See, for example, the argument made by Ayatullah Bihishti,
"Ruhaniyyat dar Islam va darmiyan-i Muslimin," pp. 147-149.


20 Ali Shariati, Islamshinasi, p. 29.

21 Na’ini, from whom Shariati borrows the expression of "religious and clerical tyranny," was himself a religious leader who wrote a treatise at the time of the constitutional movement in its support. In this work, Na’ini presents the argument that in the absence of the twelfth Imam, the only one capable of establishing a legitimate and perfect Islamic government, the constitutional regime is the least imperfect and illegitimate system of government and an effective means of preventing tyranny, including the religious and clerical type. See Siyyid Husayn Na’ini, Tanbih al-Ummah va Tanzih al-Millah. It must also be pointed out that Shariati’s negative view of the role of the clergy reflects his thinking on the institutionalization of religions and social movements in general: "Religion (madhhhab)-- which in the beginning is itself a revolutionary movement and a novel thought and plan--will assume a conservative spirit within the rigid and static framework of the "organization of the clergy," become stagnated and rigidified, protector of oppression, immobility, and the "past," and fearful of the future." (Shariati, Islamshinasi, p. 31.)

22 For example, similar arguments are made in S.M.H. Bihishti, "Ruhaniyyat dar Islam va darmiyan-i Muslimin," pp. 131-161.

23 John A. Williams, ed., Islam, p. 94.

24 I.P. Petrushevsky, Islam in Iran.

28 Hamid Algar, Religion and Politics in Iran, 1785-1906, pp. 6-7.
29 S.A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, pp. 139-140.
30 Murtiza Mutahhari, Khadamat-i Mutaqabil-i Islam va Iran, pp. 670-671. Of course, elsewhere Mutahhari distinguishes between two types of ijtihad, one valid and the other invalid. The invalid form, which was practiced by the Sunni ‘ulama’, took the form of qiyas (analogy) and ijtihad-i ra’iy (independent judgement). Since the Shi’ite ‘ulama’ had rejected this practice, and since the term ijtihad was used only in this particular meaning until the fifth Islamic century, they totally refused to recognize it as a valid concept. But as ijtihad gradually assumed a more general meaning (i.e., meaning any attempt to deduce religious rulings), the Shi’ite ‘ulama came to accept it in their own version. See Mutahhari, "IJtihad dar Islam," in Marja’iyyat va Ruhaniyyat, pp. 37-43.
33 S.A. Arjomand, The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam, p. 14. As Arjomand himself acknowledges, the term hierocracy, at least in its Weberian sense which is how Arjomand uses it. Weber defines a hierocratic organization as one "which enforces its order through psychic coercion by distributing or denying religious benefits (‘hierocratic coercion’)." Max Weber, Economy and Society, p. 54. As it will become clear from our discussion of the organization of the clerical institution in Shi’ism in this chapter, and from our analysis of clerical political behavior in the remaining chapters, the Shi’ite clerical institution does not have any significant hierocratic coercive power over its members. Throughout the history of the clerical institution in
Iran, especially since the establishment of the clerical regime following the revolution, if any order has been successfully enforced at all, it has been achieved through political and not hierocratic coercion.


35 Quoted in ibid., p. 5. For a critical analogy between pre- and post-Safavid Shi'ism, see Ali Shariati, *Tashayyu'-i Alavi, Tashayyu'-i Safavi*.

36 The concept of the guardianship of the jurisprudence (*vilayat-i faqih*) which was put forward by Ayatullah Khumayni in the 1960s and was vulgarized and popularized after the revolution, is more a theory of political rather than religious authority, and thus will be discussed in our discussion of political developments in the post-nationalist era.

37 At the very beginning of every manual for religious conduct, known as *tauzih ul-masa'il* or *risalih-i 'amaliyyih*, this condition for the validity of all religious acts has been stated. Technically, there is a third group which includes those who are qualified to deduce religious laws for themselves but cannot function as sources of imitation for others.


39 Forcing members of the clergy to give up their clerical status by abandoning the garb which, as was pointed out above, has become a practice of the Islamic government is obviously a symbol of political power of the clerical regime and should not be confused with the religious power of the clerical institution per se.

40 For a fuller description of the differences between these two models, see David Apter, *The Politics of Modernization*, p. 81-84.

41 Following the death of Ayatullah Burujirdi, a major debate on the question of his succession began to take place which gradually changed it focus to the very nature of the office of religious authority (*marja'-i taqlid*) and even the place of the clerical establishment itself in Islam. Although no dramatic outcomes followed this debate, it
was a significant development within the religious community and had some political repercussions which will be discussed in chapter V.

42 An incident which happened during the tobacco protest illustrates this point. After Ayatullah Mirza Shirazi, the highest religious leader at the time, issued his famous decree forbidding all consumption of tobacco, Ayatullah Tabatabayi, another religious leader who later became a leading figure in the constitutional movement, was seen consuming tobacco. When reminded of Mirza Shirazi's decree, Tabatabayi is reported to have replied: I am myself a mujtahid.

43 For more description of the title of "ayatullah", which has become exclusively associated with Khumayni in the West, see J. Calmard, "Ayat al-Allah," Encyclopedia Islamica, New Edition. (Hereafter cited as EI.2)


46 This is a reference to that portion of the religious tax (khums) which technically belongs to the Twelfth Imam. During the occultation, however, the religious authorities receive this money on His behalf, and "theoretically" have full discretionary power over it.

47 Ibid., p. 188.

48 Ibid., p. 189.

49 Of course, the rise of the clergy to power following the Islamic revolution has been accompanied by a surge in the number of Ayatullahs regardless of their religious qualifications. Consequently the title has lost much of its religious significance.
CHAPTER III

MODERNIZATION, SECULARIZATION AND THE CLERGY:

THE RIZA SHAH ERA, 1925-1941

One of the most interesting episodes in the history of modern Iran is the peaceful and semi-legal transfer of monarchical rule from one dynasty to another. In 1924, the Majlis (Iranian parliament)—which itself had been established in 1906 by a decree of Muzaffar ad-Din Shah, the fifth Qajar monarch, during the Constitutional movement—voted to dethrone Ahmad Shah and end the Qajar dynasty. Subsequently, a Constituent Assembly was elected and, through the modification of a few articles of the Constitution, paved the way for the ascension of Riza Shah to the throne and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty.¹ Thus a new era in Iranian history began which came to be associated with modernization and secularization.

Our discussion of the Riza Shah era is not intended as a review or an analysis of his modernizing reforms.² Rather, our focus will be on the position of the clergy with regard to these reforms and their political role within the context of the social changes taking place in this period. The following discussion will thus examine the developments within the clerical establishment, the role of Ayatullah Seyyid Hasan Mudarris as the most important religio-political figure, and the position of the clergy regarding the reforms associated with Riza Shah’s era. Before examining these issues, however, the significance of this period in the history of modernization in Iran will be discussed briefly.

**Historical Significance of the Riza Shah Era**

The history of modernization in Iran is usually traced back to the attempts made by Abbas Mirza—the Crown Prince and son of Fath Ali Shah, the second ruler of the Qajar
dynasty—following his defeat by the Russians in 1912, to create a modern army capable of withstanding Russian military aggression.\textsuperscript{3} It is with the Riza Shah's coming to power and his nearly two decades of dictatorial rule, however, that Iranian society enters the "process" of modernization through the experience of major economic, social, and cultural changes. As to the extent of these changes, while it is possible to disagree with the assertion that "The changes brought about in Iran by Reza Shah were of sufficient magnitude to qualify as a revolution,"\textsuperscript{4} it is equally absurd to suggest that "Iran faced the world in 1941 as it had for centuries before."\textsuperscript{5} At any rate, that under Riza Shah Iranian society began to undergo major changes which have lasted even until today is undeniable, although the methods used, the results produced, and the costs endured by the Iranian people are all debatable.

Attributing major changes to the Riza Shah era, of course, does not mean suggesting that these changes took place simply because of one man's will and without the necessary background and preconditions. On the contrary, the development of social changes inspired by western ideas began in the mid-nineteenth century as reflected in the efforts of men like Mirza Abul-Qasim Qa'im Maqam, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir, and Mirza Husayn Khan Sepahsalar to introduce western oriented reforms in the areas of education, administration, and government.\textsuperscript{6} Mainly due to the impotence and ineptness of Qajar monarchs and their court officials, however, such modernizing and reformist attempts achieved little success. The Constitutional Movement in the early twentieth century (1905-1911), while failing to realize most of its goals because of internal as well as external opposition, opened a new phase in Iranian history by exposing the weakness of the last Qajar monarchs and deepening their unpopularity. In a sense, the Constitutional Movement was the beginning of the end of the Qajar dynasty's century-old rule and its concomitant stagnation in Iran. It is against this background of weak monarchs and even weaker central governments of the Qajar period that Riza Shah's rise to power and his successful implementation of some long awaited changes and reforms need to be seen as a
new phase in Iranian history. In other words, this period represented "an era in which Western influences, long felt but never before part of a coherent pattern, came to be of decisive importance." What distinguishes this era from other periods of social change in Iran is the force and vigor with which the changes were implemented. Ironically, this characteristic accounts for the successes as well as failures of Riza Shah’s reforms at the same time, a point which will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Developments within the Clerical Establishment**

Concurrent with the political changes which were taking place after World War I in Iran, significant developments were happening within the Shi'ite clerical establishment. The most important of these developments was the emergence of Qum as the main center of religious education and the subsequent transfer of religio-political power from Iraq to Iran. Prior to this time, Shi'ite shrine cities ('atabat) in southern Iraq, especially Najaf and Karbala, were the most important religious centers for the Shi'ites throughout the world. As for the Iranians, their highest religious authorities resided in Iraq, and even those living in Iran had resided there for some time and received their advanced religious education from the mujtahids living there. Given the great influence that the religious leaders in the 'atabat exerted over the Shi'ite population in Iran, these religious cities were indeed the political capitals of Iranian Shi'ites.⁸

The rise of Qum as the most important religious city in Iran began when a religious leader named Ayatullah Shaykh Abdul-Karim Ha'iri Yazdi moved to Qum and started a major campaign for revitalization of its religious schools.⁹ This development was helped, directly as well as indirectly, by the events that were taking place in Iraq and Iran. In Iraq, the British had been trying to impose their rule over that country ever since the defeat and dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. In response to this British policy, the people of Iraq, led by the Shi'ite religious leaders, waged an anti-British
war which reached its peak in 1921. As a means of suppressing this insurrection as well as part of the more general policy of undermining the religious influence of the Shi'ite leaders in Iraq, the British expelled some of the highest religious leaders, the two most important of whom were Ayatullah Abul-Hasan Isfahani and Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Na'ini.\textsuperscript{10}

Ayatullah Ha'iri's revitalization of Qum was also indirectly helped by the absence of opposition from Riza Khan. Because of Ha'iri's reluctance to interfere in politics and the potential role of a religious center in Qum in combatting communist anti-government opposition forces, Riza Khan, who was officially the chief of the military but in reality the major policy maker, did not oppose the developments taking place in Qum. Throughout the Riza Shah era, Qum's religious significance continued to rise and by 1940's it was recognized as the most important religious center in the Shi'i world. From Ayatullah Ha'iri's death in 1936 until the abdication of Rizah Shah in 1941 the religious leadership of Qum was shared by three Ayatullahs: Khawnsari, Hujat, and Sadre.

Ayatullah Ha'iri, regarded as the founder of the Qum religious center within the clerical community, was distinctly apolitical.\textsuperscript{11} Because of his influence and his policy of political abstinence, the Qum clerical establishment did not play a significant political role during Riza Shah's era. Indeed this remained a strong tradition in Qum until the 1960s and the rise of Ayatullah Khumayni to prominence. Consequently, the religious centers of southern Iraq, as pointed out, also had lost their political significance during this period as a result of British dominance over Iraq. The center of clerical politics in this period was Tehran and more specifically the Majlis. While a number of clerics were elected to the Majlis and were politically active, it was Ayatullah Seyyid Hasan Mudarris who dominated the political scene as the preeminent political clergy. Indeed, the role of Mudarris in the history of clerical politics is as important as those of Ayatullah Kashani in the nationalist era and Ayatullah Khumayni in the post-nationalist era and the Islamic revolution. Thus our discussion of the position of the clergy with respect to the reforms adopted in this
period focuses on his views, although this should not be taken as implying that he was in any way representative of other politically involved clerics either inside or outside the Majlis. The focus on Mudarris, nonetheless, is justified by the fact that he was the most important religio-political figure, and for some period even the most important politician, of his time. Indeed Mudarris was so extensively and deeply involved in politics that his political role almost completely overshadowed his religious status throughout most of his public life. Before examining the position and views of Mudarris on the questions relating to reforms, his background and rise to political leadership needs to be briefly discussed.

Mudarris’s political career began when he was appointed to the second Majlis (1910-1912)\(^{12}\) as a member of the "first-ranking ulama" (ulamay-i taraz-i awval), representing the Shi’ite religious authorities in a council envisioned by the constitution to ensure the compatibility of the laws enacted by the Majlis with the Shari’ah (Islamic jurisprudence).\(^{13}\) Prior to this appointment, Mudarris, who was in his late thirties, had pursued a teaching career in a small religious school in Isfahan after seven years of advanced religious studies in Najaf.\(^{14}\) His entry into politics, however, proved to be a permanent change of career. In the third Majlis (1915-1916), he was elected from Tehran while keeping his appointment as the representative of the Shi’ite authorities. He was reelected to the fourth (1921-1923) and fifth (1923-1925) Majlis sessions and acted as the leader of the majority and minority factions, respectively. In the sixth Majlis (1926-1928), which was elected after the ascension of Riza Shah to the throne, Mudarris was reelected from Tehran, receiving the highest number of votes. As the elections to the seventh and subsequent sessions of the Majlis were rigged, Mudarris was never elected to the Majlis again.\(^{15}\) In fact, because of his strong opposition to Riza Shah and the latter’s growing dictatorial rule, Mudarris was forced out of politics and exiled before his death in 1936.

As pointed out above, Mudarris entered politics as an official representative of the religious hierarchy. His appointment to this position demonstrates his religious status and credentials as a mujtahid prior to his political career.\(^{16}\) By becoming deeply involved in
politics, however, Mudarris gradually lost his religious prestige, and with that perhaps some of his traditional clerical views as well. This departure from the mainstream of clerical establishment is reflected in some of his religious, social, and political views. Mudarris was apparently critical of lack of organization within the clerical institution and supportive of its reform. He favored the establishment of a centralized hierarchy under the control of a few high-ranking ulama from Iran and ‘atabat, elected from among mujtahids by a majority vote, for a three or five year term. Interestingly enough, in such a committee of ulama, the honorary chairmanship would belong to the Shah who, being familiar enough with the basic principles of religion and Shari'ah, would participate as an ‘alim. Mudarris had even asked an envoy, whom he had sent to Europe to deliver a message from him to Ahmad Shah, to study the organizational structure of the clergy in the West and to translate the relevant material for him. Given his own extensive involvement in politics, Mudarris’ views on the political role of the clerical establishment are quite interesting. He was against the clergy’s assumption of the leadership of political movements and revolutions or their direct control of government. The same envoy sent by Mudarris to Ahmad Shah, to present his plans for the Shah’s return to Iran and the political future of the country, was asked by the Shah about the role of ulama in Mudarris’s plan. The envoy’s response was: “Although Mr. Mudarris’s relations with the ruhaniyyun [members of the clergy] is very good, he does not believe in creating a movement or revolution with their leadership because in Mr. Mudarris’s opinion, in clerical movements there is always some kind of reactionary tendencies, and thus they lead the society backward instead of forward.” Such views, if indeed held by Mudarris, show how his political involvement had changed his religious views which in turn had affected his position regarding the reform policies in this period.
The Clergy and Modernizing Reforms

In the modernization literature, the religious class is viewed as a major force, if not the major one, against modernizing reforms. Indeed the clergy are perceived as being opposed to any change at all. Typical of such a theoretical position is the statement that "Reza Shah’s reforms met with resistance from the clergy at every turn." The validity of such generalizations is questioned by the political behavior of both the Qum clerical establishment and that of Ayatullah Mudarris. As pointed out above, because of Ayatullah Ha’iri’s influence, the Qum establishment, representing the highest level of clerical institution, remained aloof from politics throughout Riza Shah’s rule, and thus did not offer any significant resistance to his policies. On the other hand, the lower rank clerics, whose lives and careers were significantly affected by some of the anti-clerical and anti-religious policies of Riza Shah, and who suffered more than any other clerical segment at his hands, lacked sufficient political power to pose a serious challenge. The only case of resistance offered by this clerical group was the incident of the Guhar Shad Mosque in Mashad following the regime’s announcement of the forced unveiling of women in 1936, which will be discussed below. As for the politically active middle-rank clerics, no unified clerical faction ever existed in this period to warrant any generalizations. Both inside and outside the Majlis, members of the clergy could be found on the opposite sides of an issue, and even more significantly, for the most part, political divisions were centered more around personalities than issues. Given his status as the preeminent religio-political leader of his time, and his influence both inside and outside the Majlis, Mudarris’s views and behavior may be considered as representative of an important segment of the politically active clergy. His views and behavior, however, do not support the claim that the clergy opposed all reforms introduced and implemented in this period. Keeping in mind the above-mentioned qualifications, one may characterize the position of the clergy regarding reforms as follows: (1) the clergy were either indifferent to or supportive of the "neutral" reforms, that is, those which had no religious or clerical significance—the majority of the
modernizing reforms were of this type; (2) of the fundamental reforms which had direct bearing on religion and the clerical class, such as educational or judicial, none were strongly opposed by the clergy while some even were supported; and (3) the reforms generating greatest clerical resistance and even popular opposition were mostly of a superficial nature, in terms of their significance for modernization of the society, but were aimed at undermining deeply rooted and religiously sanctioned cultural habits. Our discussion of the clerical position, specifically that of Mudarris, regarding these reform areas will be organized around the principal ideals and goals towards which they were oriented.

There is a general consensus among students of Iranian history on the absence of a well-defined and well-formulated ideology, such as Kemalism associated with Ataturk, in Riza Shah’s approach to modernization. Nonetheless, it has been suggested that Riza Shah’s reforms may be seen as pursuing three goals: "a complete dedication to the cult of nationalism; a desire to assert this nationalism by a rapid adoption of the material advances of the West; and a breakdown of the traditional power of religion and a growing tendency toward secularism, which came as a result of the first two ideals."21 There is no logical basis, and as will be shown no actual evidence, for the claim that the clergy were generally antagonistic toward the first two of these ideals. Even not all the reforms usually associated with secularization were strongly opposed by the clergy.

Nationalism in the era of Riza Shah had two manifestations, one internal and the other external. Internally, nationalism meant the development and strengthening of a self-conscious feeling of nationhood, the creation of national unification of the country through the establishment of a central government and suppression of separatist movements. In its external manifestation, nationalism meant defending national interests against foreign aggression and developing a more assertive role in the conduct of foreign relations. From his 1921 coup until his ascension to the throne, Riza Khan vigorously pursued all of these goals and at the same time enjoyed the the support of the clergy and particularly
Mudarris. Indeed, the clerical support extended to Riza Khan during the 1921-1925 period, which was important for the success of his well planned campaign to become Shah, must be seen as their support for order and a strong central government. Although toward the end of this period, Riza Khan had become powerful enough to manipulate the Majlis, still for the most part it was the most important center of power. Given Mudarris's influential position in the fourth and fifth sessions, the measures adopted by the Majlis in support of the nationalistic efforts carried out by Riza Khan could not have passed without his active or tacit approval. But Mudarris was indeed very much supportive of Riza Khan's efforts during this period. For example, he did not oppose or criticize Riza Khan's suppression of the movements led by Mirza Kuchak Khan in Gilan and by Shaykh Muhammad Khiyabani in Azarbayjan against the central government, although he considered both of these leaders to be fine men. Even when Mudarris was openly opposing Riza Khan, as he did a few times, he still expressed his support for the latter's efforts in establishing order and strengthening the central government. For example, as Riza Khan gradually increased his power and brought all the matters concerning the military under his control, he started to interfere in the affairs of other governmental offices and ministries and, in short, began to reveal his dictatorial tendencies, a number of representatives in the fourth Majlis became uneasy about his actions and fearing his reprisals implicitly and indirectly criticized him. In a speech on this issue, Mudarris, while telling the Majlis that they should not have any fear from Riza Khan since the Majlis has power over everybody and can remove any premier or minister, or even the Shah, says that one must evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of Riza Khan's being Minister of War, and ends his speech by saying that: "My opinion about the Minister of War is that his advantages are major while his disadvantages are minor, thus we must try to remove his disadvantages so that the country can benefit from his advantages." In another occasion, following the Republican agitation, Mudarris waged a fight against Riza Khan who had become premier and gave a vote of no-confidence to his government. In his speech in the Majlis, he emphasized that
he was only opposing Riza Khan's premiership and rule through military government and stated: "My vote of no-confidence is only against Sardar Sepah being the head of the government; as for his role in the Ministry of War, if it will be arranged that he remains Minister of War, I will be his supporter, and have always been and will remain [his] supporter." In short, Riza Khan's efforts in the direction of strengthening the military and central government and establishing order, as manifestations of his nationalist goals, were essentially supported by Mudarris and his followers among the clergy.

In fact, a self-conscious nationalism seems to have had a significant influence on Mudarris's political thinking and behavior. Some of his comments made on his trip to Ottoman Turkey during First World War are particularly reflective of this nationalism. In a meeting with Sultan Muhammad the Fifth, Mudarris stated the purpose of his trip as follows: "The purpose of our immigration as Iranians to this country is that first of all the Ottoman government ceases any talk about annexing part of Azarbajjan to Ottoman territory." During another meeting with the cabinet members of the Ottoman government, Mudarris objects to the prime minister's reference to Iranian tea as "'ajami [non-Arab] tea" when ordering tea for his guests. "Instruct [your people] to use the word Iranian instead of 'ajami," says Mudarris to the prime minister, "because the root of the word 'ajam is 'ajmih and in its derivatives it connotes the belittling of non-Arab races and Iranians (and even Turks). We Iranians, who have produced many geniuses and famous people who have made great contributions to the Arabic language and culture, do not deserve to be belittled. Thus I request that you remove the word 'ajam from the vocabulary of your language and choose the word Iranian instead." Finally in a comment concerning the duty to defend the Iranian territory, Mudarris, displayed his nationalist feelings by saying: ". . . if somebody crosses Iran's borders without our permission . . . we shoot him, be it someone wearing a hat, or a turban, or a shapo. After he is shot and fallen to the ground, we check to see whether he is circumcised or not. If he is, we say a prayer for him, and if not we just bury him."
In its external manifestations, nationalism was definitely an important influence on Mudarris and his behavior, as his encounter with the Ottoman prime minister mentioned above demonstrates. In fact, while Riza Shah's coming to power through the help of the British and enjoying their tacit support throughout most of his rule raise questions about the true significance of this aspect of nationalism in his behavior, Mudarris's views and actions leave no doubt about the presence and importance of such nationalism in his own political thinking and behavior. It has been acknowledged by all observers that Mudarris was at the center of the opposition to the 1919 treaty with Britain, which would have in effect put Iran under a British mandate. In 1923, again Mudarris criticized the government of Mustoaf al-Mamalik for being too passive in its foreign policy and specifically mentioned its silence against the British demand that all Soviet diplomats leave Iran. In making this demand, the British had mentioned Iran along with India and Afghanistan, which was seriously objected to by Mudarris. In short, either in its domestic or foreign dimensions, nationalism was a strong motive in Mudarris's political behavior.30

With respect to the second ideal attributed to Riza Shah's modernization, namely material progress and advancement, not only was Mudarris not against them, but in fact he encouraged their implementation. There is no evidence that Mudarris or any other clerical leader opposed any reforms which may be considered in the direction of material progress, such as the areas of the military, communications, health, technology, economy, administration, etc. In fact Mudarris showed some foresight and awareness of the future military needs of the country by criticizing the Ministry of War's proposed budget for not allocating part of it to buy airplanes and airplane manufactures and to train students for their use. He goes on to warn that future wars will be fought with airplanes and tanks and thus Iran has to be armed with these weapons.31 His friendly relationship with Arthur Millspaugh, the head of a group of American advisors hired by Iran to carry on administrative reforms in the area of budget management, shows Mudarris's support for such reform measures. At the last session of the fourth Majlis, Mudarris, reviewing the
positive acts of the Majlis in this period, observed: "... by coming to agreement with each other, we brought some foreign advisors from the new world, and hope that with their presence many reforms will take place." He went even further by supporting the idea that in many areas of government Iran had to look to the West for guidance: "... . . . We must accept the fact that in governing the country in economic and political matters we should be followers of those who know better than us and have more experience--I have heard that the British do not have customs fees. Does this mean that they are not aware of [the idea of] imposing customs fees? Of course not. Thus we must find out why they don’t do it, and in my opinion we must understand its philosophy." Perhaps the best example of the views of Mudarris concerning the adoption of the material progress of the West is his following statement: "I personally believe that all Iranian cities must be as good as the best European cities."

Changes associated with the third goal of Riza Shah's modernization program, secularization, were basically part of educational, judicial, and cultural reforms. The clergy, as might have been expected, could not have approved the idea of the eradication of religious influence in society. However, whether all the reform measures usually associated with secularization were perceived as anti-religious and thus opposed by the clergy is a different matter and needs to be judged in terms of actual clerical behavior.

Educational reforms are typically regarded as a major achievement of the Riza Shah era. The emphasis is usually placed on the fact that through the establishment of modern schools, the traditional religious schools (maktabs) which were administered by lower rank members of the clergy (mullahs) became obsolete and gradually disappeared completely. As a result, the monopoly that the clergy once held over the educational system was broken and with that a major area of religious influence abolished. Along with this fundamental reform, there have been other measures which are attributed to Riza Shah's educational modernization, such as the adoption of uniform curricula and textbooks, the establishment of a teachers' college for women, the implementation of compulsory
elementary education, etc. Two points regarding the position of the clergy with respect to these reforms must be mentioned. First, many of these reforms predated Riza Shah's coming to power and there is no evidence of a major opposition to them by the political leadership of the clergy. In fact, as reflected in Mudarris's views, many of these measures were supported by the clergy. For example, in the second Majlis, Mudarris encouraged the Majlis to allocate more budget for the purpose of sending students abroad to be educated as teachers or bringing foreign teachers to train Iranian students. As a matter of policy, he was in favor of first trying to bring foreign teachers no matter how expensive it was, and if not possible then to try to send some students overseas to be trained as educators who would then return to Iran and train other teachers. He was opposed to the policy of sending more and more students to Europe on the ground that it was not economical and that experience had shown that very few would receive a good education and return to fulfill the needs of the country. Mudarris, however, did not consider sending students overseas to be against religion and stated: "To remove any misgivings that what I am going to say is based on religious grounds, let me first state that there is no [religious] objection if even ten thousand students are sent from Iran to Europe." In the third Majlis, which passed the reform measures proposed by the cabinet of Mushir al-Dowleh in 1914, Mudarris was a member and supported them. Among these were the establishment of a teacher's college for women, the adoption of uniform curricula and textbooks, and the gradual transformation of religious schools (maktabbs) into regular elementary schools. Not only did Mudarris not oppose these changes, but in fact took advantage of them by sending his own son to one of the modern schools instead of a maktab.

Judicial reforms form another major component of the changes associated with secularization. The main feature of judicial reforms being emphasized is the transfer of the basis of law and the legal system from religion to a secular one, and deprivation of the clergy from the privilege of the administration of justice which used to be their monopoly. Even a brief review of all the reforms related to the judicial system cannot be attempted
here. Instead, our focus will be on two points: (1) many of these reforms were initiated long before Riza Shah came to power, and (2) they were mostly unopposed, while some even condoned, by the clergy. The adoption of the 1906 Constitution was itself a major stage in the long process of judicial reform in Iran. As it has been universally acknowledged, this document is an amalgamation of Shi'ite jurisprudence and secular laws borrowed from the West. The Constitution and its judicial reforms were on the whole approved by the highest clerical leaders of the time, which is itself quite significant from the point of view of clerical response to changes associated with modernization. Another important step towards judicial reform was taken in 1910 by appointing a French jurist to work on the writing of a penal code. The result of this effort was approved by the Majlis in 1912 and, interestingly enough, "It was signed by three ranking mujtahids, who testified that it was acceptable by the standards of the shari'ah and that its new features did not violate the precepts of Islam." Many other reform measures adopted during Riza Shah's rule both in the Civil Code and the Penal Code represented Western influence in the Iranian judicial system and the ongoing process of the secularization of the law. Of these reforms, the ones adopted after 1928, when Riza Shah fully established his dictatorial rule and ended any possibility of opposition to him, of course, caused no clerical resistance. But even if some freedom had existed, it is not definite that the clergy would have opposed all of the judicial reforms. This view is supported by the fact that after Riza Shah's removal from power and the limited restoration of some social and political freedoms, no strong demand for reversing the judicial reforms was put forward. This is perhaps indicative of the fact that even reforms as important to the clerical community as the judicial ones, if implemented gradually, may indeed receive clerical support. Indeed, the question of judicial reforms and secularization of the legal system did not become a serious point of confrontation between the clergy and the government while other issues did.

Another area which became the target of Riza Shah's secularization efforts was the religious culture. An example of his attempts in this area was the banning of religious
ceremonies—such as ta'ziyih (passion play), sinih-zani (chest-beating), zanjir-zani (self-flagellation), rauzih-khani (chanting afflictions of the Imams and members of their households)—observed during the month of Muharrim in commemoration of the martyrdom of the third Imam, Imam Husayn. Such anti-religious policies, of course, were not welcomed either by the lower rank clerics who played an active role in such ceremonies, or the masses of the people for whom these were important aspects of their religious practices. No significant clerical or public opposition, however, was waged against this government action. The absence of any resistance from higher clerics may have also been due to two factors: (1) many religious authorities themselves did not approve of such ceremonies as self-flagellation or chest-beating—some even forbid them—but were unable to discourage the public from performing them because of the stronger public influence of the lower rank clerics whose career was dependent on such religious practices; (2) the lower rank clerics were not generally favored and respected by the clerical leadership for whom religious education, which these religious functionary lacked, was the main criterion for commanding respect. The return of these ceremonies after the abdication of Riza Shah testify to both the depth of such traditional religious practices and his failure in using force to make people abandon their old cultural habits. Had he sought the help of clerical leadership and their cooperation, he would perhaps have been more successful in implementing such religious reforms. Pursuing anti-religious policies instead of seeking to reform religious practices, however, ruled out such cooperation between Riza Shah and the clerical leadership.

The only major clerical opposition which materialized toward the end of Riza Shah's rule was in response to his attempt to force women to abandon their traditional religious public dress code (chadur). Although appearing without the veil in public was not unprecedented before this time, there had not been any clerical opposition against it. Riza Shah, however, went beyond encouragement of abandoning the veil by making it mandatory and forbidding women to appear with the veil in public. Those who dared to do
so were physically attacked by the police and their veils taken away. In response to such harsh measures, people demonstrated in Mashad and took sanctuary in the Guhar Shad mosque, which was adjacent to the shrine of the eighth Imam. Under the orders of the central government, troops attacked the mosque, and killed and jailed many of the protesters. This sacrilegious act and brutal killing of innocent people, of course, was deplored by the clerical leadership but by this time they were too powerless to fight against Riza Shah.

As it has been shown in our discussion here, the position of the clergy regarding the reforms and changes associated with modernization and secularization which took place in Iran during the Riza Shah era, varied from one area of reform to another. Riza Shah is believed to have pursued three goals in his modernizing reforms: nationalism, adoption of material advances of the West, and secularization. Most of the reforms guided by the first two ideals had no significance either for religion or clerical corporate interests to cause clerical opposition. Thus members of the clergy either remained indifferent to these reforms, as was the position of the Qum clerical leadership, or encouraged them, as reflected in Mudarris’s views. Of the reforms associated with the third goal, secularization, the most fundamental ones took place in the educational and judicial systems. In general, even these reforms did not generate strong clerical opposition for two reasons. First, many of these reforms originated before the Riza Shah era and were introduced through different stages. Perhaps because of their gradual introduction, these reforms were not perceived by the clergy as threats against religion or clerical interest per se, and thus enjoyed their tacit if not open approval. Second, most of Riza Shah’s secularizing reforms were implemented between 1928-1941, during which time he had fully established his dictatorial rule and effectively suppressed all opposition, including that of Mudarris. Thus even if the clergy were strongly opposed to the secularizing reforms of this period, they were not able to do so. Openly challenging Riza Shah’s regime would have required both a radical clerical leadership in Qum and a solid popular support for such a confrontation. Neither was the
Qum leadership under the conservative and apolitical Ayatullah Ha’iri ready for such action which would have put the whole religious center at a definite risk, nor did people have strong feelings against these educational and judicial reforms. The only reforms which generated significant resistance both among the public and lower rank clerics, were those in the area of religious culture. These reforms, which were indeed superficial in terms of their significance for modernization, caused public opposition because they were aimed at undermining some traditional and deeply rooted religious practices, such as wearing the veil and commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in the forms of passion plays, chest-beating or self-flagellation. The lower rank clerics also resisted such reforms because their careers were dependent on these religious practices. Our discussion lends support to the position taken by Joseph Upton concerning the role of the clergy regarding modernization: "It would be a mistake to imagine that the clergy are unanimously opposed to modernization. As active members of Persian society who share popular aspirations and conflicts, virtually all members of the clergy would welcome some aspects of modernization. . . Their major concern is that no development take place which conflicts seriously with the Shia, which, like other Islamic sects, teaches an all-inclusive way of life."40

Through his secularizing reforms, Riza Shah was able to take away from the clergy some of their major social and legal functions and prerogatives. He failed, however, to sever the bond that existed between the clergy and people, as the events following his departure clearly demonstrate. This clergy-people bond, as discussed in the previous chapter, has been institutionalized in the office of marja’-i taqlid (source of imitation) through the concept of taqlid (the obligation to follow a religious authority), and could not have been undermined by loss of clerical control over the educational and judicial systems.
NOTES

1 Article 36 of the Supplement to the 1906 Constitution had vested the succession to the throne in the Qajar family. The Constituent Assembly changed this and articles 37 and 38 which also dealt with the question of succession. In their modified versions, article 36 vested the succession to the throne in the Pahlavi (Riza Shah’s adopted last name) family, while article 37 specifically disqualified any member of the Qajar family from ascending the throne ever again.

2 Major works which examine the reforms of this period include Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941, and Elwell-Sutton, Modern Iran.


4 Banani, The Modernization of Iran, p.44.

5 Leonard Binder, "Iran's Potential as a Regional Power," in Paul Y. Hammond and Sidney S. Alexander, eds., Political Dynamics in the Middle East, p. 357.

6 For a history of modernization initiatives during the Qajar period, see H. Farman Farmanayan, "The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Iran: A Historical Survey;" Guity Nashat, The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870-1880 and Shaul Bakhhash, Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy, and Reform under the Qajars, 1858-1896.

7 Banani, The Modernization of Iran, p. 45.

8 A number of authors have attributed the greater political role that the Iranian ulama have played compared to those of Ottoman Turkey and Egypt in the nineteenth century to the fact that the center of religious power was outside Iran. See, for example, Nikki Keddie, "The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran," in N.R. Keddie, ed., Scholars, Saints, and Sufis: Muslim Religious Institutions since 1500 p. 226. It needs to be pointed out, however, that this factor was not a crucial one, and its significance was dependent on the political circumstances in Iran. As the post World
War II developments in Iran show, the shift of religious center from Iraq to Iran did not diminish the political influence of the Iranian clergy. Indeed during the 1960s, because of the growing clerical political power, the Shah attempted to transfer the center of religious power from Qum to Najaf. Thus following the death of Ayatullah Burujirdi in 1961, he sent a telegram to Ayatullah Muhsin Hakim in Najaf thereby indicating his desire for him to succeed Burujirdi as the marja' of all the Shi'ites.


The British designs on Iraq and their concern over the reaction of the religious leaders to such plans predated WWI. Around 1886, the British Ambassador to Iran wrote a note to an Iranian friend who was going to Iraq asking him to study the attitude of the Shi’ite religious leaders residing there in the event the British government attempts to establish its dominance in Iraq. See Yahya Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, vol. 4, pp. 290-1. For more information on the role of religious leaders in the 1921 anti-British revolt in Iraq, see Ali Sadeghi, *Nigahi bi Enqilab-i Eslami 1920 Araq*. For an analysis of the role of other groups in the same event, see Amal Vinogradov, "The 1920 Revolt in Iraq Reconsidered: The Role of Tribes in National Politics," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972), pp. 123-139. More information on the immigration of Iranian ulama can be found in Shaykh Muhammad Khalisi, *Mazalim-i Engelis*.

For more information on Ayatullah Ha’iri, see Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "Ha’iri, Shaykh
"Abd al-Karim Yazdi," El. Some clerical writers have attempted to rationalize Ayatullah Ha’iri’s disinclination toward political involvement by attributing it to his prudence and foresightedness in giving priority to the preservation of the Qum religious center, which might have been completely destroyed and hence unable to play the political role that it played later, had he openly confronted the regime. See, for example, A. Davani, Nihzat-i Ruhaniyyun-i Iran, vol. 2, pp. 173, 333-335. On the face of it, this is quite plausible. However, it leaves unanswered some important questions. First, it has been generally recognized that Ayatullah Ha’iri was apolitical all his life, regardless of circumstantial considerations. Abdul-Hadi Hairi, citing numerous examples from earlier periods of Ayatullah Ha’iri’s life, characterizes him as "essentially apolitical." Abdul-Hadi Hairi, Tashayyu’ va Mashrutiyat dar Iran va Naqsh-i Iraniyan-i Muqim-i ‘Araq. Second, if such long-term political considerations are to be valued and even praised, then one should criticize rather than glorify, as these writers do, those clerical leaders, such as Ayatullah Qumi, who endangered the religious institution by confronting the government.

However, Mudarris, who was residing in Isfahan at the time, went to Tehran in December of 1911, more than a year after the second Majlis had been in session. Husayn Makki, Mudarris: Qahriman-i Azadi, vol., p. 62. (Hereafter cited as Makki, Mudarris.)

Article two of the Supplement to the Constitution stated that: "The holy national consultative assembly [Majlis] . . . at no time should its legislated enactments have any conflict with the sacred laws of Islam . . . and it is clear that the determination of [the presence of a] conflict between legislated laws and Islamic laws is the task of the noble ulama . . . Thus it is [hereby] officially stated that at all times a group of at least five mujtahids and devout jurists, who are also aware of the needs of their time, [will be] selected in the following manner that the ulama and maraji’ will introduce twenty ulama who possess the aforementioned qualities to the Majlis which will then
select either unanimously or randomly five people or more and recognizes them as members. They examine and discuss the bills presented to the Majlis and reject any which may be in conflict with the sacred laws of Islam and prevent their becoming laws. The opinion of this group of ulama will be respected and followed. This article [of the Constitution] will remain unalterable until the coming of the Twelfth Imam, may God hasten His coming." This provision of the Constitution, however, was not implemented after the second Majlis, partly because of the liberal members of the Majlis who were never in favor of it, and partly because of circumstances. The death of two top religious leaders of ‘atabat, Ayatullah Haji Mirza Husayn Khalili Tehrani and Ayatullah Mulla Kazim Khurasani Kefa’i, who had appointed the first-ranking mujtahids to the second Majlis, which happened between the second and third Majlis sessions, apparently contributed to the lack of effort on the part of the ulama to implement this provision. Also the presence of Mudarris may have given them some assurance that laws in conflict with Islamic laws would not pass, although they must have realized that as a regular elected member, Mudarris did not have the veto power that he would have had as a member of the first-ranking ulama.

14 For more biographical information on Mudarris, see Makki, Mudarris, vol. 1, pp. 49-61.

15 Following the announcement of the results of the elections to the seventh Majlis, which indicated that he had received no votes, Mudarris, who was famous for his wit, reportedly remarked: "If even no single person voted for me, what happened to the vote that I gave for myself?"

16 According to one view, his local influence in Isfahan was growing so rapidly that his clerical rivals felt threatened and conspired to have him elected as a first-ranking mujtahid to the Majlis and sent to Tehran. See Mohit Tabatabayi, Mohit, 1, 2 (Mehr 1321/Oct.-Nov. 1942), quoted in Makki, Mudarris, vol. 1, p. 56. Even if this account of the influence of the local clerics over Mudarris' appointment if true, it does not refute
the fact that he was still respected enough by the highest religious authorities in the
‘atabat to be considered for this position.

17 This point may have been included by Mudarris for the purpose of making
Ahmad Shah more interested in returning to Iran and fighting Riza Khan’s attempts
to become Shah. If this be the case, however, it is a good example of Mudarris’s
politicking.

18 Rahimzadih Safavi, Asrar-i Suqut-i Ahmad Shah, p. 90

19 Ibid.

20 Banani, Modernization in Iran, p. 47.

21 Ibid., p. 45. Elsewhere (p. 39), Banani states that Riza Shah "was basically
apathetic to religion and antagonistic toward the clergy," which is contradicted by his
identification of "a breakdown of the traditional power of religion and a growing
tendency toward secularism" as a major goal of Riza Shah.

22 Both of these movements are now claimed by the clergy as being clerical
movements. See, for example, Ali Davani, Niḥzat-i Ruḥanīyyun-i Iran, vol. 2.


24 This is a reference to the events which took place in 1924 as a result of Riza
Shah’s attempt to abolish the Qajar monarchy and establish a republic, on the model
of Turkey, with himself as the president.


26 Following the invasion of the northern part of Iran by the Russian army and the
threat of the capital falling to their hands, government officials decided to leave
Tehran. Mudarris served as Minster of Justice in this government-in-exile.

27 Makki, Mudarris, vol. 1, p. 141.

28 Ibid., p. 142.

29 Ibid., p. 209.

30 Ibid., p. 211.
Ibid., p. 46.


Makki, *Tarikh-i Bist-salih-i Iran*, vol. 4, p. 528.

Ibid., p. 290.

Makki, *Mudarris*, p. 74

Abdullah Mustoafi, *Tarikh-i Edari va Ejtima'i Qajar*.

For a review of these reforms, see Banani, *The Modernization of Iran*, pp. 68-84.

Majlis, *Usul-i Muhakimat-i Jaza'i*, p. 127, quoted in ibid., p. 38. While Banani acknowledges that "It is significant that three leading mujahids should not have objected to a French jurist preparing a code of laws for Iran," he fails to relate this point to the more general question of the position of the clergy regarding secularization in Iran.

For a strong argument against these ceremonies, condemning them as bid'at (illegitimate religious innovation), by a leading Shi'ite scholar, see Aqa Siyyid Muhsin 'Amily. *Al-Tanzih li A'mal-i al-Shabih*. This small pamphlet was translated into Farsi as 'Azadariha-yi Namashru', and distributed in 1944 to discourage people from reviving such "illegitimate" religious practices following Riza Shah's abdication and the relative restoration of social and political freedom.

CHAPTER IV

PATTERNS OF CLERICAL POLITICAL BEHAVIOR IN

THE NATIONALIST ERA, 1941-1953

The abdication of Riza Shah in 1941 signified the end of nearly two decades of dominance of politics by the state, and the beginning of a new era. Although nationalism was an important political ideology in the Riza Shah era, it did not become a social force, for the most part because the state claimed a monopoly on it, thus denying political groups any role in the formulation of the nationalist ideology. By contrast, the 1941-1953 period was characterized by nationalist politics at the level of masses and political groups. The culmination of such intensive nationalism was the nationalization of oil under the government of Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq. The relative restoration of social and political freedoms in this period also made it unique compared either to that of Riza Shah or the post-nationalist era of 1953-1978.

With respect to clerical political behavior, the nationalist era is particularly important, since it allows for the manifestation and organization of different political orientations within the clerical establishment. In the following analysis of the nationalist era, three patterns of clerical political behavior which may be characterized as conservative, pragmatic, and radical will be discussed. Conservative political behavior was characteristic of the leadership of the clerical institution for whom the order of priority of interests was: religious, clerical corporate, and national. Political pragmatism was best expressed in the activities of Ayatullah Kashani and his group, whose behavioral motives reflected the following order of priority: national, religious, and clerical corporate interests. Finally, political radicalism, manifested most significantly in the behavior of the Fada’iyan-i Islam, reflected the following order of priority of interests: religious, national, and clerical corporate. In comparing the characteristic features of these three patterns of behavior, the
position of the clerical faction representing each pattern within the clergy, its ideological orientation, its attitude toward the institution of monarchy and the Shah, and its political orientation toward other forces, particularly the nationalists, will be analyzed. Before taking up this task, however, the social and political conditions of the nationalist era will be discussed briefly.

**Postwar Socio-Political Conditions**

Postwar Iranian society was characterized by social and political disintegration precipitated by the war and the dissolution of a repressive regime which had ruled for nearly two decades. Riza Shah’s forced abdication and dethronement by the British in 1941—on the grounds of his alleged pro-Nazi tendencies—unleashed the social and political forces which had been suppressed rather ruthlessly under his authoritarian and autocratic rule. The new monarch, Muhammad Riza Shah, was too young to be able to establish himself as a feared dictator on the model of his father, especially given his initial total dependence on foreign occupying powers as well as the disintegration and demoralization suffered by the Iranian military forces during the war. Despite some degree of self-assurance that he developed after the defeat of the separatist movements in Azarbajjan and Kurdistan in 1946, which was further reinforced by his escape from an assassination attempt in 1949, the young Shah remained a weak figure for most of this period, content with reigning rather than ruling. It was only toward the end that the court became a power center by functioning as a rallying point for pro-monarchists who opposed the nationalist forces led by Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq. Even then the Shah’s position was far from secure; he nearly lost the throne in 1953, only to be saved by American and British intervention backed by royalist forces, including factions within the clergy.

Against such a vulnerable institution of political authority, forces were set in motion which further increased and intensified political and social tensions caused by the war and
foreign occupation. Innumerable organizations, coalitions, semi-parties, and parties, representing a wide spectrum of ideological and political orientation, were formed. All these socio-political groups, however, were manifestations of three rival currents in the society, namely, nationalism, communism, and Islamic revivalism.

As was the case with many other third world countries, the dominant political current in postwar Iran was nationalism. Strong anti-foreign, especially anti-British, sentiments developed during the war and under British and Soviet occupation set the grounds for the evolution of a powerful nationalist movement which reached its zenith with the passage of the oil nationalization bill by the Majlis (the Iranian parliament) and the formation of a national government under the premiership of Dr. Musaddiq in 1951. This victory was followed by two turbulent years of political struggle against British, and later U.S.-British, interventionist policies. It was also during this two-year period that the strengths as well as weaknesses of the internal bases of Iranian nationalism revealed themselves as the era of nationalist politics came to its end with the 1953 coup.¹

Communism, having established a foothold in Iran prior to the war through the underground activities of a few intellectual Marxists known as "the Group of Fifty-three," emerged as a political movement after the arrival of the Soviet and British occupying forces and Riza Shah's subsequent departure in August of 1941.² It flourished and became a significant force under the Tudeh Party which, officially formed in September 1941, remained the largest, organizationally the most disciplined, and ideologically the most coherent political force in postwar Iran. After being banned in 1949 for its alleged involvement in the assassination attempt against the Shah, the Tudeh resurfaced in 1951 and soon waged a fierce campaign against Musaddiq and the National Front coalition as "agents of American imperialism." Toward the end of the nationalist era, however, when U.S. partnership with the British against Musaddiq was firmly established, the Tudeh somewhat modified its position, tactically if not in principle, and organized mass demonstrations in support of the national movement. This belated and indirect support of
Musaddiq, and the latter's tolerance of Tudiorganized mass demonstrations, were perceived by conservative clerical leaders as evidence of the imminent threat of a communist takeover, a concern which was intentionally intensified by pro-Shah clerics led by Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Behbahani in their attempt to undermine Musaddiq's national government.³

Concurrent with the rise of nationalism and the spread of communism, a wave of religious revivalism also appeared in postwar Iranian society. Riza Shah's removal from power had ended a long period of repression of social, cultural and religious freedoms. The reappearance of women wearing chador (veil worn by Iranian Muslim women) and men wearing clerical dress, as well as the observance of religious practices and ceremonies testified to Riza Shah's failure in his attempt to destroy religious culture and clerical influence through the use of brute force.⁴ This natural reaction to the new socio-political conditions was further reinforced and intensified as a result of the aggressive activities of religious groups, such as the Fada'iyan-i Islam, who were demanding complete Islamization of the society through strict observance of Islamic practices. A more intellectual and ideological Islamic revivalism had also developed among the educated class, especially the university students, as a response to the challenge posed by communist ideology, and was the driving force behind the formation of Islamic societies on campuses. In general, religious revival was tolerated by the Shah as a means of combating communism as well as strengthening the religious and clerical base of support for his kingship.⁵

The existence of a weak institution of political authority, the coexistence of nationalist, communist, and Islamic revivalist movements, and the presence of a relatively free political environment for their interactions, provided a favorable condition for all groups, including the clergy, to become actively involved in politics. Within the clerical class itself, however, different responses to this opportunity developed ranging from political conservatism to pragmatism and to radicalism.
Clerical Political Conservatism: The Qum Establishment

The reconstruction of the religious schools and centers of Qum under the auspices of Ayatullah Ha’iri (d. 1936) in the 1920s made it the most important religious city in Iran. Within a short period of time, it even surpassed Najaf as the most important Shi‘ite center for religious education. Qum’s proximity to the capital—only 90 miles from Tehran—gave it considerable political significance, as well. After the death of Ayatullah Ha’iri, the religious leadership was shared among three Ayatullahs: Khawnsari, Hujat, and Sadre. In 1944, at the request of other religious leaders, Ayatullah Burujirdi moved from his hometown to Qum, and soon emerged as the most learned mujtahid (religious authority) and the exemplar (marja‘-i taqlid-i mutlaq or ‘amm or kull) for all Shi‘ites, a position which he retained until his death in 1961. Thus during the most important period of the nationalist era the clerical institution was under the centralized and singular leadership of Ayatullah Burujirdi.7

As pointed out in the previous chapter, the Qum religious establishment from the very beginning had developed a strong tendency to avoid politics altogether. Gradually involvement in politics came to be regarded as beneath the dignity and stature of the ruhaniyyat. Hence political clergy (akhund-i siyasi), having acquired a pejorative connotation, was used to undermine the religious credentials and piety of those who violated the policy of political abstinence. Thus Ayatullah Kashani, politically the most active cleric in the nationalist era, found it necessary to refute the accusation of being a political mujtahid.8 This policy of political noninvolvement was later reconfirmed during a conference on the subject of politics and the ruhaniyyat, held in Qum in February 1949.9 At this meeting, it was concluded that those who chose to wear clerical garb, whether in Qum or other centers, should abstain from intermingling in the affairs of politicians and political parties or becoming tools for their goals. Otherwise the Qum hauzih (religious center) would not recognize them as members of the clergy under any circumstances, and would revoke their immunity.10 As a justification for this position it was mentioned that,
from its time of establishment under Ayatullah Ha’iri’s leadership, the Qum hauzih had in
practice demonstrated that it was "clean" from all political affairs and had not allowed
itself to become "polluted" by getting involved in political conflicts. It was also emphasized
that the center was established exclusively for the purpose of scientific and scholarly
activities as well as the protection of the ruhaniyyat and had to continue following its
original goals. The Qum conference was significant in that it publicized the negative
attitude of the leadership of the clerical institution towards politics in general and its
constant effort to make the religious institution "immune" from such activities. However,
given the absence of a formal and rigid ecclesiastical structure of authority in the Shi’ite
religious institution in Iran, the most that could be achieved through such informal and
indirect pressures was discouragement of the lower rank clerics from overt political
involvement, and more importantly, prevention of the politicization of religious centers.

Its negative view of political involvement notwithstanding, the clerical leadership was
not completely absent from the political scene in this period. As far as the issue of the
nationalization of oil was concerned, however, the clerical leaders played a limited and
symbolic role. After Ayatullah Kashani issued a declaration in support of the oil
nationalization, a number of maraji’-i taqlid also issued public statements in response to
inquiries made by concerned individuals on the question of accordance of this act with
Islamic principles. Religious justifications for the principle of nationalization were based
on verses of the Qur’an which denounce dominance of the infidels as well as "the Peoples
of the Book" (i.e., Jews and Christians) over the Muslims. In their declarations, the
clerical leaders also acknowledged Kashani’s leadership on this issue by citing his
involvement as evidence for removing any doubt as to the applicability of the Qur’anic
principles to the issue of oil nationalization. While such statements may have influenced
the attitudes of some conservative religious groups, at the national level their effect was
limited and indirect—i.e., through strengthening Ayatullah Kashani’s position. An
exception to even such symbolic involvement was Burujirdi’s silence on this question
which, given his eminent position within the clerical institution, is particularly significant in terms of the position of the clerical leadership regarding the national movement. Thus national interests seem to have had the lowest priority for the leadership of the clerical institution.

Religious interests by contrast seem to have had the greatest influence on the political behavior of the clerical leadership. Thus the issue of women’s participation in parliamentary elections caused much greater involvement on the part of the clerical leadership, including Ayatullah Burujirdi. In his electoral reform bill submitted to the majlis in 1952, Dr. Musaddiq, apparently in anticipation of opposition from the clerical and conservative religious groups and in his attempt to avoid further social division, excluded women from participation, an act which brought criticism from women’s groups. Responding to the protests that were raised against this measure and fearing a reversal of this policy on the part of the government, the clerical leaders expressed their opposition to women’s participation through declarations and encouragement of other clerics to show their opposition.14

With respect to its political orientation, the clerical leadership maintained a positive attitude towards both the institution of monarchy and the Shah himself in this period. As mentioned before, the Shah had followed a policy of appeasement towards the clergy as a means of expanding and strengthening his internal base of support. Shortly after ascending the throne, as a gesture of good will towards the clergy, he returned the lands which belonged to religious endowments but were taken away illegally by his father. The Shah’s references to religion and its importance in society, and his continuous effort to present an image of strong religious commitment were also part of this strategy. The clerical leaders in turn reciprocated the friendly royal gestures by expressing their support for the monarchy and maintaining an amicable relationship with the Shah himself. After escaping an assassination attempt in 1949, the Shah received from Qum as well as religious centers of Najaf and Baghdad in Iraq, numerous telegrams which communicated
horror over this deplorable incident. The language, the honorifics used in addressing the Shah, and the contents of these telegrams are very important in that, in addition to reflecting the political orientation of the leaders of the clerical institution towards the Shah, they also reveal their ideological position regarding the institution of monarchy itself. Ayatullah Burujirdi’s telegram well illustrates this point: "To His Excellency, whose kingship may Allah make ever lasting: This tragic incident that was aimed at His holy kingly essence has brought sadness; quick recovery and well-being of that graceful being is beseeched from God, whose Names may be sanctioned."  

Ayatullah Bihbahani, who was close to Ayatullah Burujirdi, said in a telegram sent from Baghdad: "As it is apparent from the nature of the incident, the holy kingly being is subject to special attention from His Highness. This divine special attention which has repelled the danger and secured the safety of the holy kingly essence calls for many thanks." Such unmistakably cordial and deferential gestures toward the Shah, with explicit religious sanctions, certainly went far beyond the minimum formality required in correspondence with the monarch. As political statements, they reflect fundamental political beliefs of the leadership of the clerical institution, and thus are too important to be dismissed as simple formalities.

Of course the most significant act of support for the Shah and the monarchy on behalf of the clerical leadership took place in the developments which resulted in the downfall of Dr. Musaddiq’s government and reinstatement of the Shah to the throne. Ayatullah Bihbahani’s activities toward deposing Dr. Musaddiq--such as the famous event of "the ninth of Isfand" (February 28, 1953) in which he led a mob to Musaddiq’s residence in an attempt to kill him, and the demonstrations against Musaddiq’s government in the process of the coup which were organized and financed by him--are well known. Ayatullah Burujirdi, however, as might have been expected, did not directly involve himself in such activities. Indeed he refused to go along with a plan secretly pursued by Musaddiq’s opponents in the parliament according to which a fatwa (religious decree) was to be issued jointly by the three religious figures--Burujirdi, Bihbahani, and Kashani--on the day before
the referendum on the dissolution of the parliament forbidding participation in it. Burujirdi’s refusal to coauthor such an ostensibly political declaration, nevertheless, was more indicative of his style than his orientation toward Musaddiq’s government. He later expressed his approval of the coup and support of the monarchy in telegrams sent to the Shah and the new prime minister, Zahidi. In his telegram to the Shah after his return to Iran following a short exile and in response to an earlier telegram sent by the latter from Rome to him, Ayatullah Burujirdi welcomed the Shah’s return and expressed his hope that his return would correct religious corruptions and bring about the glory of Islam and well being of Muslims. In another telegram to Zahidi, he reaffirmed his support of the coup by wishing him God’s help in performing the religious duties which he had taken upon himself in such a critical situation. Similar telegrams of support for the Shah and new government were sent by Ayatullah Bihbahani and Ayatullah Ruhani Qumi.

Given the limited scope of political involvement of clerical leadership, it would be difficult to ascertain precisely the priority of interests for this group. However, it seems that national interests enjoyed the lowest degree of priority while religious interests received the highest. In the absence of a major threat against clerical corporate interests, their relative importance remains unclear as well. The clerical leadership’s favorable attitude towards the Shah, nevertheless, could be seen as being influenced in part by the latter’s accommodation to clerical corporate interests.

**Clerical Political Pragmatism: Ayatullah Kashani**

The most visible and influential political trend within the clergy during the nationalist era was manifested through the activities of Ayatullah Kashani and his group. The characteristic feature of this trend was its pragmatic approach to politics, as reflected in the political style and orientation of its adherents, which was an important factor in attracting the support of other religious and nationalist political forces. Compared to other
clerical factions, the political behavior of this group reflected a relatively higher degree of maturity and sophistication while its ideological orientation represented greater religious moderation. Kashani's clerical base of support consisted of the middle ranks of the clergy who also formed the rank and file of the League of Struggling Muslims (Majma'\-i Musalmanan\-i Mujahid) which represented the organizational base of this group. As for the importance of Ayatullah Kashani's social position and his prominent role in Iranian politics it may suffice to state that he was for the nationalist era what Ayatullah Khumayni has been for the revolutionary period: the undisputed religio-political leader. Given Kashani's influential position within this clerical faction, our analysis will focus mainly on his attitudes and activities.

The position of Ayatullah Kashani within the clergy and especially his relationship with the leadership of the clerical establishment are of particular importance in understanding the sources of variation in clerical political behavior. Kashani was basically an outsider to the mainstream of the clerical establishment.\textsuperscript{21} What distinguished him from his contemporary religious leaders was his extensive and direct involvement in political and even military activities. These aspects of his life affected his image, personality and religious status as a mujtahid. Upon finishing his religious studies in Najaf, influenced by his father's anti-British activities, Kashani sacrificed a promising religious career which could have taken him to the top position of marja'iyyat by deciding to pursue political activism and to fight the British occupation of Iraq. It is significant that when he returned to Iran, Kashani stayed in Tehran rather than going to Qum and participating in the reconstruction of its religious schools. Naturally as a member of the clergy he maintained outwardly friendly relationships with other religious leaders; but by choosing political activism over religious academe, which were considered to be incompatible and even contradictory, Kashani placed himself outside the clerical establishment. Thus, clerical corporate interests do not seem to have played a significant role in guiding Kashani's political behavior, notwithstanding his public defense of the ruhaniyyat.\textsuperscript{22}
In terms of his religious outlook, Kashani presented a more moderate picture compared to either the leaders of the clerical institution or the Fada'iyan-i Islam. He approved, for example, of women attending universities and was ready to put his opinion on this issue in writing, an act that was certain to alienate the more conservative and traditional religious leaders.\textsuperscript{23} And although in his rhetoric there were frequent references to the Islamic government and Islamic laws, his emphasis was clearly on their political aspects: "In the world of Islam, politics and religion are not separated. All the struggle against the British and the [Anglo Iranian] Oil Company is within the context of the implementation of Islamic laws since, in the religion of Islam, a Muslim must resist and struggle against injustice and exploitation."\textsuperscript{24} Kashani’s relative moderation, nonetheless, could be seen as more a reflection of his political pragmatism than a fundamental difference in religious outlook. His ambiguous and somewhat fluctuating position on social issues may also be explained by this point. Generally, prior to his serious confrontation with Dr. Musaddiq, Kashani avoided, to the greatest possible extent, taking specific positions on controversial issues to preserve political unity. For example, when asked whether in his view Dr. Musaddiq had to ban alcohol and make veiling mandatory, Kashani simply replied: "At present, oil is his concern."\textsuperscript{25} Similarly, in response to the pressures coming from conservative religious communities and groups for immediate Islamization of the society, he tried to make them realize the critical political conditions and argued that the enemy had to be completely driven out and the country be preserved before reforms could be carried out. He even went as far as accusing those who continued to insist on religious reforms of being traitors to the national movement:\textsuperscript{26}

\ldots.I have been receiving signed letters asking: Why don’t you close down the liquor stores? Why don’t you expel women from the [governmental] offices? Why don’t you order women to wear chador? These [people] are either direct servants of the British, or conspirators, or ignorant. I know there are many working women who must support several people and whose only source of income is their governmental salary. I ask you: if we did expel them today, given the country’s weak budget, are we able to provide for their expenses? And if they cannot continue their lives there is only one solution for them, that is, going to the Shahrino [the prostitutes’
Kashani's avoidance of the other two issues which were more explicitly and firmly based on religious principles and whose postponement could not have been justified--i.e., closing down the liquor stores and ordering women to wear chador--is quite significant and interesting. So is his method of reasoning by resorting to deeper religious and moral values held by the people. They both reflect Kashani's clever style in dealing with religious conservatives. Toward the end, and at the peak of his confrontation with Dr. Musaddiq, however, Kashani used religious issues to undermine the government and criticize its supporters. He condemned the Majlis for delaying the implementation of the ban on alcohol for six months, arguing that this would imply the Majlis' approval of the consumption of alcohol for this period. Later, on the occasion of the month of Ramadhan, he demanded that the government cancel all music from the radio and enforce strict observance of fasting in public places. In short, Kashani's position on religious issues was to some extent dependent on political circumstances, although it seems his views were more moderate compared to those of other clerical factions.\(^{27}\) As far as political behavioral motives are concerned, religious interests do not seem to have had a primary role in Kashani's behavior as they were often subordinated to national interests.

With respect to his political orientation, Kashani's views on the monarchy and the Shah did not differ radically from other clerical factions. He, too, never challenged the legitimacy of the institution of monarchy. Indeed, he played some role in the foundation of the Pahlavi dynasty. His first involvement in Iranian politics was on the occasion of the formation of a Constituent Assembly to determine the political future of post-Qajar Iran, as the Fifth Majlis had voted to abolish that dynasty. Kashani, participating in the elections as an observer and a candidate, was elected to the Assembly and cast his vote in favor of making Riza Khan, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, the new Shah.\(^{28}\) He reiterated his support for the monarchy during his activities in the nationalist era: "My opinion is that Iran
needs monarchy for many years to come. Indeed, the Shah's presence serves as a rallying point to unite all classes of people round this fixed center."\textsuperscript{29}

Because of his abstention from politics during Riza Shah's rule, it is difficult to determine Kashani's attitude toward the Shah. It can only be said that he did not express any antagonism toward the monarch. More significantly, he apparently remained silent on the incident of the Guharshad Mosque, in which government troops attacked this holy site, which is adjacent to the shrine of the Imam Riza, and killed hundreds of people who had taken refuge there. As for his son, Muhammad Riza Shah, Kashani maintained a favorable attitude while avoiding the kind of deference that was displayed by the clerical leadership. He gave the Shah credit for supporting the national movement: "Our young Shah seeks the good of the people and country. The best proof for this is that he has given royal assent to the law of nationalization of the oil industry immediately."\textsuperscript{30} Later when Qavam as-Saltani\eh was appointed as Prime Minister to replace Dr. Musaddiq, who had resigned after his confrontation with the Shah, Kashani blamed the Shah's associates for keeping him uninformed and leading him to believe that the Majlis had voted for Qavam. In November of 1952, he again defended the Shah's role in the national movement: "The Shah of Iran has followed the people's desires in the anti-imperialist movement, and, as much as he can, supports Dr. Musaddiq's government and the people's movement."\textsuperscript{37} When the conflict between Kashani and Musaddiq began to reach serious levels, Kashani became even more supportive of the monarch. In his interview with an Egyptian reporter, he expressed his belief that the Shah had some fine attributes which set him apart from other kings, including Egypt's Faruq who had been just deposed: "The Shah is very different from Faruq. Iran's king, unlike Faruq, is neither corrupt and faddish, nor dictator and tyrant. The Shah is a trained, wise man."\textsuperscript{31} And, of course, eventually Kashani's alliance with Ayatullah Bihbahani paved the way for the coup which overthrew Dr. Musaddiq's government and put the Shah back on the throne.

A distinctive feature of Kashani's political behavior is the presence of a strong
nationalistic and anti-foreign element in his political orientation. In fact the strongest motive throughout most of his political life seems to have been this anti-foreign tendency. Kashani’s political and military activities against the British in Iraq and the loss of his father in that struggle, proved to have a lasting effect on his political behavior. This early experience was reinforced by his arrest by the British occupying forces during the war. The theme of anti-British rhetoric is prevalent in Kashani’s public statements. During his imprisonment, he was quoted as saying: "If I stay alive and get out of prison, I’ll make sure that this Muslim nation would not give one drop of oil to Britain." To a French journalist he remarked: "I have a hatred for the British." On another occasion, he explained to a British reporter: "Since I have always considered British policy to be harmful for the Islamic countries, and have witnessed so much of the suffering and pain which our Muslim brothers and Iranian citizens have experienced because of British policy, I have not been willing to have an interview with the British, or even face them. But since some friends have said that you are a responsible journalist, I have agreed to have an interview with you." Kashani’s anti-British tendency, however, was not a blind one. His political pragmatism revealed itself even in his decisions against the British. When the question of the boycott of British commodities was raised, he arranged a meeting with leaders of the bazaar and asked them to evaluate the consequences of such action and determine whether it would have a negative effect on the bazaar, and, if so, whether the loss would be endurable or could be compensated for through other means.

Kashani’s nationalism, however, was not solely a negative one. In his messages and declarations, alongside terms such as "religious duty," "servant of Islam," and "Muslim nation" reflecting his religious concerns, nationalistic terms such as "national duty," "national government," "national goals," and "patriotism" appear frequently. While such manipulations of nationalistic symbols may be viewed as simple pragmatism on the part of Kashani in his attempt to build up as large a constituency as possible, a deeper sense of positive nationalism seems to be present in his thinking. In a message to high school and
university students, for example, he remarked: "My dear children, you are the inheritors of the culture and civilization of an ancient and proudful country which for years was the world's torch bearer of knowledge and civilization." Indeed nationalism seems to have been a basic element in Kashani's political thinking, influencing his otherwise strong support for pan-Islamism. Thus while calling for greater unity among Islamic countries and the formation of an Islamic Congress, Kashani spoke of the need for the collective effort of all Muslims to preserve the national sovereignty of each Muslim nation.

It was such a combination of nationalism, negative as well as positive, and pragmatism which brought Kashani so close to the nationalist political forces, particularly the National Front. At his exile in Lebanon, he advised his followers, including the Fada'iyan-i Islam, to vote for the National Front candidates. When he returned from exile, he was greeted by masses of people who were mobilized by political groups including the National Front, a dramatic change from his previous unnoticed returns from exile. Although a few religious dignitaries were also present, the welcoming ceremonies definitely had a political rather than a religious character. Kashani himself cooperated closely with the National Front and many of their meetings were held in his house. He expressed an unwavering support for Dr. Musaddiq during the first phase of his premiership, and played a crucial role in Musaddiq's return to power on "the thirtieth of Tir." (21 July 1952) Even during the second phase, when his relation with Musaddiq gradually began to deteriorate, Kashani maintained close contacts with other members of the National Front.

The most dramatic aspect of Kashani's political behavior was his break and eventual confrontation with Musaddiq, and his support for the coup which not only brought down Musaddiq and his government but also ended the nationalist era in Iranian political history, something that perhaps even Kashani himself did not anticipate. Why did the staunch, uncompromising, anti-British Kashani eventually undermine the most popular and the truly nationalist government in postwar Iran, which he himself had helped to bring to power, while it was still fighting the British who were now joined by the Americans?
Interpretations and speculations concerning this question are too numerous to be discussed here. For our purpose, what is important is to determine whether national or religious interests played a determinant role in Kashani's political behavior at this point. Specific reasons cited in support of the importance of religious factors include Kashani's fear of communism aroused by Tudih activities, and his concern over Musaddiq's general policy to undermine religion in society and to separate it from politics (e.g., his refusal to ban alcohol, his appointment of irreligious and even anti-religious persons as ministers). The question of the validity of such charges aside, the main problem with these arguments is that Kashani himself never attributed his dispute with Musaddiq to religious issues. Nor were those people from the National Front such as Baqayi, who deserted Musaddiq and with whom Kashani continued to cooperate closely, more religious than Musaddiq. In fact, some of the clerics, both inside and outside the Majlis, who were considered followers and associates of Kashani, chose to side with Dr. Musaddiq. At any rate, since Kashani himself did not emphasize religious differences, if these indeed existed, there is no reason to believe that they played a determinant role in his decision to oppose Musaddiq's government. Kashani's own statements concerning this question reveal two types of factors. One set of reasons, which may be considered to be reflective of his concern with national interests, relate to Musaddiq's specific policies or actions (e.g., opposition to the Shah, request for the extension of extra-Constitutional powers, referendum on the question of dissolution of the Seventeenth Majlis, extension of curfew, appointment of undesirable persons, failure to manage the economy, inefficient government, etc.). Another set of factors which even Kashani himself mentions relate to personal interests. For example, on one occasion, complaining about the public criticisms made against him, he said: "... Gentlemen, why should I be so insulted? I am an asset to this country. I am not only the leader of Iranian Muslims. All Muslims in the world recognize me as their leader. Why should they [pro-Musaddiq groups] insult me so much?"40 Also, as some of observers have noted, part of the conflict between the two leaders may have been the result of Kashani's interference in
governmental affairs by writing personal recommendations and requesting favors for his followers. In short, Kashani's dispute with Musaddiq involved personal interests as well as his concern for national interests as he perceived them. With regard to his political behavior in general, however, it seems quite clear that the order of priority of interests for Kashani was national-religious-clerical corporate.

**Clerical Political Radicalism: The Fada'iyan-i Islam**

Another religio-political development in postwar Iran was the emergence of a movement which combined religious fanaticism with political radicalism and whose most significant manifestation was the Fada'iyan-i Islam (Devotees of Islam). Although the movement received its numerical strength largely from the young lay religious men of the lower class, it maintained close affiliations with the clerical establishment, particularly, but not exclusively, its lower stratum of *tullab* (students of religious sciences). Navvab Safavi, the founder as well as the ideological leader of the movement, and Sayyid Abdul-Husayn Vahidi, another top leader, were both members of the clergy. Furthermore, the religious circles of Qum and other cities served as important centers for the Fada'iyan's political activities. Thus this movement reflects a clear political tendency within the clergy and as such is important for an analysis of clerical political behavior in general.

In analyzing the political role of the Fada'iyan-i Islam, it is important to realize that the group did not act as a well-organized political force, particularly in its early stages, but instead represented a religio-political orientation with which many individuals sympathized. Naturally those who saw themselves as the leaders of the movement were inclined to claim credit for political actions which were more the results of individual initiatives of the sympathizers than their own order. For example, the most politically significant action attributed to the Fada'iyan—the assassination of Prime Minister Razmara which paved the way for the passage of the oil nationalization bill in the
parliament--was carried out by Khalil Tahmasbi, who later disclaimed membership in any group at the time of the assassination while the Fada'iyan had issued a declaration demanding the release of their "brother." Thus the Fada'iyan's significance lies in the extent to which they reflected a broader tendency within the society and clerical institution and not so much in the size of their "membership."

As a clerical movement, the Fada'iyan identified with and defended the clerical institution. Their respect and support for clerical leadership, however, was not unreserved. In their manifesto, clerical leaders were harshly criticized for their inertia and self-interestedness:

You the 'ulama of Islam, you who have been placed on the Prophet's seat. . . Which evil have you prevented? Which good have you implemented? . . . You the Islamic 'ulim, you the ungrateful . . . by God, all throughout your life, your struggle to preserve Islam's foundation was not even one-thousandth of your effort to achieve the status of religious authority (marja'iyyat) and dominion (riyasat). By God, the moment you feel the slightest threat to your worldly title and status, you'll do anything, making accusations of blasphemy (takfir) or of religious corruption (tafsiq) even if they cause damage to the holy foundation of Islam. But if before your own eyes the result of the sufferings of the prophets, Muhammad and his household, and the holy blood of Husayn . . . is set on fire, unless you feel a danger to your own status, you do not care and do not act.

Interestingly enough, such austere criticisms notwithstanding, the Fada'iyan presented their manifesto to some clerical leaders in the hope of receiving their approval, which, of course, did not come about. On the occasion of Ahmad Kasravi's assassination in 1945, some clerical leaders, particularly Ayatullah Qumi, intervened and requested the acquittal of his assassins. However, there are two points here that make this intervention less than a full support for the Fada'iyan as a group. First, the clerical leadership considered Kasravi's assassination an act in defense of Islam against religious heresy. Thus it was their concern with the threat against Islam and not so much endorsement of the Fada'iyan which led to their intervention in this case. Second, at the time of this incident, the Fada'iyan were only beginning to form as a movement and lacked a definite ideological and political orientation which could receive the approval of the clerical leadership. Their
manifesto was published, for the first time, in 1950. Given the reluctance of the clerical leadership to get involved in politics, it is not surprising that no public endorsement was ever expressed in support of the Fada‘iyan. One should also keep in mind that, since the Fada‘iyan represented the lower ranks of the clergy, they lacked sufficient prestige to attract support or even serious attention from the clerical institution’s top leadership. Moreover, given the latter’s conservatism and unfavorable attitude towards violence and disorder, the Fada‘iyan with their violent tactics and political assassinations could not have expected much sympathy from clerical leaders. Nonetheless, they occasionally sought the support of the clerical leadership for advancing their own goals, as they did in appealing to Ayatullah Burujirdi to intervene in ending Ayatullah Kashani’s exile. The response, however, was not enthusiastic by any means. For their part, their formal respect toward the clerical institution notwithstanding, the Fada‘iyan could not have felt close to those clerical leaders who refrained from all political activities. In short, for the Fada‘iyan clerical corporate interests were not strong enough to override their concern for religious or national interests.

Strong religious motives undoubtedly formed the foundation of the Fada‘iyan movement. Reacting to what the clerical establishment considered as the religious heresy of Kasravi, Navvab Safavi left his religious studies in Najaf, Iraq, to go to Tehran and take action against such blasphemies. His first action was to establish, in cooperation with some other religious writers and personalities, the Society for Combating Irreligion (jam‘iyyat-i mubarizih ba bidini). Following the assassination of Kasravi, however, the movement gradually became more intensely involved in national politics, although religious motives continued to direct its political orientation. As their manifesto reflects, the Fada‘iyan were deeply alarmed by what they viewed as the decline in religious ethics and morals, especially "sexual indecency." Although their religious outlook was formalistic, they showed more readiness than the clerical leadership to adapt to social changes and even accept some aspects of Western life. Their call for the establishment of an Islamic
government, which for them simply meant the implementation of Islamic laws, was inspired essentially by what they saw as the moral and cultural decay of Iranian society, although social and economic inequalities were also on their minds.

While the Fada’iyan’s political ideology, as their detailed program of reforms shows, was not revolutionary in that it did not call for a fundamental change in the political system, still it represented the most radical, if somewhat simplistic, view among religious forces of its time. By resorting to political assassinations, they represented the most radical political behavior. No clerical leader or group had called so strongly for the implementation of Islamic laws. With respect to the institution of monarchy, while the Fada’iyan did accept implicitly its legitimacy, they envisioned the monarch as a patriarchal figure whose role is similar to that of a father in the family, and who is therefore necessary for every society although he may be given different titles. The Shah himself, however, was considered the usurper of the Islamic state, presumably for not implementing the Islamic laws, and hence an illegal and illegitimate ruler.

Our announcement to the enemies of Islam and the usurpers of the Islamic state: the Shah, the government, and the other collaborators whom we know very well. You the traitors, the ignobles; you know that we are right, that Iran is an Islamic country, inhabited by followers of Muhammad’s household and that you are thieves and usurpers who, with great fear and trembling, have temporarily usurped the Islamic state of Iran ... We, the Muslim nation of Iran and the children of Islam, announce to the world ... that the present government of Iran is not a legal and national government and does not have legitimacy.

The personal attack against the Shah was also evident in the Fada’iyan’s criticisms against the corruption prevalent in the government: "Garbage collectors and street sweepers along with the prime minister and the Shah are all bribe takers. The garbage collector takes bribes to collect the garbage while those two--the Shah and the minister--take bribes to betray our religion, our country, and our oil." The Fada’iyan’s denunciation of the Shah is particularly significant in the light of the clerical leadership’s highly deferential attitude, as well as Ayatullah Kashani’s conciliatory posture, toward the
monarch. After the coup, however, Navvab Safavi issued a declaration claiming credit for the Fada’iyan for their role in bringing down Musaddiq and his government, and in more moderate language calling on the Shah and the new government to implement the Islamic laws and thereby achieve legitimacy, happiness, and prosperity.48

Another aspect of the behavior of the Fada’iyan was the presence of a nationalistic tendency in their political orientation which, while always subordinate to religious concerns, did affect their political behavior. They addressed the question of oil in their manifesto, stating that Iran has the sole right to exploit its resources. The political activities of the Fada’iyan also reflected this national concern. Razmara’s assassination, which paved the way for the passage of the oil nationalization bill in both houses of the parliament, was inspired by his opposition to the bill and his insult to the Iranian people by calling them too incompetent to be able to manage this industry.49 Thus the extreme views suggesting either that the Fada’iyan were "extreme nationalists as well as religious fanatics,”50 or that the "entire concept of nationalism was foreign to the advocate of Fedayan Islam,”51 seem to be incorrect. The Fada’iyan definitely cannot be characterized as "extreme nationalists," given the predominance of religion in their thought as well as actions. On the other hand, while nationalism as a secular concept did not form their ideological orientation, their attitudes and behavior reflected certain nationalistic tendencies which were, nevertheless, always subordinated to their religious orientation.

The dubious nature of the combination of strong religious traditionalism with nationalism in Fada’iyan’s ideology and political orientation revealed itself in the behavior of the movement toward the National Front and Ayatullah Kashani during Dr. Musaddiq’s premiership. A declaration issued under the Fada’iyan’s name accused Musaddiq of anti-Islamic activities and threatened his life, as well as the lives of other members of the National Front, if he did not release some twelve members of the Fada’iyan who were imprisoned prior to Musaddiq’s government for their involvement in the assassination of former prime minister Razmara. Safavi himself, through letters and interviews, attacked
Musaddiq and Kashani and the National Front members in strong language and went so far as to accuse them of having surpassed the British in their treason to Iran. In an interview, he attributed his differences with Kashani to the latter's un-Islamic behavior and his refusal to force Majlis deputies to implement Islamic laws: "We told Kashani: 'Your policy and your behavior are not Islamic. You must change your policy and your children[!] must implement Islamic laws.' But these words did not influence him and we were compelled to keep distance from him, so that our Islamic brothers, who had received purely Islamic training and self-sacrificing, would not become spoiled." He then went on to challenge Kashani, Musaddiq, and the National Front to a "moral" trial so that people could become aware of their wrong doings. While Safavi's relationship with Kashani improved when the latter became opposed to Musaddiq, his antagonism toward Musaddiq remained strong.

A dissent, however, seems to have developed within the Fada'iyan in this period. In a declaration entitled "The Fada'iyan-i Islam Excommunicates Navvab Safavi," the opposition faction announced the ousting of Navvab Safavi from the leadership and membership of the group, vowing to punish severely the "traitor ex-leader." As for their reason for ousting Safavi, they stated:

Navvab Safavi, whom we had elected to the leadership for some time, because of repeated faults as well as insults which he made to the holy stature of the greatest and the most significant children of the Qur'an, that is Ayatullah Burujirdi, Ayatullah Kashani, Ayatullah Khawarsari, and Ayatullah Hujjat, the true leaders of Islam, and to other strugglers in the path of Truth, and for his improper passions and his vain and baseless claims has been ousted from the Fada'iyan-i Islam Society; and we announce our disassociation from him, his sinister statements, and his publications which come under the name of the Fada'iyan-i Islam, and purify the holy name of the Fada'iyan-i Islam from such ugly actions.

Despite this strong condemnation Safavi was able to retain his status as the leader of the Fada'iyan throughout the life of the group. During Musaddiq's rule frequent declarations highly critical of him and signed as the Fada'iyan appeared in the daily paper; whereas there was no further representation from this faction, indicating that perhaps it was not
large enough to sustain itself. The Fada'iyan also made an attempt to assassinate Dr. Husayn Fatimi, Mussaddiq's foreign minister; the assailant declared later that his real target was Dr. Musaddiq himself.54

The Fada'iyan's behavior toward the nationalist forces, represented by Dr. Musaddiq and the National Front, and toward other religio-political forces represented by Ayatullah Kashani reveals some important aspects of the nature of their religious and political convictions and how these motivated their political actions. Why did the Fada'iyan, despite their anti-foreign tendencies, from the very beginning so violently oppose the only truly national government of postwar Iran which was asserting and defending Iranian national interests against foreign aggression? This question is particularly significant since Musaddiq's government enjoyed at least in the beginning the support of the most important religio-political figure in Iran at the time, Ayatullah Kashani, who was so closely associated with the Fada'iyan that many regarded him as their spiritual, if not political, leader. And why did Kashani himself, whom Navvab Safavi once considered as the deputy of the hidden Imam, become so despised? Many factors seem to have been responsible for the Fada'iyan's behavior. First, their reaction to Dr. Musaddiq's government was partly the reflection of political naivete and lack of sophistication on the part of the Fada'iyan, who perhaps viewed the passage of the oil nationalization bill and the formation of Dr. Musaddiq's government as the end of the national struggle against British imperialism. Secondly, they considered their own role in this anti-foreign struggle to be more valuable and critical than that of any other group, secular as well as religious. The Fada'iyan's assassination of Hazhir, the Court Minister, had forced the government to stop interfering in the Sixteenth Majlis elections, resulting in the election of Kashani and the National front members (including Musaddiq) to the parliament. The assassination of Razmara was also crucial in the passage of the oil nationalization bill. Safavi's comments in an interview illustrate this point: "Yes we are opposed to the behavior of Kashani, Dr. Musaddiq and the National Front members, because they were elected to the parliament
with the help of the Fada’iyan and our dear brothers. . . Kashani suffered defeat throughout his political life, so did the Minority [the National Front members in parliament]. Only through the actions of the Fada’iyan-i Islam did they succeed." Naturally they expected some recognition and tangible reward for their role, preferably in the form of sharing power with the government, or at least having some influence on governmental policies through concessions made to their demand for the implementation of Islamic laws. Yet, not only was neither of these expectations realized, but their "brothers" had remained in prison, for which they held the National Front and Ayatullah Kashani responsible. In the same interview, Safavi brings up this issue, and when the reporter points out that those people were convicted by the court which had nothing to do with the National Front and Kashani, he replies: "No. In my opinion it is all the work of the Minority and Kashani. All the arrests and interrogations were personally ordered by them . . . I believe that presently all my dear brothers are imprisoned on the order of Kashani and the National Front. Our newspapers are banned by their orders, too." Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Fada’iyan's insistence on the implementation of Islamic laws did reflect their deep religious convictions which served as the strongest motive for political action. Again, as Safavi had reasoned with Kashani: "Even if the Minority did not become deputies with our help and were elected on their own, still it is their duty to try to implement the laws of Islam." Seemingly, at the very beginning of Dr. Musaddiq's premiership, the Fada’iyan submitted a four-point demand which contained: (1) making veiling mandatory, (2) firing female employees from governmental offices, (3) banning alcohol, and (4) making participation in congregational prayers mandatory for all government employees. Kashani had apparently tried to make them realize that the National Front could not be expected to support such measures and that the political situation was not yet appropriate for raising such divisive issues. Safavi, however, viewed such arguments as excuses on Kashani's part and reflective of his "un-Islamic" behavior. Thus the Fada’iyan, viewing themselves as the most religiously and politically qualified
group, which had made the greatest sacrifices and yet was betrayed by the nationalist and religious forces, came to oppose them both throughout most of this period. Their reconciliation with Kashani towards the end was the result of the latter’s confrontation with Musaddiq, who as a nationalist leader was not in a position to compete with Kashani for the Fada’iyan’s sympathy and support.56

As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, the clerical class did not behave as a monolithic group in the postwar nationalist era of Iranian politics; rather, different patterns of political orientation and behavior coexisted throughout this period. Within the analytical framework adopted here, it was possible to identify three such patterns based on the behavioral motives for clerical political involvement. Since the three types of motivational interests were all present to some extent in the behavior of every clerical faction identified in this study, each faction’s characteristic feature may be represented by its order of priority of interests.

The clerical institution, represented by the leadership of the religious hierarchy, displayed a conservative political behavior which reflected the following order of motivational priority: religious, clerical corporate, and national. As a result of its reluctance to become directly involved in politics, this clerical faction played the least important role in the national movement. The second clerical group, represented by Ayatullah Kashani and his followers, exhibited a pragmatic political behavior which reflected the following order of motives: national, religious, and clerical corporate. As the most politically active group, this faction played the most important role in the national movement by both offering and later withdrawing its support. The third clerical faction, represented by the Fada’iyan-i Islam, manifested a radical political behavior with the following order of motivational priority: religious, national, and clerical corporate. This faction accommodated the nationalist forces only to the point of initial victory over the foreign enemy, after which its religious motivation proved to be too strong to allow for further cooperation with the nationalists.
In addition to the identification of these three patterns of clerical political behavior, there are several other important points which emerge from the analysis of the political role of the clergy in this period. On the question of the relationship between religion and nationalism, as the pragmatic behavior of Ayatullah Kashani illustrates, it is possible even for a clerical faction to develop harmonious relations with the "secular" nationalist forces. Kashani's eventual confrontation with Musaddiq was not a conflict between religion and nationalism as such. Neither did Kashani genuinely seek, as many post-revolution revisionist interpretations suggest, to impose an Islamic framework on Musaddiq's nationalist government, nor did Musaddiq ever intend to undermine Islam and its place in Iranian society. The differences between the two camps led by Kashani and Musaddiq were essentially political, complicated by personal interests. The distrust between religious and nationalist political forces resulting from this experience, however, as post-revolutionary developments well demonstrate, proved to be deeply rooted, notwithstanding their brief and tactical alliance against the Shah.

A common characteristic of all three clerical factions is that none of them challenged the legitimacy of the institution of monarchy despite the weak position of the Shah throughout most of the nationalist era. Indeed, the Shah himself enjoyed the full support of the clerical leadership and Ayatullah Kashani, religiously the two more important groups. Only the Fada'iyan raised the question of the Shah's piety and legitimacy. It is against such a background that the significance and novelty of Ayatullah Khumayni's direct and harsh denunciation of the Shah, and his characterization of monarchy as being anti-Islamic in the course of the 1978-1979 revolution, can be fully appreciated.

With respect to intra-clerical relations, there certainly existed a sense of community identification among all three factions. As members of the religious class, all clerics may be expected to reflect attachments to the clerical institution and develop some motives in defending its interests which, in many instances, may coincide with their personal or factional interests as well. However, this does not mean that clerical corporate interests
are the strongest motive for political action for all members of the clergy. In the cases of the Fada’iyan and Ayatullah Kashani the other two types of motive, religion and national, seem to have played a much more important role than clerical corporate interests. For the leadership of the clerical institution, however, which is the heart of the religious class, clerical corporate interests were important. Of course, in the nationalist era no major clerical interest was fundamentally threatened, and thus a true test of the degree of group solidarity among the clergy based on clerical corporate interests never took place. This situation, however, changed significantly in the 1960’s and 1970’s as a more self-confident Shah began to expand governmental control at the expense of the clerical institution and its corporate interests.
NOTES

1 A detailed account of the development of Iranian nationalism can be found in Richard Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*.

2 For a history of communism in Iran, see Sepehr Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran*, and Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*.

3 An example of such activities was the writing of fabricated letters (in red ink) signed by the Tudiin Party in which the clerical leaders were threatened with hanging from the lamp posts on the streets. See B. Afrasiyabi and S. Dihqan, *Taliqani va Tarikh* p. 121.


5 It has been maintained, generally without presentation of specific evidence, that the religious revival in this period was encouraged by the British and the Americans as part of their strategy to combat Soviet influence in Iran. See, for example, Yahya Armajani, *Iran* p. 154; "Islam and Oil in Iran," *Christian Century*, 68, 33 (August 15, 1951), p. 940; T. Cuyler Young, "The Problem of Westernization in Modern Iran," *Middle East Journal*, 2, 1 (January, 1948), p. 57. The only specific charge seems to have been made by the Soviets and their Iranian supporters: "... every year since 1943 a flock of five hundred ‘Rouze Khan’ (a kind of Mohammedan priest), educated in anti-Soviet and anti-labor tactics in the British-dominated neighboring country of Iraq, have been clandestinely sent to the northern Soviet-occupied provinces. Each of these servants of God is armed with an ‘emergency’ British passport and receives a monthly allowance of 3,000 rials, quite a handsome sum." See Reza Shahshahani, "What Next in Iran," *Soviet Russia Today* (March, 1946), p. 22. Soviet propaganda set aside, this is
a plausible hypothesis, especially with respect to the role of the British, given their long history of interference in Iranian domestic affairs. The evidence, however, remains inconclusive. On the other hand, some have suggested that the Soviets either directly or through the communist Tudeh party were behind the Fadaiyyan Islam and their activities. See Khawndaniha, 16, 35; George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs p. 421; and Philip W. Ireland, "Islam, Democracy, and Communism," in D.S. Franck, ed., Islam in the Modern World p. 68.


7 For more information on Ayatullah Burujirdi, see Abdul-Hadi Hairi, "Burujird, Hadjdji Aka Husayn Tabataba'i," El², Supplement; and A. Davanti, Sharh-i Zindiganiy-i Ayatullah Burujirdi.

8 M. Dahnavi, Majmu'ih-i Payamhay-i Ayatullah Kashani, vol. 1, p. 27. (Hereafter cited as Dahnavi, Majmu'ih.)

9 Ittila'at, Isfand 2, 1327/February 21, 1949.

10 Probably this is a reference to the clergy's exemption from military service or similar privileges held by them.

11 Ruhaniyyat va Asrar-i Fash-nashudih az Nihzat-i Milli-shudan-i San'at-i Naft. (Hereafter cited as Ruhaniyyat va Asrar.)

12 Specifically, the Qur'an 2:118, and 4:141.

13 The basis of this speculation is that in a special commission formed by the United Nations on the issue of women's social status, the Iranian delegates, representing Dr. Musaddiq's government, along with those from Lebanon, proposed a resolution giving women political rights equal to men's. Specifically, its three articles confirmed women's right to participate in elections, both as voters and candidates, and to hold the same occupational positions available to men. See Ittila'at, Farvardin 9, 1331/March 29, 1952.

14 See ibid., Day 15, 1331/January 5, 1953 for opinions issued by Ayatullahs
Burujiirdi, Sadre, Kuhkamarri-i, and Bibbahani as well as a declaration by the preachers of Tehran.


16 Ibid., 21 Bahman 1327/10 February 1949.

17 Ibid., 10 Murdad 1332/1 August 1953.

18 Ibid., 3 Shahrivar 1332/25 August 1953.

19 Ibid., 10 Shahrivar 1332/1 Sep. 1953.

20 Ibid.

21 One contemporary biographer of Kashani wrote that perhaps he was the only ruhani in Iran who did not have any religious endowment under his control. Abul-Hasan Ihtishami, Bazigaran-i Siyasat p. 53. Kashani himself once defended his motivational sincerity by asking: "Who can claim that I have been covetous, or received something from the government, or benefitted from a mauqufih [religious endowment]." See M. Dihnavi, Majmu'ih, vol. 1, p. 24. Shahrough Akhavi also notes this point concerning Kashani's position within the clergy. (Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary in Iran, p. 218.) However, the example that he provides--Kashani's decision to stay at the governor's residence rather than that of Ayatullah Burujirdi or another religious leader on his trip to Qum to observe the fortieth day of Ayatullah Khawnsari's death--is incorrect. In fact Kashani stayed at Ayatullah Khawnsari's residence where Ayatullah Burujirdi payed him a visit and, as required by custom, he returned the visit later. See Ittila'at, Mihr 1, 1331/September 23, 1952.

22 Kashani's criticism of the clerical institution's leadership is reflected more clearly in his personal correspondence. Writing from his exile in Lebanon to a fellow cleric, he complained about lack of support from clerical leaders when he was arrested by the government, and referring to the religious class he stated: "Even your own guild (sinf) do not allow that something be accomplished." (Dihnavi, Majmu'ih, vol. 1, p. 61.) In another letter to the same person he wrote: "You have written that the government
recognized the mock Jewish state and none of the ‘ulama of the Qum or elsewhere protested. My brother, they are right; they should not engage themselves in politics, otherwise nobody will give them the share of the Imam [part of the religious tax given to the clerical leaders]. I protested twice against the Jews, and not one of them came to my support." (Ibid., vol. 5, p. 100.) As for the kind of opposition that he had to face from some segments within the clergy, the following example may be mentioned. According to one observer, when Kashani made a trip to Mashhad in 1950, a large group of clerics under the leadership of Ayatullah Hajj Mirza Ahmad Kafayi preached against him and even protested to his being given the title of Ayatullah. See B. Afrasiyabi, Musaddiq va Tarikh p. 307. Still it is indicative of his clerical bias that after the coup which overthrew Musaddiq’s government, Kashani requested from Zahidi, the new prime minister, the release of the "turbaned" members of the parliament who had been arrested during the coup. See Ittila’at, 11 Shahrivar 1332/2 September 1953.

23 Hassan Arfa, Under Five Shahs, p. 391.

24 Dihnavi, Majmu’ih, vol. 1, p. 159.

25 Ibid., p. 152.

26 Ruhaniyyat va Asrar, p. 152.

27 Richard Cottam attributes Kashani’s use of religion to his personal interests: "It is probably indicative of an overwhelming drive on Kashani’s part for personal political power that he was less of a theologian than his fellows but more fanatically devoted to the concept of Shariat predominance." (Richard Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, p. 153.) As the above argument has attempted to show, this view is both somewhat inaccurate and too simplistic.

28 A. Amirtahmasb, Tarikh-i Shahanshahy-i A’lahazrat Riza Shah Pahlavi, p. 593.

29 Dihnavi, Majmu’ih, vol. 1, p.144.

30 Ibid., vol. 3, p. 120.
31 Ibid., p. 322.

32 S.J. Madani, Tarikh-i Siyasi-Mu'asir vol. 1, p. 142.

33 Dihnavi, Majmu'ih, vol., p. 105.

34 Ruhaniyyat va Asrar, p. 111.


36 Muhammad T., Ittila'ati dar barih-i Tashannujat va Dargirihayi Khayabani va Tauti'ih-ha dar dauran-i Hukumat-i Duktur Muhammad Musaddiq, Daftar-i Avval, p. 61. (Hereafter cited as Tashannujat.)

37 S.M. Kashani, Qiyam-i Millat-i Musalman-i Iran p. 182.

38 Dihnavi, Majmu'ih, vol., 5, p. 105.


41 In an interview, Tahmasbi made the following statement about his organizational affiliation at the time of the assassination of Razmara: "I was a devotee of the religion of Islam, and my duty was to make every sacrifice for the cause of religion and the Muslim nation of Iran. At that time, I knew and respected my dear brother Navvab Safavi. I also used to frequent Ayatullah Kashani's house as well as other religious and nationalist organizations and societies. Yet I was not a member of any group or association. Rather, I cooperated with all the self-giving and patriotic Muslims. (Tehran Musavvar 484, 30 Aban 1331/20 November 1952; quoted in Tashannujat, p. 12.)
42 *I'lamiyih-i Fada'iyyan-i Islam ya Kitab-i Rahnamay-i Haqqa'iq* p. 82-83. (Hereafter cited as *Rahnamay-i Haqqa'iq*.)

43 Ahmad Kasravi was a historian who became a religious innovator attacking strongly many aspects of popular religious beliefs and practices as well as the clergy. His ideas and activities caused strong opposition on the part of the clerical leaders who considered him a heretic. His assassination was inspired and financially supported by some clerical leaders. See, *Khawndaniha*, 16, 1 (Mihr 1334/September-November, 1955), p.24.

44 The Fada'iyyan are usually portrayed as the archetype of blind anti-modernism and anti-Westernism. Aside from the biases and value-judgements involved in such characterizations, they are misleading since the clerical leadership is in many respects more traditional and resistant to any change, even those of a purely technological nature. For example, the Fada'iyyan called for the building of prayer rooms inside cinemas so that movie goers would be able to perform their daily prayers on time (*Rahnamay-i Haqqa'iq*, pp. 21-22), an idea totally inconceivable to many leaders of the clerical institution who considered such Western innovations as radio, television, and cinema to be sinful in themselves regardless of their contents.

45 An interesting point to note, which also shows the depth of belief in the monarchical system of government in the Fada'iyyan's political thinking and culture, is their reference to the Twelfth Imam as *al'lahazrat*, an honorific used primarily for the Shah, and "the absent king of the world" (*padishah-i qa'ib-i jahan*). Ibid., p. 26.

46 Ibid., p. 62.


49 According to one interpretation, Razmara's assassination was planned by the regime itself which was alarmed by his political ambitions and close ties with the United States. Even if this view is correct, it does not necessarily mean that the
Fada’iyan knowingly collaborated with the government and acted as its agents. Given the unlikelihood of the existence of such a close, secret relationship between the two, a more plausible explanation seems to be that the government infiltrated the Fada’iyan and, manipulating their animosity toward Razmara because of his opposition to the nationalization of oil, involved them in its plot against him. This would not in any sense undermine the Fada’iyan’s nationalistic attitudes reflected in their hatred for Razmara who was considered the major obstacle to the nationalist movement at that time.

50 Richard N. Frye, Iran p. 90. The same point is repeated by Adele Ferdows who writes that the Fada’iyan "were as much extremist nationalists as they were fanatically religious." See Adele (Kazemi) Ferdows, "Religion in Iranian Nationalism, Fedayani Islam," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Indiana, 1967, p. 31. Ferdows's characterization of the Fada’iyan as "extremist nationalists" is also based on their alleged advocacy of "purification of the Persian language through the elimination of all Arabic and Turkish words" and their "desire for the establishment of an Islamic government under an Imam. " (Ibid., p. 30.) However, no specific evidence or reference is provided in support of either of the two points. The Fada’iyan’s manifesto, which Ferdows uses for her analysis of their ideology, does not support either of these claims. Based on their own usage of the Persian language as well as their religious fanaticism, it is highly unlikely that they would call for the elimination of Arabic words. As for the second point, even if they had called for the establishment of an Islamic government under an Imam, it is not clear at all why this would make them "extremist nationalists."

51 Richard Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, p. 151. This position is apparently based on the idea that secularism is an essential element of nationalism and thus a fanatically religious group such as the Fada’iyan could not be even remotely associated with nationalism. In his later works, however, Cottam takes a different position and is
indeed very critical of the view that nationalism is an essentially western and secular ideology. See Richard Cottam, "Nationalism and the Islamic Republic of Iran," Canadian Review of Studies of Nationalism, 9, 2 (Autumn 1982), pp. 263-277.

52 Tashannujat, pp. 96-97.

53 Ibid., p. 87.

54 Given such open and strong opposition waged against Musaddiq and his government by the Fada’iyan from the very beginning, it is indeed astounding to read that: "Fadayn was the power behind Dr. Mosaddeq’s assumption of office . . . and formed the most important force behind his government during its attempt to nationalize Iranian oil." (Adele Ferdows, "Religion in Iranian Nationalism," p.30.)

55 B. Afrasiyabi, Musaddiq va Tarikh, p. 313.

56 Joseph Upton asserts that Musaddiq’s "not moving ahead faster with the implementation of the oil nationalization law" was the source of the Fada’iyan’s opposition to him. The Fada’iyan’s threat against Musaddiq’s life, according to Upton, was similar in motivation to their assassinations of Hajir and Razmara. "In each of these instances," writes Upton, "the motivation was anti-foreign." See Joseph M. Upton, Modern Iran, p. 157. As it has been discussed here, religious convictions and the desire for greater political power were the main factors behind the Fada’iyan’s conflict with Musaddiq.
CHAPTER V

THE POST-NATIONALIST ERA AND THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION, 1953-1979

The 1953 coup d'etat marked the end of an era in Iranian history in which nationalism dominated the political scene. As was shown in the previous chapter, even religious groups which were involved in politics reflected the presence of a relatively strong element of nationalism in their political behavior. The success of the coup, nonetheless, revealed the weakness of nationalism as a unifying political force. Although engineered and carried out essentially by the CIA and its British counterpart, the coup could not have succeeded without direct as well as indirect support of domestic forces, including the religious ones. The nationalist forces continued to be active for some time even in the post-nationalist era through the formation of the Second National Front (Jihbey-i Melli Duovum) and the Movement for National Resistance (Nihzat-i Muqvimat-i Melli). Musaddiq, too, continued to remain a national hero for almost all political groups emerging in the post-nationalist era, including the religious ones such as the Movement for Freedom in Iran (Nihzat-i Azady-i Iran). By the 1960's, however, nationalism had almost completely lost its effectiveness as a political force against the growing dictatorship of Muhammad Riza Shah. In the process of the 1978-79 revolution, nationalist groups joined the anti-regime movement, but this time instead of religion being under the umbrella of nationalism, it was the nationalist forces which followed the political leadership of the clergy. Both for the older generation, which had experienced the limits and shortcomings of nationalist politics, and the new generation, which was in search of a guide for radical political action and even armed struggle, nationalism was passe. The 1960's and 1970's, in short, were the age of ideology for political opposition in Iran. The choice of secular forces was Marxism; that of the religious ones an ideological Islam. A major objective of this chapter is to examine the process of ideologization of Islam by religious intellectuals in the post-nationalist period.
In terms of clerical involvement in politics, the post-nationalist era itself may be divided into four phases: 1953-1960, 1961-1964, 1965-1977, 1978-1979. This chapter will focus on the second and third phases as they reflect changes inside the clerical establishment which were crucial for the realization of the Islamic revolution in the fourth phase. More specifically, it will examine the politicization of the clerical establishment under the leadership of Ayatullah Khumayni. Before discussing these developments, however, some important points concerning the clerical establishment in the first phase will be briefly mentioned.

The Clerical Establishment Under Ayatullah Burujirdi

In the first phase (1953-1960), the relation between the regime and the clergy were basically amicable as the Shah adopted a policy of appeasement towards the ruhaniyyat. The clerical establishment, itself did not experience any significant changes in its political role. It remained under the leadership of Ayatullah Burujirdi, "the sole religious authority" (marja'-i taqlid-i 'aam) since the early 1940's, who had adopted a policy of political abstinence. In terms of its internal organization, however, the clerical institution underwent some changes which were significant for the future developments both inside and outside the ruhaniyyat.

A major achievement of Ayatullah Burujirdi was the rapprochement of Shi'ism and Sunnism through cooperation with the center that was established in Egypt for the purpose of closing the gap among all branches of Islam (Dar al-Taqrib). Through his contacts with the leaders of Al-Azhar, first Shaykh Abdul-Majid Salim and then Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, Ayatullah Burujirdi paved the way for the recognition of Shi'ism by Sunni ulama as one of the acceptable legal schools within Islam on a par with the four major Sunni schools. This was a historic development toward ending the isolation of the Shi'ite population from the Sunni majority. Besides creating a more favorable and
supportive attitude toward Shi'ism and its religious leadership among the Sunni ulama and their followers, this development also opened the way for greater influence of Sunni reformist thinkers among the Shi'ite clergy. Perhaps the most important of these thinkers was Seyyid Qutb, whose books were translated into Farsi by members of the clergy and whose ideas seem to have had a significant impact in making the Iranian clergy more involved in social affairs.¹

Another important development under the leadership of Ayatullah Burujirdi was his approval of the establishment of modern elementary and high-schools which would be supervised by devout lay Muslims or members of the clergy and in which religion would be integrated with other subjects in the curriculum. Ayatullah Burujirdi himself contributed to these schools by using part of the "share of the Imam"² for their creation. This was significant since, as Ayatullah Mutahhari points out, there were other religious leaders who still saw the creation of new schools and the teaching of modern science as threats against Islam.³ These schools were important as they inspired a more positive attitude toward religion among the educated classes. Moreover, they actually contributed to producing intellectuals who were knowledgeable about modern science and yet were educated in a religious environment. This was important for the process of ideologization of Islam which itself was a significant factor in the Islamic revolution.

Ayatullah Burujirdi is also credited with some organizational reforms within the clerical establishment such as the introduction of book-keeping and accounting which were nonexistent before. For example, he ordered records to be kept of all the clerics who were authorized by him to collect religious taxes and contributions, and thus curtailed the abuses which had become common practice. He also ordered the recording of all correspondence through his office. The significance of these reforms under Ayatullah Burujirdi is better appreciated when they are placed against the background of the traditional animosity that existed within the clerical establishment toward such attempts. Indeed, many clerics considered the anarchy that was prevalent before these reforms as
the secret of the survival of the clerical institution. While it is very difficult to evaluate precisely the significance of these reforms with respect to the future political developments within the clerical establishment, it may be surmised that these organizational reforms strengthened the network of the clergy and its communication which was crucial during the revolution.

**Politicization of the Clerical Establishment**

The death of Ayatullah Burujirdi in 1961 was a turning point in the history of the clerical institution. It created a vacuum in the leadership of the clerical establishment. Outside the clerical institution, Ayatullah Kashani had lost his status as the most important religio-political leader and no other clerical leader had been able to fill that gap. The resulting vacancies in both religious and religio-political leadership proved to be crucial in making possible the developments which took place during 1961-1964 and led to the emergence of Ayatullah Khumayni as the most important clerical leader, and to the politicization of the clerical institution under his leadership.

No religious authority could command the universal following that Ayatullah Burujirdi did. Possible candidates for this position included Ayatullah Seyyid Kazim Shari'atmadari, Ayatullah Muhammad Hadi Milani, Ayatullah Khamnsari, Ayatullah Gulpayigani, Ayatullah Shahrudi, Ayatullah Mar'ashi Najafi, and Ayatullah Seyyid Muhsin Hakim. The regime attempted to use this opportunity to transfer the center of Shi'i religious leadership to outside of Iran. In pursuit of this policy, the regime sent a telegram of condolences for Burujirdi's death only to Ayatullah Hakim who was residing in Najaf, Iraq, thus indicating its support for his leadership. A second attempt by the regime to accomplish this goal was made following the disturbances of March of 1963, during which the Fayziyyih religious school in Qum was attacked by troops in response to Ayatullah Khumayni's opposition to the Shah's "White Revolution." Following that incident,
Ayatollah Hakim sent a telegram to the religious leaders of Qum and invited them to immigrate to Najaf. The regime informed the clerical leaders that it would not have any objection to such action and would in fact make arrangements for their trip.⁵

While none of these candidates were eventually recognized as the sole religious leader, the political events led to the emergence of Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni as the most outspoken clerical leader against the regime. As a result of this development, Ayatullah Khumayni’s clerical prestige significantly increased to the point that he gradually came to be recognized as the sole leader of all the Shi’ites, although his religious erudition alone could not have made this possible. Ayatullah Husayn-Ali Muntaziri, who has been designated as the successor to Ayatullah Khumayni in the current regime, issued a statement in 1963 in which he called on all the people to become followers of Ayatullah Khumayni since he was the most qualified religious leader.⁶

The turning point in the political developments within the clerical establishment following Ayatullah Burujirdi’s death was the regime’s introduction of a series of reforms under the slogan of the "White Revolution," or as it later came to be called, the "Shahpeople Revolution." These reforms brought clerical opposition and set the stage for three years of confrontation between the clerical establishment and the regime. The Shah’s reform proposal contained six items; the two most important one’s which were commonly believed to be the real reasons behind clerical opposition were land and electoral reforms. It was generally maintained that the clergy opposed the land reform since the religious endowments (awqaf), which constitute an important revenue source, would be taken away from clerical control. The electoral reform also included the enfranchisement of women, which the the clergy had opposed even during Musaddiq’s premiership.⁷ Having dissolved the Majlis in 1960, the Shah intended to submit these reforms to a public referendum.⁸ This fact also raised some questions concerning the constitutionality of the Shah’s action which were mentioned in some of the statements of the clerical leaders. Before issuing any public comments, the Qum clerical leadership sent an envoy to the Shah to inquire about
the nature of the reforms and to express its opposition to him privately. The Shah reportedly insisted that the reforms had to be implemented and assured the clerical leadership that if they did not oppose them, he would accept any request that they might have concerning the particular interests of the clerical community. Ayatullah Khumayni seems to have sent an envoy of his own to discuss this matter with the Shah. In his first public statement, Khumayni did not make any reference to the land reform provision. After raising some legal and constitutional objections, he alluded to the electoral reform and then concluded that "clerical officials believe that the Quran and the religion [of Islam] are threatened, and it seems this forced referendum is a preliminary step toward the eradication of other aspects of religion." He also referred to the regime's earlier attempts to reform the laws of the elections to state and local councils. In those reforms introduced in the late 1950's, the regime had attempted to give women the right to vote and to change the reference to "the Quran" mentioned in the requirement for taking an oath for elected officials to that of "the holy book." From this statement then, it seems Khumayni's main concern was women's enfranchisement. The regime, however, attributed clerical opposition to the clergy's concern over the religious endowments which would come under the land reform. In fact, there had been clerical opposition to the land reform before its submission for referendum. Ayatullah Burujirdi has been quoted as saying that "... sometime ago, rumors were heard about a possible limitation on land-ownership. I told the Prime Minister and His Imperial Majesty, that the limitation was incompatible with the laws of Islam." Ayatullah Bihbahani is also said to have stated that "... the land reform bill has disturbed the thoughts of Muslims because it contains provisions incompatible with the teachings of Holy Islam and the Constitution ... It shall not be legal even if it is enacted." In another statement, Bihbahani mentioned religious endowments specifically: "... I strongly protest the idea of distributing religious endowments." Such oppositions, however, cannot be attributed to clerical corporate interests only. As the post-revolutionary developments have shown, there indeed exists a view among religious
authorities which considers all limitations on property as being against Islamic laws. Thus, in these instances of clerical opposition to land reform, both clerical corporate interests and religious motives seem to have been involved.

The Shah still hoped he could appease the clerical leadership. Thus two days prior to the referendum, he made a trip to Qum to meet with clerical leaders. Because of the demonstrations and clashes with the police which had taken place the day before the Shah’s visit, no clerical leader would meet with him. The Shah reacted strongly by making demeaning statements about clerical leaders without mentioning them:  

... a group of ignorant and shallow [qishri] people have always thrown stones on our path, because their minds have not been shaken and are incapable of being shaken ... the "black reactionaries" have no understanding at all, and since a thousand years ago their thoughts have not changed ... The Red terrorists [communists] have clear intentions, and incidently my hatred for them is less since he [sic] says openly that "I want to deliver the country to the foreigners." Lying and deception is not his style ... by black reactionaries I mean those people who a few days ago formed a small and ridiculous gathering of a bunch of stupid and bearded bazaar merchants to make some noise ... the model for these people is the Egyptian regime ... that Nasser who has at least fifteen thousands political prisoners ... these are traitors who are one-hundred times worse than the [communist] Tudih Party.

Such insulting comments by the Shah, of course, could have only further alienated other religious leaders as well as their supporters in the bazaar. From this point on, the Shah took a more aggressive public position against the clergy while continuing his insults.

After the referendum, a series of confrontations took place between Qum religious students and security forces. In one of these incidents, the police attacked a gathering held at the Fayziyyih religious school. Many students were injured and their belongings and books were destroyed and set on fire. The brutal way by which the religious students were treated led many religious leaders to the conclusion that further confrontation with the regime could endanger the whole clerical establishment and that it was time to retreat and observe taqiyyih (concealing one’s true beliefs and opinions) in their relation with the government. Khumayni, however, remained adamant in his opposition to the government.
Following this incident he issued a statement which was significant in two aspects: (1) focusing his attacks on the Shah and monarchy by characterizing the atrocities that the security forces had committed as expressions of their love for the Shah, which implied acting on his orders, and (2) placing himself on a par with, or even higher than, the more well-known and respected clerical leaders by encouraging them not to retreat.\(^{18}\)

... while shouting "Long Live the Shah," they attacked the center of Imam Sadiq [the sixth Imam, and founder of the Shi'ite branch of jurisprudence] and his physical [his descendants, Seyyids] and spiritual children . . . threw sixteen/seventeen year old children off the roof, tore apart books and [copies of] the Quran . . . these people commit sacrilegious acts under the slogan of shahusti [loving the Shah]--shahusti means plundering, committing aspersion against Islam, violating the rights of the Muslim people, attacking the centers of science and knowledge(?) shahusti means striking the body of the Quran and Islam, and burning the signs of Islam(?) . . . shahusti means violating the laws of Islam(?) . . . shahusti means smashing the ruhaniyyat and destroying the results of the prophecy.

Following these harsh remarks against the atrocities committed by the pro-government forces and the police, and characterizing them repeatedly as manifestations of the real meaning of loving the Shah, Khumayni then addressed his own colleagues, warning them that: "the fundamentals of Islam are being threatened. The Quran and the religion [of Islam] are endangered. Given this condition, taqiyyah is haram [religiously unlawful, impermissible] and revelation of facts is vaqib [religiously obligatory]."\(^{17}\) Khumayni ended this important declaration by stating: "My heart is now ready for the bayonets of your agents. But I will never submit to your tyranny, or bow to your oppression."\(^{18}\) This dramatic remark set the tone for future confrontations with the regime which continued until Khumayni’s exile in 1964. Even during his exile, Khumayni continued to influence the political atmosphere of the Qum clerical establishment through the network of his associates and former students. The end result was the creation of a revolutionary potential within the clerical community, especially its middle and lower rank members.

The dramatic politicization of the clerical establishment under Khumayni’s influence enhanced the position of the clergy among anti-government political forces significantly. At
the same time, however, the clerical institution was assisted by a new development taking place within the Muslim intellectual community, namely, the ideologization of Islam. establishment.

_Idelogization of Islam_

As it has been shown in previous chapters, Islam has been present, although in different forms, as a socio-political force throughout most of the Pahlavi period. What is significant about the role of Islam in the post-nationalist era is its emergence as an ideology or a belief system which could serve as the basis for the organization of modern society. Until this time, Islamic political activism was essentially motivated by religious feelings which were often heightened in reaction to anti-religious policies and developments. Even the Fada'iyan-i Islam, who raised the issue of Islamic government, were primarily concerned with the moral decay of the society which in their opinion would have been corrected by the implementation of Islamic laws. Thus for them, Islamic government did not mean a system of government with a form of its own; rather, any form of government which would enforce Islamic laws would have been accepted. The ideologization of Islam, however, means its introduction as a system of belief which has its own world view, philosophy of history, sociology, political and economic system. Ideological Islam is distinct from the traditional and cultural Islam in the sense that it is studied and consciously selected as an alternative to other religious and secular ideologies. This approach to religion was undoubtedly to a great extent a product of modernization and western influence in Iran. Its advocates had received their education through modern schools and universities and had come in direct or indirect contact with the West and its ideologies. They were members of the intellectual class, itself a product of modern education which was introduced in the 1920's.

Ideological Islam, however, did not appear in the earlier periods for two reasons. First,
as a general rule, the initial reaction to new ideas and phenomena, such as western influence, is either fear or fascination, one leading to total rejection, and the other to complete submission. Thus, in the earlier periods of the twentieth century and especially during Riza Shah’s rule, these two opposite responses to western influence emerged simultaneously. The reaction of fascination and total submission is personified by Hasan Taqizadih whose famous slogan was "we must become western from the head to the toes." Indeed this is what most intellectuals who were exposed to modern education or had gone to Europe did in practice. On the opposite side, were those members of the religious class or general population who because of their traditional religious views, rejected anything novel. The third kind of response to western influence, which may be called eclectic, is based on critical evaluation and selective adoption. It develops more gradually and slowly because it is more sophisticated than the other two responses and in part emerges as a reaction to them. Consequently, it is in the 1960’s that we witness the development of this response on a large scale in Iranian society, although its roots can be traced to the postwar period. A second factor was also responsible for the delay of the development of intellectual Islam, namely, the dominance of nationalist politics in the 1940’s and early 1950’s. The gradual diminishing of nationalist politics following the 1953 coup paved the way for the emergence of new socio-political forces. As suggested above, both the old and new generations were looking for more powerful ideologies than nationalism. It is within this context that Islam appears as a political ideology and competes with Marxism as a revolutionary force in the process of revolution.

It must be stressed at the outset that our discussion and examination of the process of ideologization of Islam in the post-nationalist era is necessarily brief and incomplete. No thorough study of this phenomenon and the lives and works of its participants, such as Mehdi Bazargan and Ali Shariati, has been done either in English or Farsi. Such an attempt, of course, is far beyond the scope of the present work. Our focus will be on the general characteristics and political significance of Ideological Islam and its contribution to
the Islamic revolution.

The most important figure in the early phase of the ideologization of Islam was Mehdi Bazargan, the prime minister of the Provisional Government which was formed following the revolution. Bazargan attended modern schools and finished his higher education in mechanical engineering at the University of Tehran. He was among the first group of students who were sent by Riza Shah to Europe in 1928. Later in one of his defense statements in court, Bazargan made the following comments on the social atmosphere of that time, the attitude of the government in sending them abroad, and his own worries:

... the country was burning with the fever of modernization (vataddud) and reforms (islahat). Principles and results of European civilization were particularly on people's minds and had become fashionable. It was mostly believed that if we move in the direction of higher education and specialization, build factories, and organize our lives on western models our pains will be cured, our suffering will be ended, and our underdevelopment (aqab-utfadigi) will be corrected."

Bazargan also notes that "we were asked by Riza Shah to bring patriotism, sciences, and technologies to Iran as souvenirs," while "many of our parents and we ourselves were worried and wanted to make sure that if we could not succeed in achieving something, at least we should not lose our former assets such as our ethics and religion." After seven years of study in France, Bazargan returned to Iran and pursued an academic career at the University of Tehran. At the same time, he became actively involved in writing and lecturing on different aspects of Islam. Bazargan summarized his experience in Europe and what it taught him as follows: (1) Engineering knowledge and specialization practices; (2) increased belief and interest in Islam—that Islam which is original, social, alive, and life-giving, and not the one which is superstitious, distorted, ceremonial, and individualistic; (3) the realization of the great fact that the creator and owner of Europe's civilization and grandeur has not been one individual or official and that all the people have participated in it; (4) the discovery of the great secret that European life and the guarantor of perpetuation and victory of all nations depends on the form of their social structure and
not on personal and individual [characteristics].

The two most important themes in Bazargan’s works are: (1) the compatibility of Islam and its laws with modern science, and (2) the inseparability of religion and politics. In his earlier works, Bazargan was more concerned with proving that many aspects of religion which are commonly perceived as being refuted by modern science could actually be explained scientifically. Among his topics in this relation were prophecy, revelation, and worship. One of his first books deals with the rules for purification and cleanliness in Islam and how they can be scientifically supported. In advocating the inseparability of religion and politics, Bazargan was following his general criticism of those religious groups and clerics who were emphasizing the other-worldliness of Islam and had practically disarmed it of any role to play in this world. In his view, however, Islam can be summarized as having three elements: a goal which is God, a means which is this life, and a road which is the Islamic religion. It is in this context that he encourages the religious class to become more actively involved in politics and to discard the idea that such involvements in worldly matters are signs of weakness in their piety. Indeed, in his work entitled The Secret of the Underdevelopment of Muslim Nations, Bazargan considers the creation of an official religious class in Islam as one of the causes of underdevelopment of Muslim societies. In his opinion, this was responsible for the separation of religion from social life and the emergence of the view that working for success in daily life is somehow less valuable than devoting one’s life to the study of religion. In another work entitled The Boundary between Religion and Social Affairs, he again emphasizes the need to bring religion out of private life and make it relevant to society.

Bazargan was himself politically active in the nationalist era. Following the nationalization of oil, he was sent by Dr. Musaddiq as the head of a committee to take over the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. After the 1953 coup d'état, however, he became more seriously involved in politics and gradually separated from the nationalist forces. Finally in 1961, with Ayatullah Seyyid Mahmud Taliqani and Dr. Yadullah Sahabi, he founded the
Movement for Freedom in Iran (MFI) [Nihzat-i Azady-i Iran]. As the constitution of the MFI reflects, while Musaddiq remained their national hero, Islam was to become their political ideology in the new phase of political struggle. Later in 1963, in an article entitled, "Political Struggles and Religious Struggles," ["Mubarizat-i Siyasi va Mubarizat-i Mazhabi"] Bazargan, after making the observation that in Iran the relation between the government and people had fallen on the same track as that in countries which experienced revolution, asks which type of struggle should be chosen and would be more successful: political or religious? His answer is in favor of religious struggle, although he maintains that those who pursue a political struggle and are motivated by nationalistic and humanitarian goals should be supported and encouraged. Bazargan argues, however, that in Iran and in the East in general, nationalism does not have a strong popular base while religion has always been an important force in political change. He points out that until the Constitutional Movement and the superficial imitation of the West, such concepts as nationalism and Iranian nationhood had no meaning either for the people or the governments. People do not have any strong feelings toward "homeland," "the nation of Iran," "freedom," "popular government," and even "the Shah of Iran," while for religious matters they express strong feelings as reflected in their mourning of the loss of a Mullah or religious leader. In short, Bazargan concludes, "in this environment, people's thinking and psyche is far more prepared for religious struggles than for struggles under the banner of nationalism and political or humanitarian ideals." Elsewhere, he asserts that "the universal, comprehensive, and inclusive form of struggle in Iran is religious struggle." Of course, Bazargan is quick to add that this does not mean that religion can be simply used to make a non-religious struggle successful since only those religious struggles will succeed that are based on religious duties and beliefs. Bazargan attempts to dispel some fears concerning his position that future struggles should take the religious form and points out other advantages in doing this. First, he denies that religious struggle means blind imitation of a particular religious leader or moving away from universal progressive
reforms, meaning the emergence of reactionary movements. He argues that a leader for such religious struggle will have to have proper qualifications and be accepted by all the people. Without mentioning names, Bazargan gives the example of Kashani's loss of popular support once he deviated from the wishes of the people, while another "unknown" and brave cleric who entered the political scene, meaning Ayatullah Khumayni, came to enjoy the support of the people. Then Bazargan concludes that as these experiences show, "the people of Iran have reached that level of maturity not to follow a religious leader blindly."\textsuperscript{30} Rejecting such an objection, Bazargan goes on to assert that religious struggles can benefit from the vast organizational and propaganda network of the clergy. He also warns that the mistakes of the past, such as the one made in the Constitutional Movement, should not be repeated. The mistake made by both the clerics and lay devout people in these cases was that they did not see it as their task to manage the society, and hence once a limited victory was achieved they left the scene and returned to their shops or mosques. "This mistake (or sin)," warned Bazargan, "should not be repeated ever again."\textsuperscript{31} The present political scene in Iran testifies to the fact that Bazargan's warning was well headed at least by the clerics.

While Bazargan started the process of ideologization of Islam and its transformation into a political ideology, it was with Dr. Ali Shariati and his works that this process reached its height and led to the adoption of Islam by the young educated class as a revolutionary ideology. Like Bazargan, Shariati was raised in a religious family but attended modern schools and upon finishing his university education in Iran won a government scholarship and went to France to pursue his education in 1959. During his years in Iran, he was politically active in the nationalist movement and according to one source, "loved Musaddiq."\textsuperscript{32} During his stay in France, Shariati continued his activities in cooperation with such nationalist forces as the National Front (Abroad). However, gradually he came to the same conclusion that Bazargan had reached earlier, namely, that a more specifically Islamic ideology is needed to lead the struggle against the regime. Thus
in September 1962, he proposed the foundation of a parallel organization to the MFI which had been established by Bazargan and his friends inside Iran. In his letter of proposal, Shariati attempted to explain the justification for the formation of this organization outside the National Front and other nationalist forces and stressed the need for an ideology which could answer many difficult questions which Iranian students living abroad were facing:

... socialism, the political system, religion, social and political schools of thought, revolution, reform, ownership, Islamic countries, liberation movements, and in short answering the question: What should be done? and from where should we start in Iran? These questions ... are today present in our way of thinking as well as our ideology, and if we do not attempt to answer them others will do so, as they are doing it now, and we will have no choice but to watch its saddening results.

Shariati's intensive attempt to formulate the Islamic ideology which he had in mind in France started when he returned to Iran and began teaching at the University of Mashhad in 1967. His works were mostly presented as lectures and later published by many religious organizations in Iran. In addition to the lectures which he delivered at different universities at the invitation of student religious organizations, Shariati began giving regular lectures at the Husayniyyih-i Irshad, a religious institution which was established in Tehran in the mid 1960's. By the time the regime closed down the Husayniyyih-i Irshad, it had become the most important center of religious activities for intellectual Muslims, especially the younger generation and university students. In his class lectures Shariati presented a scholarly approach to Islam by examining it from a sociological point of view. His major goal in this respect was to convince his students that Islam could be viewed as a complete belief system with progressive social and political ideas. To achieve this he made the strongest possible criticisms of traditional Islam and all its superstitious aspects and then presented his own views of what Islam is. One of his major themes is that the real struggle is between two versions of Islam: Islam as a culture and Islam as an ideology, the Islam which became the official religion under the Safavids (Safavid Shi'ism) and the Islam which Imam Ali represents (Alavi Shi'ism). In its distorted version, Islam
was reactionary, opposed to any change, a stagnated institution, and one in which form was emphasized at the expense of content, in contrast to the true Islam which was a revolutionary movement to bring justice and equality, to fight all forms of oppression, and to show man how to live. Thus a major part of Shariati's works consists of redefining some of the basic principles and tenets of Shi'ism such as ghaybat (occultation of the Twelfth Imam), shahadat (martyrdom), taqlid (imitation of a religious authority), imamat (divine leadership of the Twelve Imams), and many others. Perhaps the most influential aspect of Shariati's work and source of attraction for the youth was this distinction between two opposing versions of Islam. It enabled them to identify with Islam without feeling embarrassed in a social environment which looked down on religion.

*The Islamic Revolution*

In terms of its religious dimension, the 1977-1979 Islamic revolution resulted from the joining together of the two processes of politicization of the clerical establishment and ideologization of Islam. Without each of these developments, the revolution, if occurring at all, would definitely have taken a different character. Through his activities in the 1961-1964 period, Khumayni brought politics to the heart of the clerical establishment and changed a long tradition of political abstinence which had come to characterize this institution. Even after his exile in 1964, he continued to exert significant influence over the clerical community throughout Iran. By 1979, when the regime made the mistake of attacking Khumayni directly and personally, he had the whole network of the clerical establishment, which had become more organized, behind him. In short, in the course of the revolution, the clerical establishment itself underwent a revolutionary change under the leadership of Ayatullah Khumayni. At the same time, intellectual Muslims such as Bazargan and Shariati engaged in a serious effort to formulate an Islamic ideology capable of meeting the needs of the new generation as well as the challenge posed by Western and
Eastern ideologies. Based on their own experiences in the nationalist era, these intellectuals had reached the conclusion that nationalism could no longer serve as the basis of a political movement and a mobilizing force against the regime. The new stage of political struggle, in their view, required a more powerful and well-defined political ideology. Islam had the potential for both mobilizing the masses and serving as an ideology for a political movement. In the course of its development, this ideological Islam gradually took a revolutionary orientation through the intellectual and political activities of Shariati and the armed struggle of the Organization of People's Mujahidin of Iran (Saziman-i Mujahidin-i Khalq-i Iran). While denying the legitimacy of the clergy as a religious class in Islam, and being critical of most of the religious views emanating from them, the advocates of ideological Islam recognized the potential value of the clerical institution in the mobilization of the masses and thus supported and even encouraged greater clerical political involvement. Indeed bridging the gap between intellectual and clerical communities was a major goal of the Movement for Freedom in Iran, led by Bazargan. Khumayni was particularly respected and praised as a revolutionary clerical leader by almost all individuals and groups within the Islamic intellectual community. Without such crucial support, Khumayni would not have been able to establish himself as the universally accepted leader of the revolution inside as well as outside Iran.

The influence of Muslim intellectuals in the process of the revolution, however, should not be mistaken for their role in its outcome. Shariati, for example, is usually referred to as the ideologue of the Islamic revolution. This characterization is correct in the sense that he was the most influential figure in the process of ideologization of Islam, which itself was an important factor in the revolution. However, it must be emphasized that as a mass-based anti-regime movement, the revolution incorporated many groups with different ideological orientations. Even among Islamic groups, significant variation existed in terms of their perception of what the nature of the post-revolutionary regime should be. In the process of revolution, Islam served as a motivating force for anti-regime activities, but
"Islamic government" simply represented the antithesis to the monarchical oppression and injustice and as such had only symbolic meaning and significance. What precisely an Islamic government should be like remained unclear. No group or individual involved in the ideologization of Islam, including Bazargan and Shariati, had presented a model or blueprint for an Islamic government. As it turned out, the most specific discussion of such a government was offered by Ayatullah Khumayni in his lectures on the subject of vilayat-i faqih (guardianship of the jurisprudent) which were later published under the title of Hukumat-i Eslami (Islamic Government). The technical and substantive aspects of this work, however, received little attention outside the clerical establishment. Those few who read it prior to the revolution, saw it essentially as an attempt by Khumayni to politicize the clerical establishment by making political involvement a duty of the clergy. It was only after the revolution that vilayat-i faqih became the dominant issue in the debate on the nature of the political system to be created. Even at that point, it seems Khumayni's close aids, such as Ayatullah Bihishti, were more adamant in basing the legitimacy of the Islamic regime on the concept of vilayat faqih than Khumayni himself. Thus to the extent that, following its success, the ideology of the Islamic revolution came to be embodied in the concept of vilayat-i faqih, it cannot be said that Shariati was the ideologue of the revolution. The success of the revolution itself, however, was in large part due to the evolution of ideological Islam for which Shariati was mostly responsible.

As discussed above, the tendency and even eagerness to involve the clergy in social and political affairs was strong within the Muslim intellectual community itself. However, it must be stressed that Ayatullah Khumayni's role in creating a high degree of respect toward the clerical establishment among intellectual Muslims was crucial. In other words, Khumayni's politicization of the clerical institution had both internal and external importance for the Islamic revolution. Internally, it overcame the strong predisposition against political involvement which had dominated the clerical institution since the 1920's. Externally, Khumayni created a positive attitude toward clerical political leadership among
Islamic, and even some non-religious, political forces. It was through him and his revolutionary actions that the clerical establishment assumed the leadership of the revolution. Even the acceptance of *vilayat-i faqih*, the doctrinal basis of the clerical regime established after the revolution, by a large segment of the general public as well as by some groups within the religious intellectual community, was more due to Khumayni's personal religio-political prestige than to the religious validity of the doctrine itself.
NOTES

1 For example, Ayatollah Seyyid Muhammad Ali Khameneyi, the current president of the Islamic Republic, translated Qutb’s *Social Justice in Islam* in the 1960’s.

2 See chapter II, p. 48, n. 46.


4 The clergy were famous for their negative view toward institutional organization. Their own slogan was that "the best organization is having no organization at all." See ibid., pp. 248-9.

5 Ayatullah Hakim may have acted on the basis of his own interest. However, it is possible that his call for the immigration of the clerical leaders was influenced by the regime. In his telegram, he stated: ". . . the repeated, painful incidents and the deplorable tragedies experienced by the great religious leaders and Qum’s clergy had saddened the community of the faithful, and I am deeply saddened. ‘And very soon those who commit injustice will know how the One who turns things around would turn them around.’ [Quran, 26:227] The ulama should immigrate collectively to the ‘atabat ‘алият [shrine cities in southern Iraq] so that I can issue my opinion about the government." Madani, *Tarikh-i Siyasi-i Iran*, vol. 2, p. 28, n. 1. In his response, Ayatullah Khumayni, while thanking Hakim for his telegram and offer, rejects the idea of immigration, stating that: ". . . we know that with the immigration of maraj' and ulama . . . the great center of Tashayyu‘ [Shi’ism] will be on the verge of collapse and will fall into the hands of kufr [disbelief] and zanadiqih [unbelievers] and our dear brothers in faith will become subjected to torture and great hardship. We know that this immigration will lead to great changes and developments, which we are worried about." Ibid., p. 29, n. 1.

6 Madani, *Tarikh-i Siyasi-i Mu'asir-i Iran*, vol. 2, pp. 96-97, n. 1. (Hereafter cited as
Madani, *Tarikh.* This is quite significant in that it shows the strength of Khumayni's influence in the future developments within the clerical establishment, such as the rise of Ayatullah Muntaziri to prominence; it also reveals how the bond established between Khumayni and his clerical supporters began nearly fifteen years prior to the Islamic revolution.

7 See chapter IV, p. 88, n. 14.

8 Since one of the charges brought against Dr. Musaddiq had been his "unconstitutional" act of holding a referendum during his premiership, the Shah called his own referendum "national approval."

9 Madani, *Tarikh,* vol. 2, p. 12. The envoy was Hajj Aqa Ruhullah Kamalvand, a religious leader from Khurramabad.

10 Ibid. Khumayni's envoy is referred to as Mr. Bihbudi.

11 Ibid., p. 13. There are two other points in this public statement which reveal important aspects of Khumayni's political thinking. One is his reasoning that referendums are worthless as far as Islamic laws are concerned, meaning they lack any legitimacy. The other point is his argument that those who vote on the referendum should be knowledgeable about what they are voting on, "therefore, the vast majority of people do not have the right to vote on this issue."


13 Ibid., 218.

14 "Religious Demonstrations and Clashes," Echo of Iran, *For Your Information,* 385 (8 June 1963), p. 3.

15 *Ittila'at* 4 Bahman 1341/1963, quoted in Ibid., p. 17.

Ibid. p. 28

Ibid.


Bazargan was arrested and imprisoned from January 1963 until November 1967, following his foundation of the Movement for Freedom in Iran in 1961 and his activities in association with that organization.

*Mudaf'at-i Muhandis Bazargan*, p. 41.

Ibid.

Ibid., pp. 64-65.

See, M. Bazargan, *Mutahharat dar Islam*.


Ibid., p. 39

Of course, this reflects a serious weakness in Bazargan's argument. While he bases his claim that religious struggles are more successful than political ones on their advantage in having more favorable cultural and social conditions, he rejects the possibility that non-religious struggles can use religion as a tool and succeed on the ground that they lack genuine religious motives. The question then is whether people can distinguish between genuine and nongenuine motives in religious struggles.

One can only wonder whether Mr. Bazargan still holds the same view or not.

Ibid., p. 44.


Ibid., p. 20

This speculation is based on the fact that the first draft of the constitution which was presented to Khumayni and approved by him did not have any reference to *vilayat-i faqih*. This is significant since the original plan was to submit that
constitution to a referendum and once approved adopt it. Eventually, however, it was decided that a Constituent Assembly be elected and given the task of revising and giving the final approval to that constitution. The Constituent Assembly, which was dominated by the clerics, instead of revising that constitution engaged in writing a new one in which *vilayat faqih* was included as the basis of the Islamic Republic. Many other religious leaders, including Ayatullah Taliqani who was also elected to the Constituent Assembly, were not in favor of *vilayat-i faqih* and never approved it publicly. By this time, however, its proponents had managed to turn it into an issue between Islamic and non-Islamic forces to be able to discredit their opponents.
CONCLUSION

The most important point emerging from this study of clerical political behavior during the Pahlavi monarchy is that the Iranian clergy do not represent a politically monolithic group. The presence of a relatively strong sense of group loyalty and solidarity within the ruhaniyyat notwithstanding, uniformity and conformity in political behavior is not a characteristic of this institution. Thus any generalization concerning the political behavior of the clergy in Iran would be misleading. At each of the periods examined here, it was possible to identify different, even opposing, patterns of political behavior within the clerical establishment. The analytical framework for clerical political behavior adopted in this work--based on the three types of behavioral motive of religious, clerical corporate, and national--enabled us to identify these different patterns and place them in a comparative perspective. For some periods, such as the nationalist era (1941-1953), the different patterns were more clearly distinguished because of greater freedom and more extensive political involvement by the clergy. For the other two periods, the Riza Shah era (1925-1941) and the post-nationalist era (1953-1979), the possibility of political participation within the system was very limited. Under Riza Shah, from the late 1920's until his abdication in 1941, socio-political freedom was non-existent and even prior to that, it was considerably curtailed. In the post-nationalist era, while generally a dictatorial regime was in power, there still existed more freedom than the time of Riza Shah. The question remains, however, as to why the clergy did not become politically involved outside the system and oppose Riza Shah's dictatorship as they did that of his son, Muhammad Riza Shah. Was it because they were "too surprised and stunned to react effectively," as one observer has suggested? The answer is certainly more complex. Three factors seem to have been influential in this respect: (1) political circumstances and the nature of the regime, (2) organization of the clerical institution, (3) clerical leadership. Riza Shah's dictatorial rule was much more primitive, brutal, and indiscriminate. The famous story
about his personal mistreatment of Ayatullah Bafqi inside the shrine of the Eighth Imam’s sister in Qum, the center of clerical establishment, demonstrates the difference of style between Riza Shah and his son. On a personal level, perhaps it could be said that Riza Shah was feared as well as respected as a father figure and national hero. His military background and success in providing public security through the establishment of a powerful central government enabled him to command such fear and respect. Moreover, although it was generally believed that the 1921 coup d’état which brought him to power was the work of the British, and although the more recent opponents of the Pahlavi regime dismissed him as simply a tool of British imperialism, at the peak of his power, Riza Shah was not viewed by the public in that image. Muhammad Riza Shah, however, had neither the personal charisma of Riza Shah, nor his image of a nationalistic figure. The political circumstances surrounding his ascension to the throne at the age of 22—the Allied occupation of the country—and his return to power through the CIA engineered coup d’état of 1953, gave the second Pahlavi monarch an image of being a puppet of foreign powers. Especially following the 1953 coup, his image of being completely controlled by the U.S. became his major vulnerability and was effectively used by Ayatullah Khumayni against him.

Another reason why the clergy did not oppose Riza Shah as strongly as they did Muhammad Riza Shah in the post-nationalist era is that the clerical institution was stronger and more organized in the latter period and thus provided a more powerful internal base for political action. Under Riza Shah, however, the Qum religious center was only beginning to get organized and at that early stage could not have played a significant political role. Thus once individual clerical leaders such as Mudarris who opposed Riza Shah were silenced or exiled, it was not easy for an alternative clerical political leadership to emerge. Finally, during Riza Shah’s rule, the leadership of the clerical establishment was in the hands of Ayatullah Ha’iri, who was essentially apolitical and had encouraged a policy of political abstinence. In the post-nationalist era and following the death of
Ayatullah Burujirdi, however, clerical leadership came under Ayatullah Khumayni and his strong orientation toward political involvement. There is no doubt that without the influence of Ayatullah Khumayni clerical political involvement would not have taken the strong anti-regime and confrontationalist orientation that it did.

The existence of different patterns of clerical political behavior within the clerical community was in part due to some characteristics of the clerical institution itself and the Shi'ite religious tradition. From the institutional point of view, the most important feature is perhaps the absence of a rigid hierarchical structure of authority. Such absence of 'hierocratic coercive' power, to use Weber's terminology, means that no "official" policy on the relation of the clergy to politics can be effectively imposed. Hence, even when an Ayatullah Ha'iri or Burujirdi is recognized as the highest religious authority and either formally or informally expresses a policy of political abstinence, another religious leader such as Ayatullah Mudarris or Ayatullah Kashani may become extensively involved in politics without being deprived of his religious status. Such division between religious and religio-political leadership was in fact a major characteristic of the beginning of Riza Shah's rule and the whole nationalist era. Also the most important development within the clerical establishment in the course of the Islamic revolution was the integration and unification of these two positions under the singular leadership of Ayatullah Khumayni. The emphasis on the absence of a rigid hierarchical structure in the Shi'ite clergy does not mean that hierarchical religious institutions prevent the development of political movements which defy the "official" position. Rather the point is that a loose hierarchical structure makes it much more difficult for the religious leadership as well as government officials to undermine the legitimacy and authenticity of such political developments.

Another significance of the loose hierarchical structure in Shi'ism is that clerical leaders are generally more susceptible to public opinion and pressure than is the case in a more rigid religious hierarchy. Contributing to this clerical characteristic is the religious principle that allows one to choose his/her religious authority (marja'i taqlid) from among
the qualified clerical leaders. Thus different patterns of clerical political behavior are to some extent reflections of different political orientations in the larger religious population. However, when a particular political orientation becomes popular among the followers in general and within the clerical community in particular—as it happened in the early 1960’s as a result of Ayatullah Khumayni’s influence—it becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible, for other clerical leaders to behave differently.

A major theme throughout this study has been the interrelationship between religion and modernization. Three aspects of this interrelationship which have implications for theories of modernization were examined: (1) the impact of modernization on the clerical institution, (2) clerical positions on different aspects of modernization and secularization, and (3) the impact of modernization and secularization on religious thinking. The most serious attempts to transform Iranian society in the direction of westernization began in the late 1920’s and the 1930’s under Riza Shah’s rule. As a result of the implementation of numerous educational and judicial reform measures, the clergy lost the monopoly that they once enjoyed in these areas. The most immediate and obvious impact of secularization on the clerical establishment then was the elimination of some important and fundamental clerical social and legal prerogatives and functions. A number of factors, however, prevented a complete disestablishment of the clerical institution in Iran. First, the obligation to imitate a religious authority (taqlid) has institutionalized the clergy-people bond and enabled the clerical institution to maintain its popular base. Second, the financial independence of the clerical institution from the state and its dependence on the people, made it possible for the clergy to survive the loss of other revenue sources caused by some secularizing reforms. Third, the functional separation of the clerical institution from the state which started under Riza Shah and continued after him enhanced the clergy’s socio-political independence from the government and its moral authority to criticize the latter’s corruption. Thus the clerical institution’s relationship with the government was transformed from partnership into rivalry. Fourth, Riza Shah’s attack against some
popular religious practices (e.g., mourning, wearing the veil) and his method of using pure force to achieve many of his goals alienated a large segment of the population and enhanced their attachment to the clerical community and its leadership, which symbolized the defense of religion against Riza Shah's anti-religious policies. In other words, by attacking both clerical corporate interests--without completely disestablishing the clerical institution--and popular religion at the same time, Riza Shah undermined his own success in creating a lasting popular support for his reform. Finally, Riza Shah's rule did not last long enough to completely destroy the basis of clerical influence and power in society.

In terms of clerical position on different modernizing and secularizing reforms, it was shown here that not all such measures were opposed in principle by the clergy as a whole. Some of the educational and judicial reforms which had originated before Riza Shah's coming to power in fact enjoyed clerical support, while the more superficial reforms such as the forced unveiling of women were strongly opposed. More importantly, many of the reforms which were more gradually introduced and carried out were eventually accepted by the clergy despite their initial resistance. Women's enfranchisement is perhaps the best example of such reforms. Under the Islamic Republic, women not only have the right to vote but they can be elected to the parliament, something almost unthinkable two decades before the Revolution. The Iranian experience in this respect is quite significant in demonstrating the extent to which that both religion and the clergy may change as time changes, which goes against one of the most widely held assumptions in the literature of modernization.

Another aspect of the Iranian experience which challenges a basic assumption of the mainstream modernization theory in the West concerns the impact of modernization on religious thinking and practices. Secularization of education was viewed as resulting in the emergence of a completely secular intellectual class. As the case of Iran demonstrates, while such development indeed may be the initial result of secularization, it is possible and in fact very likely that modern education will produce a religious intellectual class whose
main characteristic is the adoption of a selective approach to both religion and modernization. Reflecting a more sophisticated response to the challenges posed by modernization and secularization than those of the two extreme positions of complete submission and rejection, such outcome may be viewed as part of the process of maturization of society in its encounter with other civilizations.

The present study also reveals the weakness of the approach to the Islamic revolution of 1978-1979 in which some specific Islamic or Shi‘ite religious principles are considered as explanatory variables in themselves. For example, some observers have attempted to explain the role of religion in the revolution through references to such principles as shahadat (martyrdom), ghaybat (occultation of the twelfth Imam), or illegitimacy of all governments during the absence of the Imams, etc. There are two basic problems with this approach. First, it assumes that such religious principles are absolute and not subject to interpretation, an assumption which is not supported by historical facts. Not only the meaning and political significance of these religious principles have changed throughout the history of Islam, but also at any given time there have existed different interpretations of them. The classic conflict between the mu‘tazilih and asha‘iri, that is, between free will and determinism, is an example of this point. Another example, which is more relevant to the case of Islamic revolution, is the concept of intizar (the expectation of the coming of the Twelfth Imam). This important concept has been understood in two different ways with two opposite political implications. According to the more superficial and popular view, the return of the Twelfth Imam is conditioned on the society’s complete abandoning of religion. The twelfth Imam reappears to eradicate sin and injustice which have penetrated all aspects of society. The implication of this view is that one should hope for the triumph of the evil forces, or at least remain completely passive. The same principle, on the other hand, can be interpreted, as was done by Shariati, in a way that requires the believer to show his readiness for the Twelfth Imam’s coming, by being involved in the fight against injustice and corruption. Consequently, the political implication of this basic Shi‘ite doctrine
depends on which of these interpretations has become more acceptable. From a sociological and political view then, the real question is why and how one interpretation becomes popular at one time and the other at another time.

The second problem is that there are opposing concepts in Shi’ism which make the development of two opposite political behaviors possible. For example, on the one hand, there are such politically significant concepts as jihad (struggle for justice and eradication of unbelief), amr-i bi ma’ruf (directing others to do what is good), and nahy-i az munkar (enjoining others not to do what is bad) which are emphasized in Shi’ism and indeed are part of the eight "secondary principles" of religion. However, all these duties may be abandoned in practice based on another principle which has emerged in Shi’ism, namely, taqiyyih (concealing one’s true beliefs and, if necessary, abandoning some religious duties). As was pointed out in the previous chapter, in his attempt to politicize the clerical establishment, Ayatullah Khumayni had to convince his colleagues and their followers that because of the Shah’s policies Islam and the clerical institution were endangered and therefore taqiyyih was not permissible. Again the main point that needs to be emphasized is that the political significance of all religious principles or practices must be viewed as being dependent on how they are interpreted or used. They must be viewed as variables and not constants in any analysis of the role of religion in politics. They have potential for both revolutionary and reactionary roles. The real question is why and how one potential becomes a reality and acquires greater legitimacy or popularity, at the expense of the other.

In explaining the role of religion in the Islamic revolution, this study adopted an institutional approach by focusing on the clerical establishment and its internal developments which enabled the ruhaniyyat to assume the leadership of the revolution. The most significant development in this regard, of course, was the politicization of the clerical institution under the leadership of Ayatullah Khumayni which began in the early 1960’s. This was itself made possible by the vacuum created in clerical leadership
following the death of Ayatullah Burujirdi in 1961. Thus in the development of the clerical role in the Islamic revolution, one can see an interplay of different variables: religious doctrine (\textit{taqlid}, which preserved the clergy-people bond despite the process of secularization), the clerical institutional (the absence of a rigid structure of religious authority, which made it possible for members of the clergy to become politically active outside the clerical institution), individual clerical leaders (the significant influence of Ayatullah Khumayni), the element of chance (Ayatullah Burujirdi’s death at a time when no religious authority was able to fill his position as the sole leader of the Shi’ite community, which made it possible for Ayatullah Khumayni to establish himself--through his political activities—as the most influential clerical leader). All these were important factors in making it possible for the clergy to lead the Islamic revolution.

The clerical political dominance in the post-revolutionary era, however, has changed the role of the clerical institution in Iranian society significantly. The most obvious change is the clergy’s loss of the moral authority which was their great asset against the Shah’s regime. Their extensive involvement in politics has revealed the clergy’s vulnerability to the same corrupting influences that have tarnished the image of politicians in almost every society. In fact the clergy have shown that as politicians they are less constrained by moral and ethical principles since the preservation of Islam, which for them means clerical dominance, is the ultimate end and justifies the means. The latest version of the regime’s official ideology, that is "the absolute sovereignty of the jurisprudent," (\textit{vilayat-i mutlaqih-i faqih}) indeed has freed the clerical leadership from the constraints of religious laws (\textit{shari‘}) should political expediency (\textit{maslihat-i siyasi}) make such departure necessary. The preservation of the Islamic Republic, in other words, has assumed the status of being the primary goal, with everything else reduced to secondary status. Such theoretical developments along with their practical manifestations have alienated the vast majority of religious intellectuals, including members and supporters of groups such as the Movement for Freedom in Iran and the Organization of People’s Mujahedin of Iran, who were among
the supporters of Ayatullah Khumayni even prior to the revolution. Given the experience of the clerical regime, it is extremely unlikely that the kind of favorable orientation toward the clerical institution and its political leadership which existed before the revolution and contributed to its success will emerge in the near future. Indeed many questions and criticisms concerning the very concept of immitation of religious authorities (taqlid) have already surfaced among religious intellectuals. While the foundations of this important religious concept have undoubtedly been shaken, the long-term significance of such developments is far from clear.

Political rivalries within the clerical establishment have also contributed to the clergy’s loss of religious as well as moral authority. The 1988 parliamentary elections brought to surface some deep hostilities among various clerical factions. A major clerical group was accused by its opponents of advocating an "American Islam" which favors capitalism. Such clerical in-fighting undoubtedly has undermined the status of the clerical establishment as a whole. Thus, although the clergy seem to have managed to maintain their basis of popular support, there has been a shift from religious to political allegiance on the part of their supporters among the masses. However, it is not certain that these groups will extend the same support to the clerical establishment in the absence of social, economic, and political benefits which they have come to enjoy and expect from the clerical regime. In short, it seems the future of the clerical institution and its role in Iranian society has become far more dependent on political factors than religious ones.
NOTES


2 The details of this story are sketchy. Basically the incident happened as the Queen was performing some religious ceremony at the beginning of the new Persian year at the presence of Ayatullah Bafqi. When the Queen's head-cover slips off, the Ayatullah admonishes her. Upon receiving the news of this "disrespect" to the Queen, Riza Shah sends some troops to the shrine and Ayatullah Bafqi is dragged out of the shrine.

3 In Shi‘ite jurisprudence, religious principles are divided into two groups: usul ad-din (the primary and fundamental principles), and furu‘ ad-din (the secondary principles). The fundamentals are: (1) tawhid (oneness of God), (2) nubuwat (prophecy), (3) ‘adl (absolute justness of God), (4) imamat (divine leadership of the twelve Imams), and (5) ma‘ad (resurrection). The secondary principles include: (1) namaz (five daily prayers), (2) ruzih (fasting during the month of Ramadhan), (3) hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca once in one’s life time), (4) khums (literally, one-fifth; a religious tax), (5) zakat (alms), (6) amr-i bi ma‘ruf (directing what is good), and (8) nahy-i az munkar (enjoining what is bad). Two more secondary principle have been gradually developed but are not usually emphasized as the other eight: one is tavalli (expressing one’s devotion to Imam Ali, the first of the Twelve Imams), and the other is tabarri (expressing one’s dissociation with Ali’s enemies). One main difference between the primary and secondary principles is that one should come to believe in the former through one’s own reasoning and faith, while the latter are observed and performed according to the instructions of one’s marja‘-i taqlid (source of imitation).
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