Iran’s Religious Intellectualism:

A Comparative Study of the Islamic Reformist Discourse before and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979

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The Introductory Chapter:

Iran’s Religious Intellectualism in Comparative Perspective
An Overview:

This paper discusses the second two waves of religious intellectualism in Iran. It draws an analytical comparison between the new Islamic theologies before and after the revolution of 1979. The argument presented here attempts to demonstrate that the second reformist discourse is not an extension of revolutionary theology and breaks with the first discourse completely. Indeed, the current discourse develops an entirely different Islamic thought connoting epistemological and hermeneutical understanding of religion. The first revolutionary stand is represented here by Jalal al-Ahmed, Ali Shariati, and Seyyed Mahmoud Taliqani, while the second modernizing trend is presented via the works of Abdol-Karim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, and Mohammed Mojtahed Shabestari.

The Emergence of a Modern Theology:

In 1997, Khatami’s landslide victory crystallized the unprecedented rise of a new Islamic political discourse. This movement, with its scholastic depth and academic complexity, was made available to the urban middle classes through Khatami’s platform. His religious-modernist and reformist agenda endorsing such modern concepts as civil society, political pluralism, and “Islamic democracy” derived its ideas mainly from that rising reform movement. The movement’s leading intellectuals campaigned on Khatami’s behalf hoping that their rationalistic and progressive understanding of Islam would be incorporated within the rigid state system of the Islamic Republic. Their disenchantment and disillusion with the increasingly totalitarian nature of Islamic theocracy drove them to develop moderate interpretations that would work to accommodate the modern globalized world and serve the contemporary Iranian context which

The religious reformism movement was underway before the presidential elections of 1997. The earliest stages of this Islamic reformist trend go as far back as late 1980s and early 1990s. It began to take shape in 1984 with the establishment of *Kayhan-e Farhangi*, a monthly magazine which focused primarily on debates over matters of cultural and intellectual concerns as well as literature and philosophical thought. At first, the magazine was cautious and intended not to speak in a critical language against the Islamic regime or tackle subjects of controversial nature. However, with the publication of a series of articles written by Abdol Karim Soroush the *Contraction and Expansion of Religious Knowledge* between 1988 and 1990, the journal was soon shut down in 1990 given the highly problematic ideas introduced by Soroush such as defending a plurality of Qur'anic interpretations, the idea that caused a huge controversy since it logically questions the validity of the clergy’s monopoly over the interpretation of the text. Nonetheless, another journal was launched under a new editorial title of *Kiyan* in 1991. The publication of this journal was closely associated with heated topics including secularism, clerical authority and its relationship to Islamic jurisprudence, modernism, and freedom of speech. Given the philosophical depth of its topics, *Kiyan*’s readers are among those of highly educated university students. Despite state restrictions and censorship, *Kiyan* has managed to survive and stand up to constant official pressure. It has served since then as a reformist forum for Soroush and other religious intellectuals, contributing significantly to the articulation of this progressive Islamic trend (Arjomand, 2002, p. 721; Fletcher, 2005, p. 527; Jahanbakhsh, 2004, p.
Why Important?

The significance of this post-revolutionary Islamic discourse cannot be underestimated. Its significance predominantly lies in its flexibility to move its ideas from the academic circles into the public arena. It had made headway to the public sphere where its ideas were fit for public consumption and played a dominant role in the construction of Khatami’s reformist project. As explained earlier, the proliferation of this socio-political discourse has been exclusively fostered by the small media of printed publications. Its success was not restricted to penetrating the public domain, but it also succeeded to build a wide base of popular support. That success has best manifested itself in Khatami’s election and also in challenging the state monopolistic control over the interpretation of Islam and in setting a new set of parameters for a new understanding of religion.

The Origins of Iranian Religious Intellectualism:

This reform experience is not the first of its kind. Iran’s religious intellectualism discourses can be considered to have passed through three phases. The first phase goes back as early as the Constitutional Revolution of 1907-11 which recognized the need for religious renewal and accepted such political novelties as democratic governments and parliaments. By the mid-1960s and 1970s, the second phase of the Islamic movement emerged and ultimately
culminated into the Islamic Revolution of 1979. This pre-revolutionary discourse was characterized by particular features including its revolutionary language, deep ideological scope and foundation, and its ideal vision. However, it is important to identify the two camps associated with the pre-revolutionary discourse: the conservative camp headed by Khomeini and the reformist camp led by Ali Shariati. The first camp endorsed traditional Shi‘ism, while the other camp was considered an offshoot of Shiite modernism which fundamentally sought to revitalize Shi‘ism. In spite of the triumph of the revolutionary movement in taking over the state and consolidating its ideological thought within the state system, the evolution of Islamic thought did not stop at that stage and a new rival alternative came to the surface. This new alternative represents the third phase of Iranian Islamic intellectualism that emerged during 1980s-1990s (Jahanbakhsh, 2004, p. 485; Kamrava, 2008, p. 120; Matin-Asgari, 1997, p. 97-98; and Vahdat, 2003, p. 599). Given that historical record and outline of Iran’s religious intellectualism, an important question arises: whether these waves have common characteristics or each of these grows independently from the other. While it seems essential to examine these three phases in comparative perspective, the intention here will be limited to an intellectual inquiry of the last two waves, particularly the pre and post-revolutionary reformist discourses.

**Competing Views:**

Contemporary mainstream scholarship has developed several positions over the relationship between the pre and post-revolutionary reformist discourses. The first paradigm acknowledges the difference between both discourses and that each discourse has advanced distinct features. However, this distinction has more to do with the context as both discourses
grew in an entirely different political and social context. On the one hand, the former reformist discourse mainly found itself fighting against a secularizing and westernizing trend. It emerged in opposition to ideological polarization whose prevailing ideologies were Marxism and capitalisms. So, its imperative drive was mainly Islamization. On the other hand, the post-revolutionary religious reformism is being articulated in a context which has been already Islamicized. It has been growing in response not only to political despotism in comparison to the previous discourse, but also to religious absolutism. It struggles to provide a viable alternative understanding of Shiite Islam instead of the dogmatic official reading. Nevertheless, this paradigm retains that major continuities in the Islamic thought of both discourses do exist. It argues that the post-revolutionary reformist discourse has its roots in the pre-revolutionary one. Put differently, the post-revolutionary discourse originates in and emerges from within the same lines that articulated the pre-revolutionary reformist discourse. It even states that the contemporary intellectual climate of Iran is a direct outcome of the previous discourse in the sense that the second discourse has built upon the foundations set by the former one. According to this paradigm, Soroush absorbed Shariati’s concept of the changing form of religion according to place and circumstances within the development of his well-known theory that mainly distinguishes between the basic tenets of religion and the understanding of religion, the theory which will be elaborated on later in details (Fletcher, 2005, p. 527-534; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 140-146; Kamrava, 2008, p. 120; Vahdat, 2005, p. 600-602).

The second paradigm advanced an entirely different position. It mainly argues that there are enormous differences between the pre-revolutionary discourse and the one articulated after the revolution. Post-revolutionary Islamic thought represents a sharp break with Islamic
modernism of the pre-revolutionary era. These differences manifest themselves specifically in the ideologization of religion and the different approach to understanding religion. While the pre-revolutionary discourse sought to contextualize Islam into an ideological framework, the reform movement of the third phase tried to eliminate that revolutionary legacy. The second discourse has attempted to depoliticize religion and minimize the control of the state over religion. For example, Sorough criticizes Shariati for characterizing Islam as an all-encompassing ideology and advocated a pluralistic form for Islam. Similarly, Shabestari, a reformist cleric, develops a critique for the ideologization of religion and argues that Islam is essentially pluralistic. Moreover, the current Islamic reformism largely understands religion in a non-ideological context in the sense that it is not characterized by exclusivist rigidity and does not have an ideal vision or develops a maximalist view of Islam. Their understanding is attributed to their different approach to the Qur’an. Put differently, they advance a scientific interpretation of religion and base it on knowledge which is not derived from the Jurisprudential science (Amirpur, 2005, p. 337-334, Arjomand, 2002, p. 721-725; and Jahanbakhsh, 2004, p. 480-486).

These paradigms have their own shortcomings and intellectual limitations. What the first paradigm essentially tries to prove is that differences in Islamic thought are attributed mainly to the fact that each discourse grew in a different intellectual climate and that is why in consequence they have developed somehow different ideas. In that sense, this paradigm overemphasizes the significance of context. Despite the fact that it recognizes the existence of differences in thought between the two discourses, its insistence on the assumption that the latter discourse has its roots in the former suggests that the differences it acknowledges are minor. Thus, according to that paradigm, the second discourse represents an extension of the previous
trend and has not taken a completely new track; the assumption which will be refuted throughout this paper. Similarly, the second paradigm fails to distinguish between what has been widely known as the conservative discourse articulated by Khomeini and the reformist whose central figure was Shariati. In contrast, it generalizes and places the reformist and conservative discourses of the pre-revolutionary period into one category which is essentially considered revolutionary and ideological. Hence, this generalization would make the distinction between the concerned discourses restrictive to ideologization alone. Another limitation of that paradigm is that it does not place much emphasis on the approaches taken to understanding religion or delineate the different type of methodologies employed in the two discourses. It mentions the methodology as a difference but not as paramount to the articulation of a new theology. In other words, it does not characterize it or highlight its importance and how they have an influential impact over the development of post-revolutionary Islamic thought.

An Alternative Perspective:

The present paper is more in line with the second paradigm that recognizes the concerned discourses as fundamentally different, while trying at the same time not to neglect the role of context emphasized by the first paradigm. So, this paper attempts to bridge the gap between the two paradigms. In advancing this “third” paradigm, this paper will place a greater focus on the methodology of the second discourse. In linkage to the first paradigm, the methodological approach is argued to have been developed as a direct product of the different contexts existing before and after the revolution. In this sense, the difference between the third paradigm
suggested and the first paradigm lies in the fact that the characteristic ideas of both discourses are outcomes of the different methodologies approached as a result of the distinctive contexts.

Accordingly, the thesis of this paper is discusses the following 1) the post-revolutionary discourse is not a continuation of the first discourse; and 2) the methodology of the second discourse is a product of the context and thus represents a fundamental difference which has led to an entirely new understanding of religion and the articulation of distinctive Islamic thought. These hypotheses will be addressed by shedding light on the ideas of the leading thinkers of each discourse. The thinkers of the pre-revolutionary discourse are Ali Shariati, Seyyed Mahmoud Taliqani, and Jalal-al-ahmed. The paper chooses to focus specifically on these intellectuals because they have been profoundly influenced by Marxism that laid the bases of ideology and the first two initiated the notion of Islamic ideology. On the other hand, Abdol-Karim Soroush, Mohsen Kadivar, and Mohammed Mojtahed Shabestari will be considered as the main architects of the post-revolutionary reformist trend since they articulate challenging ideas and enjoy much influence within the academic and public circles in Iran.

To examine these claims, a theoretical interpretation of the pre and post-revolutionary discourses will be gained by drawing on Foucault’s discourse analysis. Briefly, discourse is a structure of statements formulated due to the rise of new system of thoughts that are subject to three rules: types of rules; surfaces of emergence (Agents of socialization such as the family and school), authorities of delimitation (Institutions of law and religions), and grids of specification (Social categorization such as social concepts). In light of this theoretical framework, the pre and
post-revolutionary methodologies will be considered as products of the rise of specific systems of thought (context). However, discussing the three rules is beyond the scope of this study which limits its research to examining the authorities of delimitation and the role of religion in helping advance different methodological approaches before and after the revolution.

**Methodology and Outline of Study:**

Publications written by these thinkers will be examined within the intellectual inquiry of this paper. These publications include a score of essays and journal articles in addition to portions of books that can be accessed on their internet websites. Secondary sources will be the main source of information for this paper because most of the concerned thinkers’ writings are in Persian and few are with English translations.

This paper is divided into four chapters including the introductory chapter. The first chapter will discuss the various approaches adopted by the mentioned thinkers for the interpretations of Islam. This chapter talks about the methodology of each thinker individually. The second chapter will focus on their positions on democracy. The final chapter will tackle the role of the clergy and the different theories developed by these intellectuals on Jurist’s Guardianship. The issues investigated are of vital importance as they still occupy a substantive area of inquiry and interest in modern Iran. They also represent the best research areas that could possibly highlight the major philosophical differences separating the thinkers of each discourse.
The First Chapter:

Different Approaches to Islam: Pre and Post-Revolutionary Methodologies Compared
**Introduction: The Aim of this Chapter:**

This chapter discusses the different methodological approaches of Islam adopted by the last two waves of religious reformist thinking. The pre and post-revolutionary Islamic readings are examined in order to demonstrate that the second discourse has developed its thought autonomously and independently of the first reform movement. Since their methods of analyzing the text are the exact opposites of each other, it is argued that this has created a diversity of Quranic interpretations and led to building an entirely different reformist discourse in the post-revolutionary period due to different contexts. Methodologies examined here include ideologization, jurisprudential, and non-jurisprudential approaches. Ideologization is associated with pre-revolutionary religious intellectualism, while the other two approaches are identified with the second discourse. The common characteristic among these methodologies is that each of them is claimed to represent the thinker’s solution to Muslims’ encounter with modernity.

**Foucault and the Emergence of Islamic Reformist Discourse in Iran:**

In seeking to highlight the methodologies concerned as direct products of divergent contexts, Foucault’s discourse analysis will provide for a theoretical framework supporting this argument. Being referred to briefly in the introduction, this theory will be discussed here in detail. First, discourse is defined as a particular set of statements that constructs and shapes the perceptions and beliefs of individuals. Discourse constitutes socially prevalent and structured systems of meaning that seek to depict and represent reality in a certain way. From a Foucauldian perspective, reality does not exist, but each discourse offers a competing representation of reality that establishes its own claim to truth. For instance, Foucault argued that
society as an entity does not have a real existence. Rather, it is a product of a sociological
discourse created in the nineteenth century to understand the principles and rules regulating
individuals or groups. So, the emergence and dissemination of these discourses which result in
creating various forms of knowledge depends on power. Here comes the complex relationship
and connection between power and knowledge. For Foucault, power is not an oppressive tool
monopolized by the state and its institutions. Instead, power is a dispersed productive force
inherent in all human social relations that contribute to the creation of discourses. Since the
formation of discourses is bound up with power, there are consequently certain conditions
governing the emergence of particular forms of knowledge. As has been mentioned earlier, there
are three types of rules, only one of them is tackled in this study which is authorities of
delimitation. This rule refers to the role of law and religious institutions in governing what can

In light of this context, controversial events and policies deemed significant to the
development of ideological as well as hermeneutical approaches to Islam will be touched upon.
In the pre-revolutionary era, the process of westernizing and secularizing Iran took place as a
result of the Iranian leadership being taking over by Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1921. The measures
initiated by Reza Shah including establishing a strong army, a centralized bureaucracy, a non-
religious judiciary, and a secular education which ultimately diminished the status of the ulama
by depriving them of certain privileges such as the banning of Muharram ceremonies and
restricting the use of clerical dress code in the public space. These policies were more associated
with modernism than with modernity indicating a triumph of westernization over a
modernization program that carefully sought to retain the sociocultural character of the nation.
Those who opposed this program of absolute separation of religious and political institutions were labeled as reactionaries and usually were suppressed as dissidents. Thus, this situation gave way to the rise of an anti-clerical western-oriented culture and thus led to the radical changing of the Iranian polity. This trend continued under Mohammed Reza Shah the son after he had been installed by the occupying powers of Britain and the Soviet Union in 1941. Despite the fact that the early years of reign were characterized by a limited space of freedom, the Shah quickly established his rule, gained ample powers that put him above the Constitution, and crushed his opponents with the blessing of the foreign powers and the assistance of the police apparatus (Bayat, 1983, p.32; Dabashi, 2006, p.42-43; Rajaee, 2007, p.27-40; Hosseini, Tapper, and Richard, 2006, p.13).

The intolerant atmosphere fostered by the Shah’s autocracy and the encroachment of Western powers in internal affairs worsened with frustrating Mossadaq’s attempt at reviving a national process of modernization through the nationalization of the Oil industry in 1953. However, Mossadaq was soon removed from power through a CIA orchestrated coup. During these years, the U.S influence started to replace the British presence and Iran was obviously undergoing a massive process of Americanization that had given it a more westernized outlook in appearance as well as spiritual aspects. In 1962, the White Revolution initiated by the Shah further alienated huge segments of the Iranian society and undermined the role of Islamic teachings and institutions. Hence, these years witnessed major efforts to revive a robust Islamic discourse since intellectuals began to abandon the secularist nationalist cause to search for an alternative framework of governance that would serve as a resistant force against Western interference and as a tool for mobilizing the masses against the political oppression of the Shah.

What this study is attempting to emphasize is the pre-revolutionary political environment as the primary factor contributing to the rise of an ideological approach of Islam and not merely a return to Shiite Islam. In combating the modernist agenda implying westernizing measures and seeking to replace it by a modernizing program taking into account the Iranian socio-national character, it was deemed essential that Islam should take a particular form, that is ideological, to raise political and religious consciousness silenced over years by the westernized consumerist culture. The form that Shiite Islam was to assume had to be robust to fight against modernism and appear as a competing alternative. For instance, Mehdi Bazargan, a reformist and the first prime minister of Iran in 1979 after the revolution, advanced a moderate non-ideological approach to Islam; however, he did not enjoy the fame Shariati, for example, enjoyed and this might be attributed to the revolutionary ideological methodology advanced by Shariati. So, the authorities of delimitation being embodied in the institutions of state and religion that initiated secularization and westernization policies ultimately led to the development of an ideologized and politically assertive interpretation of Shiite doctrines since it was the only form that would be able to challenge the well-entrenched culture of westernization as well as Pahlavi absolutism. One can even argue that ideologization represented a form of resistance. As Foucault once said, where there is power, there is resistance (Weeks, 1982, p.116). The ideological approach to Islam provided an effective resistant force against the dominant discourse presented by the state.
The ideologized methodology of interpretation produced a revolutionary discourse that was transformed into the 1979 Islamic revolution. The politicization of Islam led to the centralization of all powers in one single class of the clergy that ultimately installed an Islamic regime. They brought about extremist and hardline interpretations of Shiite Islam that were too hard to be challenged by the reformist forces as the latter had been ruthlessly suppressed and effectively removed from power. In March 1979, a referendum accepting the formation of an Islamic republic was passed followed few months later by another referendum that approved a constitution establishing theocratic rule through institutionalizing the Jurist’s Guardianship theory. These political decisions harbored certain socio-cultural changes such as extreme political polarization and social antagonism. After the death of Khomeini in 1989, constitutional amendments were passed in which clericalism was further tightened by extending the jurisdiction of the supreme leader to other political areas and increasing the powers of the non-elected institutions. These powers include determining the general policies of the republic and supervising their implementation, and appointing thirty one members of the Expediency Council. However, factional politics, the growth of civil society, and the proliferation of reform movements despite severe repression that characterized Iran in 1990s gave rise to a new political discourse. This discourse did not emerge in a vacuum, but coincided with Khatami assuming the presidency as has been explained in the previous chapter (Bayat, 1983, p.41; Rajaee, 2007, p.195-205; Hosseini, Tapper, and Richard, 2006, p.14-23).

In the post-revolutionary period, the authorities of delimitation included the clerical establishment that had been excluded under the Shah rule. With its religious absolutism and monopolization of authority as well as excluding other political groups and silencing their
objections, a new methodology of Islamic interpretation emerged. As ideologization appeared vis-à-vis a western-style dictatorship, some sort of resistance that turned out to be a hermeneutical approach to Islam along with other discourses including the secular ones responded to post-revolutionary religious despotism. Since the current regime had been brought to power through an ideological methodology, the post-revolutionary method avoided the same approach and created another one that would provide a real alternative to the clerical authority. This is why it is hard to believe that the post-revolutionary methodology of the Islamic reformist discourse could have roots in the pre-revolutionary ideological intellectualism. Thus, it was natural that a hermeneutical approach would be drawn on to articulate a different reformist discourse to challenge the official ideological as well as jurisprudential approach adopted by the authority. So, the clerical establishment by specifying a certain methodology for interpreting Shiite Islam controlled the intellectual context that in return gave way to the rise of another competing methodology.

**First Part: Pre-Revolutionary Methodologies: Ideologization Emphasized:**

In order to understand the project of reviving Islam as an ideology, definitions of ideology or more precisely revolutionary ideology that are often connected and used interchangeably will be provided. However, generalizations are avoided here and it is considered important to distinguish between these terms to construct a model through which the process of ideologizing Islam or conceptualizing Islam as a revolutionary ideology will be explained. First, ideology is referred to as “a set of political, economic, and social values and beliefs which can galvanize man into action or inaction and turn necessities, preferences, and ideas relating to
social issues and social relations into levers of action to change or maintain the status quo” (Lafraie, 2009, p.10). Second, revolution on the other hand is defined as “a rapid and fundamental transformation in the categories of social life and consciousness, the metaphysical assumptions on which these categories are based, and the power relations in which they are expressed as a result of widespread popular acceptance of a utopian alternative to the current social order” (Lafraie, 2009, p.12). Based on the above definitions, a synthesis of revolutionary ideology is formulated and will be employed as a model in analyzing Islamic reformist thinking before the revolution. This model consists of three elements: political consciousness, criticism of existing social arrangements, and outline of the desired society (Lafraie, 2009, p.10-19).

First, political consciousness is the primary task of any revolutionary ideology. It is designed to foster the consciousness of the masses and help them develop the capacity to question the larger social structure they exist in and change it if needed through a revolutionary movement. Second, criticism of existing social arrangements is generally about delegitimizing the present social conditions and evaluating the workability of the social institutions by emphasizing areas of deprivation, dislocation, and repression. Third, new set of values stresses the need to construct values associated with the revolutionary struggle that the ideology would launch. Fourth, outline of the desired society constitutes a form through which the values constructed can be realized. It is also a design of the economic, political, and social system aspired to in the ideal society. Fifth, programs of action provide for strategic plans designed to bring about the present system and building a whole new one. Finally, claims to truth explain how a revolutionary ideology can establish justifications for its criticism of the current system while simultaneously building support for its replacement. It also looks at the sources
constituting the basis for the ideas advanced by this revolutionary ideology. There are other elements provided by this model including new set of values, commitment to action, as well as programs of action. Nonetheless, these elements did not significantly contribute to formulating the Islamic revolutionary ideology examined here and thus will be incorporated as points of the elements mentioned above (Lafraie, 2009, p.15-19).

It is important to note that this theoretical model is used only in discussing the ideological approaches of Shariati and Taleqani since Al-Ahmad’s contribution to the ideologization of Shiite Islam is limited to initiating the reception of Islamic ideology. Nonetheless, as will be showed later, Al-Ahmad addressed two major elements of ideologization: political consciousness and criticism of existing social arrangements though not as extensively as Shariati and Taleqani. However, methodologies of these three thinkers have been influenced significantly by Marxism and derived that very notion of ideology exclusively from it. But that influence manifested itself in various forms according to each thinker. For instance, Shariati borrowed the notion of dialectical historical determinism to develop his own theory of philosophy of history. Likewise, Taleqani drew substantially from Marxism in developing a socio-economic theory with Islamic grounds, which is considered his most important contribution to the process of Islam’s ideologization. Alternatively, Al-Ahmad’s experience with Marxist movements, as will be explained later, led him to seek solace in Shiite Islam.

Jalal Al-Ahmad: Islamic Ideology Awakened:
Al-Ahmad was the first pre-revolutionary intellectual to point out to the importance of ideological language in creating a revolutionary discourse. Even though Al-Ahmad never used the term ideology, his works made ideological statements that paved the way to the articulation of an Islamic ideology. He was able to predict the ideological disposition that any future revolution in Iran would endorse, as many of his writings show. Born in 1923, Al-Ahmad was raised in a distinguished religious family with major religious ranks. Al-Ahmad had Islamic schooling and then entered a prestigious secular secondary school system named Dar al Fonun in 1943 after a short trip to Najaf where he decided to abandon his family project of becoming a Shiite cleric. It was during these years that Al-Ahmad became influenced and associated with Kasravi, a social reformist known for his radical anti-clericalism. In 1943, Al-Ahmad joined the Tudeh party and continued his postgraduate studies in Persian literature. Nonetheless, in 1948, after moving quickly within the party leadership, Al-Ahmad broke with the party because of its radical affiliation with the Soviet Union. After the CIA coup d’état in 1953, Al-Ahmad lost interest in political activism and focused his attention on writing not only social essays but also works of fiction and literature that delivered implicit criticism to the Shah regime. The intellectual career of Al-Ahmad culminated with the publication of Westoxication book in 1962 which still constitutes a cornerstone of Al-Ahmad’s works and one of the most important books in modern Iranian history. In 1969, ten years before the revolution, Al-Ahmad died due to a heart attack (Dabashi, 2006, p.41-73; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 98-100; and Rajaee, 2007, p. 102).

Al-Ahmad shaped the course of the development that Islamic ideology would take in Iran in two ways. First, Al-Ahmad offered a serious analysis of the identity crisis of Iran and attributed it to the cultural disease caused by Western intrusion (Westoxication). Al-Ahmad
identifies the machine as a dominant manifestation of *Weststruckness* and associates it with three major features: *Westoxication* surfaces when neither the machine nor an understanding of its configuration and structure is available, it evolves when the requirements and prerequisites of machine operation and making such as new sciences and technology are absent, and it fully materializes when the pressures of economy and oil trade necessitate the acquisition of the machine. As has been mentioned earlier, Al-Ahmad sought to develop a critique to the Western intrusion in Iran because of losing faith in Marxist movements he had been affiliated with. He accused the intellectuals of these movements of ignorance of the culture of their country, and that is why they were unable to gain foothold in the political scene. He criticized them for borrowing foreign ideas from the West and seeking to marginalize the Iranian Islamic culture. Al-Ahmad even placed much blame on modern Iranian intellectuals by tracing the roots of *Westoxication* and arguing that secular ideas were largely disseminated by the mid-nineteenth century intellectual movement. In the face of Western flow of cultural elements, Iranians were not able to retain their Islamic identity. However, Al-Ahmad maintains that the rural areas were not infected yet by this disease and that it still represented the source of wisdom in Iran. It was rather the city which embodied *Weststruckness* the most since formal secular education was imposed by the state and *Westoxic* Iranians always tried to assume a European character. Al-Ahmad was concerned and deeply disturbed by the blind imitation of anything Western in origin. He looks at those Iranians who had attained Western learning from abroad and how they are alienated from their culture that would willingly or unwillingly turn them into agents for the West and further weaken the socio-cultural character of Iran (Arjomand, 2002, p.720; Dabashi, 2006, p.74-78; Hanson, 1983, p. 11; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 101-107; Rajaee, 2007, p. 101; Vahdat, 1999, p.53).
According to Al-Ahmad, *Westoxication* is a manifestation of weakness. He argues so by explaining that there has always been a division between the East and West. Nonetheless, no supreme power claimed the upper hand in this competition, the fact which guaranteed a two-way street of cultural exchange. With the decline of the East, the competition was no longer possible to continue and the East had to adopt the Western criteria and accept Western predominance because of their inferiority, backwardness, and helplessness. With Al-Ahmad limiting his focus on Iran, Western economic superiority enabled the West to control the economy of Iran and make the latter heavily dependent on the former. For Al-Ahmad, this naturally paved the way for cultural domination of the West. Since *Weststruckness* is associated with the machine, Al-Ahmad identified three possible courses of action usually taken vis-à-vis the machine: immediate submission to the machine and its creators (The present course), complete rejection of the machine which is equated with abandoning modernity and thus means isolation, or controlling the machine by not merely consuming it, but by becoming familiarized with its technology, science, and hence building it. So, the main challenge for Iran is acquiring the capability to build the machine without necessarily imitating the West. Thus, for Iran to gain economic as well as cultural independence, it should learn how to master the machine otherwise it would remain *Westoxic*. And this solution allowed his next step for developing an Islamic ideology, that is, returning to the authentic culture of Iran. The reconciliation between technological modernity and Shiite tradition is the only way for liberation from the Western domination. The machine should be Islamicized and built in accordance to human ideals independent of imperialism and nihilism that accompanied the rise of the machine in the West. Thus, the only viable resistant force to nihilistic mechanization is a mass revolutionary uprising inspired by Shi’ism. In this sense, Al-Ahmad did not only want to create an independent national identity, but also an anti-
Western Islamic revolutionary discourse that addressed the possibility of Shiite-born political consciousness and captured the imagination of a generation in search of an identity (Arjomand, 2002, p.720; Dabashi, 2006, p.63-77; Hanson, 1983, p. 9-12; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 108-113; Rajaee, 2007, p. 103).

Al-Ahmad’s travel to Israel in 1962 presented glimpses of his aspired Islamic utopia. Even though Al-Ahmad saw Israel as a state harboring so many flaws and contradictions, he considered it as a better model over all other models of the West for Iran. He was inspired by the capability of Israel to combine a solid cultural Jewishness with the characteristics of a modern-nation state. Al-Ahmad recognizes the fact that Israel resorted to political dependency on the West, but this was a temporary solution that ultimately gave permanence to the newly-established state of Israel in return. Based on this trip, Al-Ahmad drew a conclusion which is that religious structures are effective means or vehicles for the construction of a strong modern state. New political weapons including industry, capital, and independence can be achieved while simultaneously retaining an authentic cultural identity. In this sense, Al-Ahmad’s Westoxication reawakened alertness to the importance of religious ideological symbolism in making a successful national resistance movement. However, as Dabashi (2006, p.75) puts it, “perhaps the greatest irony of Al-Ahmad’s lifelong achievements was that the ideological frame of reference he helped to shape, “the Islamic ideology”, was the deepest, most effective form of Westoxication ever”. It is because of ideology, which is a predominantly a western product, that Al-Ahmad is considered Westoxic (Dabashi, 2006, p.63-77; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 112-113).
Ali Shariati: The Articulator of the Islamic Ideological Discourse:

Shariati drew on Al-Ahmad’s focus on the political power of Shi’ism and Islamic culture as an instrument for liberation and constructed a populist and activist version of Islam. He built on Al-Ahmad’s work and “completed” the process of ideologizing Islam which ended up in an excellent alternative to the predominating secular ideologies in the Iranian context. In other words, while Al-Ahmad advanced a critique of the forms that modernism and secularism assumed in the Iranian society and pointed to Shiite Islam as a viable substitute, Shariati took this critique further and developed the project of altering Islam into an authentic ideological discourse. This extension represents the point of intellectual connection between Al-Ahmad and Shariati. Nevertheless, it is this very same point that identifies Shariati as the ideologue of the revolution or among its major architects and the most influential thinker in pre-revolutionary Iran. As most of Islamic thinkers, Shariati was born in 1933 into a reform-minded clerical religious family affiliated with politics. In 1953, he graduated from the Teacher’s College of Mashad and then earned a degree in foreign languages, notably Arabic and French, in 1958. In 1960, he attained state scholarship for a PHD in sociology and Islamic history at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Shariati’s residence in France immensely influenced him and shaped his political thought because of three reasons. First, his residence coincided with a very important political period in France where the Algerian national liberation and Cuban revolution triggered major demonstrations in support of them in which Shariati participated. Second, Shariati became affiliated with nationalist political groups such as Iranian Students’ Confederation in Paris that helped organize protests and publish pamphlets against the Shah. Third, the studies of Shariati introduced him to the works and writings of contemporary Marxist and post-colonialist revolutionary minds such as Franz Fanon, John-Paul Sartre, and Michel Foucault whose
influence upon Shariati is clearly evident in his political theory. After spending six months in prison due to his anti-Shah activities upon his arrival to Iran, Shariati began his intellectual journey where his ideas were to be articulated and transmitted to Iranian youth. Shariati’s main tool of communication was delivering lectures in Husseinieh religious center. These lectures were transcribed into booklets and circulated and thus earned Shariati audiences among college and high school students. However, this religious center was soon closed down by the government in 1972 owing to concerns over Shariati’s popularity and highly critical and controversial ideas of the Shah regime and the clergy. Few months later, Shariati was arrested and imprisoned, but was soon released as a result of popular protests and international pressures. Nonetheless, he was put under house arrest for two years until he was given the permission to fly to London. Immediately after his arrival, he suddenly died because of a massive heart attack in 1977 (Abedi, 1986, p. 229-231; Abrahaiman, 1982, p. 25-26; Crooke, 2009, p.93; Hanson, 1983, p. 13; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 114-115; Rajaee, 2007, p. 131; and Sukidi, 2005, p.405).

According to the revolutionary ideological model, Shariati had first to awaken the consciousness of Shiite Muslims and stand against political quietism propagated by traditional clerics whom Shariati accused of being hired by the Shah regime to spread passivity as a traditional principle of Shiite Islam and provide a religious justification for the status quo. As has been emphasized earlier, Fanon who stressed the need to guide people of the Third World to return to their cultural roots and dismiss indifference nurtured by colonialism had a great impact on Shariati who sought to employ these ideas within his model aimed at fostering political consciousness among Iranian people. This issue especially has occupied a major space in Shariati’s works that specified two elements for creating consciousness: reviving an inherent
concept of humanity and the perfectibility of human nature and creating a new concept of Shadat (Martyrdom). First, as Shariati’s main task was to render Shiite Muslims as responsible, self-conscious, and responsive through a process he called “return to the self”, he had to define first what it means to be a human. In accomplishing this task, he made a distinction between “hominid” (Bashr) and human (Insan). In the Quran, Bashr refers to the general characteristics of individuals including biological, physiological, and psychological features. On the other hand, Insan points to the uniqueness of each human being. Shariati sees all human beings as inherently Bashr since they share these generic features, but to become an Insan, people need to develop divine characteristics and always aspire to move toward perfection. These divine features that could elevate humans to the level of God’s spirit are three: self-consciousness, freedom of choice, and creativity, personal values that Shariati deems important to the revival of consciousness. Shariati defines self-consciousness as understanding the quality of individual and the nature of the universe as well as one’s relationship to the universe. With respect to individual freedom of choice, a concept which Shariati derived from Sartre who affirmed the duty of individuals to question and rebel, Shariati claims that man is endowed with the capability to revolt not only against nature, but also against his own natural needs. To back up his argument, Shariati claims that for humans to be God’s vicegerents on earth, they should possess this characteristic. That is why God granted humans this gift, that is, to establish their own destiny on earth. Shariati argues that this high status was never given by any other religion, not even European humanism and therefore Islam is the most perfect and authentic religion. In regard to creativity, Shariati notes that man should not confine his satisfaction to what nature offers, but also seek to produce and create. Artistic creation and technological innovation are manifestations
According to Shariati, the process of becoming an *Insan* is not possible to continue smoothly without facing certain impediments. Shariati named four obstacles which he called the “four prisons”: nature (biologism), history (historicism), society (sociologism), and the self. Man has the capability to defeat the forces of nature that construct humans in accordance to its laws by understanding human nature and thus enhancing self-consciousness. Similarly, Shariati contends that humankind can also prevail over historical determinism representing the past events that shape the identity of human beings by seeking to perceive the philosophy of history. Influenced by Marx’s theory of history, Shariati then articulates a theory of traditional Islamic philosophy of history to help break down the chains of historical determinism prison. This theory claims that history represents a dialectical struggle between good and evil, justice and tyranny, the ruler and the ruled, and the aggressor and the victim. From an Islamic point of view, this struggle started with the story of Cain and Abel. On the one hand, Abel assumed pastoralism and thus symbolizes true faith and brotherhood spirit. On the other hand, Cain was responsible for agriculture and therefore represents the system of private ownership which is naturally accompanied by religious hypocrisy. This competition marked the beginning of a constant war where Cain killed Abel and hence his model ruled all over history. For Shariati, this division repeated itself between Moses and the Pharaoh, Muhammad and Quraish, Ali and Muawiyyah, and Hussien and Yazid. Unlike Marx, Shariati believes that despite the fact that humankind inherited injustice and antagonism, social disintegration can be avoided or escaped by commanding good and forbidding evil. Likewise, the social system with its class and economic
relations has an impact over mankind. As for the self, Shariati identifies it as the worst of all since the prisoner and the prison are closely interconnected. However, Shariati claims that it is through the power of love that this prison could be overcome. For Shariati, the power of love as a spiritual value induces people to rebel against themselves in the depth of their very beings, to make self-sacrifice without feeling the cost or the damage incurred and without expecting any gratitude in return. As a part of accentuating the power of self-sacrifice and completing the process of changing the quietest attitude, Shariati wrote a book, *the Immortal Martyr*, published in 1968, to portray Imam Hussien as a revolutionary responsible political leader who stood against injustice and sacrificed himself for the common good of the *Umma*. And that is how Shariati revived the concept of Shadat, the second element of political consciousness and one of the paramount social values Shariati wants to restore in the society. Based on this, Shariati uses Hussein’s martyrdom as an example of a model that fought against tyranny and oppression to re-emphasize the significance of Jihad and help it regain relevance to modern day Iran as well as establish firm commitment to action and self-confidence (Akhavi, 1988, p. 411-12; Hanson, 1983, p. 17; Hunter, 2008, p.53; LaFraie, 2009, p. 129-134; and Rajaee, 2007, p. 135-150).

Since the elements of ideologization are interconnected and interdependent, the process of political consciousness should be combined by criticism of the status quo. In other words, criticism of the existing social arrangements is essential for making people aware of the injustices committed by the current regime and thus stimulating them to revolt against it. It is important to note that Shariati never delivered a direct criticism to the Shah. Rather, he always tackled the Persian history in a way that made implicit critical references to the Shah. For example, Shariati attacked the ancient Sassanid dynasty as oppressive, exploitative, and
tyrannical for it monopolized power and wealth. Shariati also used his criticism of capitalism to criticize the economic system of the Shah. For instance, Shariati claims that capitalism is inhumane system aimed at destroying cultural roots and used as an oppressive tool by single ruling regimes. Surprisingly, Shariati also criticized Marxism for seeing human history and the world through materialistic lenses and encouraging revolutionary consciousness merely along class lines. In addition, he rejected institutionalized or bureaucratized Marxism and blamed the Tudeh party for its superficial understanding of Marxism since it sought to apply this model of Marxism in Iran without taking into consideration that Iran had not experienced the mature stage of capitalism. Nevertheless, Shariati perceives Marxism as the most all-encompassing and comprehensive ideology and even a potential rival to Islam, whereas capitalism as the real enemy of Islam. Imperialism was another factor Shariati commented on as contributing to the degrading status of Iran. However, Shariati contends that even though the corrupted Pahlavi regime and Western interference were responsible for Iran’s backwardness, it was Muslims who were to blame for their acceptance of oppression and tyranny. This quietism was reinforced by the traditional version of Shi’ism propagandized by the clerical establishment (Abrahamian, 1982, p. 26-27; Hanson, 1983, p. 16; Hunter, 2008, p.52-53; Lafraie, 2009, p.129-140; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 117-120; and Rajaee, 2007, p. 133).

In an attempt to purify Shiite Islam and explain how the conventional version is anchored to Shi’ism and therefore does not represent the authenticity and true spirit of religion, Shariati makes a distinction between what he calls Alavid Shi’ism named after Imam Ali and Safavid Shi’ism identified with the Safavid dynasty. Shariati defines Alavid version as Red Shi’ism which embodies martyrdom and thus targets injustice, corrupt rulers, and foreign invaders. On
the other hand, Shariati identifies Safavid version as Black Shi’ism that is associated with the culture mourning and passivity. Red Shi’ism encourages commitment, responsibility, and activism as well as challenges oppression and tyranny. On the other hand, Black Shi’ism inculcates the culture of quietism and justifies political absolutism. Shariati claims that Alavid Shi’ism is the true and original version of Shi’ism, while Safavid Shi’ism is the inferior copy that got corrupted by the Safavids through institutionalization. According to Shariati, the Safavids suppressed the revolutionary spirit of Alavid Shi’ism and turned it into an institution to establish a strong state vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire and hence serve their political ends. They sent ministers of religious affairs to Eastern Europe to borrow religious practices from the church and incorporate in Shi’ism. Based on this argument, Shariati believes that Shiite Islam has no traditional, historical, or institutional form and thus is a multi-dimensional and comprehensive religion or a worldview. Like Al-Ahmad, Shiite Islam is part of the cultural and traditional make-up of Iran and it would be the only acceptable vehicle for revolution (Hanson, 1983, p. 16-17; Hunter, 2008, p.52; Lafraie, 2009, p.140; and Rajaee, 2007, p. 137-138).

After criticizing the status quo and emphasizing Shiite Islam as a viable solution indigenous to Iran, Shariati moves to articulating the outline of the good society. He begins first with the definition of the Islamic Umma. In Shariati’s view, the Islamic Umma is a society in the process of becoming. It consists of committed individuals with common ideas and goals, moving toward a specific purpose which is becoming good. A society that works for liberation, fights against tyranny, calls for justice, and encourages cooperation. Thus, for Shariati, a society aspiring to become good should be following the religion of Tawhid (Monotheism). Tawhid fosters consciousness, develops a goal and purpose in life, and builds appreciation for absolute
perfection. It is compatible with the human ambitions towards freedom, idealism, and equality. It urges people to direct all their attention and faith in only one source of power, that is, God. The most important characteristic of all is that Tawhid invites people to submit only to God and revolt against injustice, a feature that Shariati claims to have revolutionary attitude. In this sense, Shariati associates belief in God to social responsibility. Shariati quotes from the Quran: “You are the best Umma evolved for mankind, enjoining good and forbidding evil and believing in God”. According to Shariati, the very fact that this principle came before belief in God highlights the importance given to this duty and how the Islamic Umma should observe it. Thus, in a Tawhidi system based on these principles, a classless egalitarian society would surface where contradictions between man and nature, spirit and body, and the hereafter melt away. Shariati also emphasizes the importance of a unified Islamic Umma as a major agent of change. He claims that the Quran frequently mentions An-Nas (The people) to remark its capability in bringing about meaningful revolutionary change. Indeed, such a utopia would be in need of a political leadership as stressed by Shariati. However, this part will be explained in the coming chapter discussing democracy (Akhavi, 1988, p. 412; Hunter, 2008, p.53; Lafraie, 2009, p.130-143; Mirsepassi, 2000, p. 126; Vahdat, 1999, p.59).

**Seyyed Mahmoud Taleqani: Socio-economic Aspects Underlined:**

As has been emphasized earlier, Taleqani’s political philosophy is far less developed than Shariati and Al-Ahmad. However, his socio-economic ideas earned him an important role in role in Islam’s ideologization process. Born in 1910, Taleqani was a member of a prominent clerical family that participated actively in the political movements of 1910s and 1920s. He received
traditional religious education under his father’s supervision. In early 1930s, Taleqani moved to Qom where he pursued higher religious learning. During these years, Taleqani became dissatisfied with the clerical establishment for either keeping silent or tolerating the Shah’s secularizing measures such as standardizing the dress code. This led Taleqani to establish a religious organization known as the Islamic Institute to offer a more revolutionary reading of Shiite Islam. Taleqani became more affiliated with political activities and criticized unequivocally the Shah’s policies. He even harbored radical organizations such as Fada’ian-e Islam seeking to achieve its goals by political assassinations. On the other hand, Taleqani made several alliances with moderate movements as well as social reformist thinkers. For instance, in 1957, Taleqani founded the National Resistance Movement and, again, in early 1960s, he joined Mehdi Bazargan in establishing Iran Freedom Movement. He also participated wholeheartedly in 1963 uprising led by Khomeini. Not unexpectedly, Taleqani was imprisoned on several occasions and sentenced to ten years in prison following 1963 uprising but was released in 1968. Two years after his release, he continued his political struggle against the Shah regime, the activities for which he was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison but got an early release immediately before the revolution in 1978. Taleqani became soon associated with Ayatollah Khomeini and recognized his supreme leadership of the revolution. Following the success of the Islamic revolution, several political disagreements arise between Khomeini and Taleqani over issues like the latter’s inclinations toward leftist groups. At the same year, Taleqani died of a heart attack (Dabashi, 2006, p.217-270; and Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p.69-70).

Taleqani advocates a scientific and modernist interpretation of the Quran. For him, the Quran bears relevance to contemporary issues and thus can offer solutions to problems like the
absence of social justice. In fact, Taleqani was disturbed by the Marxist domination of the oppositional political circles and saw it as an obligation to address the issues raised by Marxism in an Islamic way. Thus, Taleqani had to awaken attention to the Quran by reenergizing it in the same way Marxism revolutionized its objectives. In an attempt to revive political consciousness, Taleqani provided for a deep analysis of mankind. In a direct reference to Marxism, Taleqani claims that God created man with certain instincts and impulses which he always seeks to satisfy by searching for material gain. For the actualization of these needs, man has been endowed with unlimited potentialities and capabilities which indicate that man enjoys semi-autonomy. But man as the source of development should realize these capacities by making continuous efforts to move toward absolute perfection. This would be accomplished by seeking a balance between instincts and principles. Achieving this balance entails faith in absolute truth and perfection. In this sense, ideals will be sought for their sake per se; everything is done for God’s sake. In return, this will influence human relations by rendering social responsibilities more important than personal gains, for they would be done only in pursuit of human perfection. Social and spiritual values including justice, equity and self-sacrifice are to be promoted. According to Taleqani, humans are granted the status as God’s vicegerent on earth to establish three Islamic obligations. First, the responsibility to struggle in the way of God against Taghut (Tyranny), which simply means Jihad, encourages people to stand up against tyrannical and illegitimate regimes. Second, the duty to establish equity was the main reason why prophets were sent down, that is, to establish equity that enables each person with certain capabilities to occupy the position he/she are qualified for. Third, the duty to enjoin good and forbid wrong which reflects the superiority of Islamic societies and encourages Muslims to use this principle even if against the ruler. It is in this way that Taleqani sought to develop Islamic consciousness (Akhavi, 1988,
In advancing a criticism of existing social arrangements as a next step in revitalizing Shi’ism, Taleqani devoted substantial attention to foreign domination. For Taleqani, destroying faith was essential for the West to have free access to the material and non-material resources of Iran. He attacked the Shah for recruiting Iran as a satellite state of American domination and servitude. Taleqani also referred to the ruling intelligentsia as corrupted, corrupting, and exploitative. The wealth of the Iranian nation was exploited and plundered by the ruling aristocracy. In addition, Taleqani looks at how this exploitation led to the rise of materialism and immorality. Wealth and profits have become mere goals themselves rather than vehicles for the evolution of humanity toward perfection. Under these circumstances, aimlessness, confusion, and frustrations become most evident. According to Taleqani, these conditions either lead to the misinterpretation of Shiite Islam or abandoning it. The intrusion of various philosophical and traditions and customs of so many nations cause distortions, superstitions, and fantasies to make inroad to Shi’ism. Then, Taleqani envisions the outline of the good society which focuses more on the economic aspects. In the question of ownership, Taleqani affirms that private ownership is temporary since absolute ownership belongs only to God. The Islamic leader is the one assigned with the distribution of lands in equal terms. Private individuals enjoy freedom over their production, distribution, and consumption. However, these freedoms are restricted by certain limitations to prevent exploitation and the accumulation of unlimited profits and wealth (Lafraie, 2009, p.84-92).
Second Part: Post-Revolutionary Methodologies: The Expansion of Hermeneutics:

In contrast to the ideological form that characterized pre-revolutionary religious intellectualism, the post-revolutionary Islamic reformist discourse has advanced different approaches that include the following elements. First, it generally operates outside the classical parameters of Shiite tradition and disciplines, that is, it does not evolve entirely in light of Shiite Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) or exegesis (*Usul Al-Fiqh*). It rather develops interpretations that are more scientifically oriented and associated with a hermeneutical and epistemological understanding of religion. In respect to Islamic studies, theories of hermeneutics and epistemology refer to the complementarity of *Fiqh* and modern sciences as well as other political novelties such as democracy and human rights. The Islamic reformist discourse advocates the science of hermeneutics and epistemology to make an inroad into Fiqh which needs to undergo major revisions to offer Islamic interpretations compatible with modern times. This methodology which seeks to construct a hermeneutics of jurisprudence to promote a dynamic Fiqh more responsive to the changing times and circumstances is at the heart of difference between the last two waves of Iran’s religious intellectualism. In recent years, the use of hermeneutics as an interpretive tool has become popular and widely practiced in Iran. Second, another major feature of the methodological approaches identified with this discourse is the significance of *Ijtihad* (Independent Judgment). *Ijtihad* encourages the dynamism of *Fiqh* since it is based on reason and takes into consideration context, time, and place. Third, the methodological approaches pertaining to this discourse are categorized according to Jurisprudential and Non-Jurisprudential approaches. Mohsen Kadivar belongs to the first category, while Abdol-Karim Soroush and Mohammed Mojtahed Shabestari represent the second trend. It is important to note that Soroush will be classified here as belonging to a more secularized trend slightly different from that
First: Mohsen Kadivar: A Proponent of a Jurisprudential Approach to Islam

Mohsen Kadivar is one of the most prominent religious intellectuals in post-revolutionary Iran who mainly adopts a Jurisprudential and traditional approach to interpreting Islam. Born in 1959, Kadivar received traditional religious education in Qom where he pursued Jurisprudential studies and became formally trained in Fiqh and theology. In 1997, Kadivar was awarded the title of Hojat al-Islam and given the permission to practice Ijtihad, the highest level of Shiite learning. Unlike Shabestari and Soroush whose methodologies will be examined later here, Kadivar’s views are not widely discussed in Western academic scholarship. This is mainly due to the fact that Kadivar does not invent an entirely new approach to Islam and remains within the traditional methodological boundaries specified by Shiite Fiqh. He relies solely on primary Islamic texts such as the Quran and Hadith or any other Shiite traditional sources. What makes his ideas and views distinct though and worth discussing as part of the post-revolutionary Islamic reformist discourse is that they deliver an implicit criticism to the theory of Jurist’s Guardianship by offering various traditional opinions on its validity and workability. These theories are tackled in the works of Soroush and Shabestari hermeneutically, while Kadivar approaches them in a jurisprudential way, and that is why they are considered as Kadivar’s magnificent contribution to the post-revolutionary religious intellectualism. Not unexpectedly, these views placed him in trouble with the clerical establishment. In 1998, he was called upon by special court for clergy that convicted him with “propaganda against the Islamic Republic” and “dissemination of lies”
for which he was sentenced to eighteen months in prison. Ironically enough, it is Kadivar’s imprisonment that caused the rapid spread and popularity of his ideas among the middle class and university students who are discontented with clerical control of state power (Kamrava, 2008, p. 161-162; Kurzman, 2001, p.349 Matsunaga, 2007; p. 317-318; Sadri, 2001, p. 262; Vahdat, 2000, p.137-138).

Like the ruling clergy in Iran, Kadivar’s interpretive and theoretical tools employed to draw certain conclusions or construct innovative ideas are predominantly dependent upon the traditional sources of the Quran and the Sunnah. Nonetheless, he attempts to visualize or emphasize the contradictions within the system of the Islamic Republic by seeking premises in the widely accepted and reliable sources of Islam. The history of Islamic theology and philosophy are also among the sources from which he tries to derive more progressive and reformist re-conceptualizations of Islam. However, his complete reliance on traditional sources does not mean that he provides a literal reading of Islam. On the contrary, Kadivar stresses the importance of Ijtihad and justice as a guiding principle in interpreting Islamic rules and adjusting them to contemporary times since justice, Kadivar believes, works as a measure of how just a particular religion is. He also emphasizes the significance of contextualization and sets criteria according to which Islamic law should conform. The major components of these criteria are compatibility with reason, compatibility with the requirements of justice, and compatibility with the requirements of time and people’s preferences. Kadivar invokes the Prophet’s epoch to explain how it perfectly met these requirements and that Islamic regulations were much more reasonable and just than the traditions of the Arabian Peninsula and, thus were superior to the

Kadivar strives for a harmonization between reason and revelation. He believes that reason is not self-sufficient to guide humanity. Thus, reason needs to be combined with revelation, for humankind, Kadivar contends, is in need of revelation that God sent down to humans though prophets to awaken the consciousness of peoples. Historically speaking, Kadivar compares between Sunni and Shiite Fiqh and looks at how the Asha’rite traditionalism triumphed over Mu’tazalites’s rationalism in Sunnism. Unlike the Sunni Fiqh, the founders of Shiite Jurisprudence such as Mufid (948-1022) reconciled between the excessive rationalism of Mu’tazalites and the conservatism of Asharites and articulated a more dynamic Fiqh, or more precisely, modified the rationalism of Mu’tazalites to save a space for reason in Shiite Jurisprudence. Kadivar advocates this middle road between “irrational” rationalism and rigid traditionalism. It is this middle path that enabled Kadivar to advance a theory by which he can extract ideas suitable for the Iranian context (Hunter, 2008, p.65-66; Vahdat, 2000, p.136-139).

Kadivar develops a distinction between what he calls a historical Islam and spiritual Islam. He outlines this distinction as an approach that would possibly bridge the gap existing between tradition and modernity in contemporary Islamic thought. On the one hand, historical Islam considers the practices of the Prophet’s time as scared, unchanging, desirable, and even constitute ideal forms and concepts. This form of Islam represents the only authentic version which its revival means the creation of a society reminiscent of the early days of the Prophet’s
era. On the other hand, spiritual Islam is about the realization of the spirit of religion and its main principles and goals. According to Kadivar, Muslims are in the process of transition from historical to spiritual Islam. To pass this process with all of its complexities resultant from Muslims’ encounter with modernity, Kadivar introduces the paradigm of spiritual and goal-oriented Islam whose most fundamental characteristics are: first, the reclassification of Islamic rules and ordinances into fixed and changeable categories. The changing category would be considered to be created only to address certain problems that existed at the time and place of their issuance. Based on this, those rules which no longer meet modern day conditions or fall short of justice and reason are to be considered non-permanent and temporary ordinances and thus can be neglected. Second, Sharia derives its legitimacy from its justice and compatibility with reason and remains valid so long as it does not contravene them. Kadivar builds support for his seemingly controversial approach by arguing that Islam adopted so many practices of pre-Islamic Arabia that were perceived then to be reasonable and just and regarded appropriate enough to achieve certain goals prescribed by Islam. However, with the change of time, many of these ordinances came to be considered as unjust and inappropriate, almost incompatible with rationality and justice (Hunter, 2008, p.66-67; Matsunaga, 2007; p. 324-327; Vahdat, 2000, p.143-144).

**Second: Mohammed Mojtaheh Shabestari: Jurisprudence Abandoned:**

Not unlike Mohsen Kadivar, Mojtaheh Shabestari is one of the main architects of the third wave of Iran’s religious intellectualism. He was born in 1936 into a distinguished clerical family. Indeed, he was educated in Qom and achieved major degrees of Ijtihad and Islamic
philosophy that attained him the major rank of Hojat al-Islam. From 1970 to 1979, Shabestari headed the Islamic Center of Hamburg where he became quite eloquent in Christian Theology and other Western philosophical and theological concepts of major philosophers such as Immanuel Kant. These religious and philosophical sciences introduced him to the modern studies of religious hermeneutics upon which he draws a theory for reforming or rethinking Islam. What makes Shabestari’s social background rather different from Kadivar’s is that he held an official position in the Islamic Republic as a member in the first Majles. Because the views and ideas of Shabestari lack any traditional foundations and are mainly based on extra-religious sources, he has been classified as an ex-cleric since he abandoned the conventional approaches he was well versed in. Shabestari emphasizes the significance of hermeneutics and how it should be endorsed by Islamic sciences. Although the use of hermeneutics as a generally accepted interpretive tool constitutes the theoretical concepts of Shabestari, still his contribution to the incorporation of hermeneutics in Shiite theology is limited to his invented theory on the nature of religious knowledge (Arjomand, 2002, p. 724; Hunter, 2008, p.68; Kamrava, 2008, p. 167-168; Mahdavi, 2011, p.101; and Sadri, 2001, p. 260-61).

Shabestari claims that religious rules and knowledge have a limited nature and thus complementing them with non-religious sources is a necessity. To clarify his point, in the realm of politics and economics, Shabestari refers to the role of the Quran, and Sunnah, as well as Fiqh as that of organizing and not by any means establishing rules. Similar to Kadivar, Shabestari contends that the sociopolitical systems that existed among Muslims in various periods of time are not inherent in Islam but actually corresponded to the socio-historical contexts in each of these periods. In his book *Hermeneutics: The Book and Tradition* published in 1996, a
cornerstone if not the most important books of Shabestari, he attributes the cause of all problems being embodied in the clash between modernity and Islam to the insistence of Muslim scholars to depend wholly on Hadith or the Quran as the only Islamic doctrines. In *A Critique of the Official Reading of Religion*, Shabestari argues that Islamic Jurisprudence has always corresponded to the process of modernization which changed its character and scope. Like Kadivar, Shabestari advocates the rational revitalization of Islamic law contextually and points to the central role of *Ijtihad* in fostering the dynamism of religion. According to Shabestari, what matters is absorbing the general values of Islam and not the forms created to realize them in any given time. He emphasizes the difference between the essence of the Quran and Hadith which is constant and unchangeable, and “our” understanding of it which should be contextual and responsive to contemporary times. Shabestari contends that broad principles belong to the fixed category, while percepts as well as rules fall in the changeable category. In distinguishing between the eternal (Values) and the changeable (Instances and Applications), Shabestari argues that Islamic Jurisprudence with its inflexibility and rigidity cannot perform this function alone and in the absence of definitive and systematic views of other disciplines because it is not possible to make this distinction between fixed principles and rules without new modern human sciences. Shabestari believes that this issue is not negligible and a profound attention should be paid to it (Arjomand, 2002, p. 724-725; Kamrava, 2008, p. 168-169; Mahdavi, 2011, p.101; Sadri, 2001, p. 260-61; and Vahdat, 2000, p.36-38).

Shabestari challenges the “exaggerated” status of *Sharia* in Islam and regards it as no more than a collection of opinions that do not necessarily represent the core of religion. *Sharia’s* primary function is interpretive and not constitutive or obligatory. It emerged after the death of
Prophet Muhammad and Islam’s expansion to find answers to questions that the Quran and the *Sunnah* could not adequately address. Hermeneutically speaking, Shabestari advances the notion of religious experience. Unlike Kadivar who highlights the importance of revelation, Shabestari believes that God-individual relationship essentially exists with or without revelation. This attitude leads Shabestari to prioritize Islamic faith over *Sharia* and thus reducing the role or even the need for human mediators or interpreters (Clerics). Shabestari maintains that revelation and the message of God need to be experienced personally and individually. Every person approaches the Quran with individual presuppositions, preconceptions, prejudgments, and preferences resultant from their human consciousness of contemporary times. These various and multiple presuppositions, which are naturally characterized by non-neutrality, immensely influence their understanding of the text and thus come up with different interpretations. Shabestari refers to the existence of diverging views among religious scholars as that each of these scholars approaches the text with various prior understandings different from those of previous interpreters (Arjomand, 2002, p. 724; Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.343; Hunter, 2008, p.69-70; Kamrava, 2008, p. 168; and Mahdavi, 2011, p.101).

Hence, Shabestari questions the viability of what he calls “Jurisprudential” Islam and argues that no individual reading of Islam should predominate, since human knowledge and consciousness are continuously in a process of evolution and development. Thus, the interpretation cycle should never come to an end and no single valid interpretation for all times could exist. In addition, an official reading of religion represents an obstacle to the individual genuine process of experiencing Islam and stands in direct contradiction to the spirit of Islam. In *A Critique of the Official Reading of Religion*, Shabestari mentions the problems associated with
the Fiqh-based reading of Islam and how it creates a problematized society in deep crisis as it is unable to adjust itself to modern times. This crisis comes to the fore due to two main mistaken assumptions: the first is that Fiqh is an all-encompassing science which can enter the realm of politics and economics and provide answers for arising questions; and the second is that the state is the body entrusted with the function of executing Islamic law. Based on this review, Shabestari concludes that a pluralistic reading of religion is compatible with the true essence and spirit of Islam (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.343; Hunter, 2008, p.69-70; Kamrava, 2008, p.168-169; and Mahdavi, 2011, p.101).

**Third: Abdol-Karim Soroush: An Advocate of a Secularized Islam:**

Soroush is another influential religious thinker whose ideas are deemed crucial for the articulation of post-revolutionary religious intellectualism. He is the most significant and best known of the three political theologians reviewed by this study, so a huge space will be devoted here to his thought and intellectual biography. The reason for providing a detailed biography on Soroush has to do with his substantial influence in the context of Shiite Iranian political thought and with explaining how the methodology of the interpretation of religion has changed after the Islamic revolution. It would not be exaggerating to say that there could not have been a major Islamic reformist discourse enjoying audiences among the middle class of Iranian society and able to stand vis-à-vis the state version of Islam without the foundations laid by Soroush. Unlike Shabestari and Kadivar, Soroush did not receive religious education and has no religious rank or title. He was born in 1945 to a religious family that enrolled him in a school with a educational system of religious and scientific studies. Soroush specialized in Pharmacology at Tehran
University while simultaneously seeking private religious instruction from Ayatollah Mutahari. He took up the study of classical Islamic philosophy and disciplines of Fiqh and exegesis as well as Quran commentaries that earned him an excellent ground in traditional Islamic sciences. To pursue his post-graduate studies, Soroush travelled to London and concluded his studies with a doctorate in analytical chemistry. During his residence in England, Soroush became acquainted with philosophy and its relationship to religion and expanded his studies to include epistemology. At the same time, Soroush was also politically active and experimented with various political groups based in Europe and the USA where politicized Iranian students gathered to coordinate their opposition activities in support of the revolution against the Shah.

Before and during the revolution, Soroush delivered a series of lectures that were then combined in a book and published. Despite the fact that Soroush was one of Shariati’s fans and now his harshest critic, these lectures addressed a critique to Marxism and left-wing groups that aimed primarily at curbing the Marxist influence and thus allowing a space for Islamists to take the leadership and influence the minds of young activists. This book among several others with Islamic contents earned him the praise of Ayatollahs Khomeini and Mutahari whom he became later associated with. In 1980, Soroush was appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini as member of the Advisory Committee on Iranian Cultural Revolution whose main job was to Islamize the curricula of universities that were temporarily closed due to the protest of traditional-minded clergy over what they considered the western, un-Islamic, and corrupting character of social sciences. Soroush’s current opponents use his long committee membership to accuse him of helping install this Islamic regime, an accusation to which he responds by saying that he wanted only to help to reopen the universities and work towards social sciences not being Islamicized. However, Soroush claims that as soon as disagreements over the functions of the committee

The methodological approach of Soroush is embodied in his book *Theory of Contraction and Expansion of Religious Knowledge*. Originally published as a series of articles entitled as *the Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Religion* between 1988 and 1990, these articles were expanded and supplemented with extra material and then republished in book form to represent the hallmark of Soroush’s intellectual works and one of the most significant contributions to the hermeneutical construction of Islam. In this theory, Soroush examines his predecessors’ efforts to reconcile between change and immutability. In their attempts to revive Islam, they wanted to maintain its essence while at the same time making it compatible and responsive to contemporary times. According to Soroush, this was usually done through either purifying or filtering Islam from foreign elements and thus retaining its actual character, or through complementing it with other ideological elements to make it more functional. Soroush concludes that these efforts ended up in failure and inherited major contradictions and incoherencies because they all lacked an epistemological theory. They all tried to change the character of Islam to bring about this reconciliation, while what was actually needed according to Soroush was changing man’s understanding of religion. These theories failed to make a distinction between religion itself on the one hand, and religious knowledge on the other hand. Not unlike Shabestari,
Soroush maintains that the essence of religion is different from “our” understanding of it. Whereas religion per se is eternal, divine, unchangeable, constant, and sacred, religious knowledge is the complete opposite. Our understanding of religion is finite, limited, changeable, flexible, and not sacred. Religious knowledge is a human endeavour, it is the result of an attempt to interpret religion and understand its text which is not so obvious; does not reveal its meaning so explicitly and in need of human interpretation to constitute a body of knowledge as Soroush contends. The various types of religious knowledge are dependent on human branches of knowledge that are always subject to change and development or even expansion. As no complete understanding of nature would ever exist because competing views and theories are always in constant flow, so is religious knowledge which is contingent on human knowledge and understood in the context that the latter shapes. Our understanding of religion is part of human knowledge in general; it is engaged in a process of give and take with other disciplines and sciences and thus is also vulnerable to change and evolution (Amirpur, 2005, p.341; Arjomand, 2002, p. 723; Fletcher, 2005, 538-543; Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.340; Hunter, 2008, p.78-80; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p.146-149; Kamrava, 2008, p. 157; Mahdavi, 2011, p.100; Sadri, 2001, p.259; Matin-asgari 1997, p.69-67; Vahdat, 2003, p.614-615; and Wright, 1997, p.68-69).

So, as human knowledge shapes our understanding of the world, it would also influence our understanding of religion and since human cognition changes over time, man’s perception and comprehension of religion is changeable as well. In this sense, human understanding of religion is necessarily imperfect and no complete definitive understanding of religion could be ever produced. Soroush takes his theory to another level and argues that human construction of religious knowledge is renewable and thus cannot lock itself in the past. This means that Islamic
scholars studied the unchangeable essence of Islam being embodied in the Quran, Hadith, and for the case of Shiite Islam, the teachings of the infallible Imams and came up with religious knowledge compatible with their times. Different approaches to the texts, worldviews, and the culture of their times determined their understanding of Islam, the idea which assumes that the Quran was supplemented with outside presuppositions. Like Shabestari, as this theory concludes that religion is subject to contraction and expansion as its title indicates, there should be always epistemic pluralism or a pluralistic reading of religion. According to this conclusion, Soroush argues that Islam is pluralistic in nature. That is why there is a diversity of Quran interpretation and different types of religiosity in each period. Like Shabestari, another important implication of this theory is the science of theology, Fiqh, can no longer provide a sufficient bases for the interpretation and understanding of Islam (Amirpur, 2005, p.341; Arjomand, 2002, p. 723; Fletcher, 2005, 538-543; Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.340; Hunter, 2008, p.78-80; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p.146-149; Kamrava, 2008, p. 157; Mahdavi, 2011, p.100; Sadri, 2001, p.259; Matin-asgari 1997, p.69-67; Vahdat, 2003, p.614-615; and Wright, 1997, p.68-69).

Soroush’s contribution to post-revolutionary Islamic reformist discourse is not only limited to the construction of methodological approach to religion, but it also includes advancing an intellectual well-developed critique to the ideologization of Islam. This critique is what primarily distinguishes him from Kadivar and Shabestari and signifies his work as more critical to the articulation of the third wave of religious intellectualism as providing an alternative to the official version of religion entails criticizing it. First, Soroush presents an evaluation of Shariati’s project of ideologizing Islam. He opposes this project no matter how progressive and revolutionary it was. However, Soroush retains that the circumstances then were acceptable for
the use of Islam as an ideology in opposition to the oppressive status quo. Nevertheless, Soroush argues that this ideological character of Islam led to the creation of another form of authoritarianism. Furthermore, Soroush’s epistemological and hermeneutical theory is no more than an attempt aiming at the de-ideologization of religion. He develops this critique by first emphasizing religion and ideology as two distinct philosophies. On the one hand, ideology has a particular function as a rival to another ideology. It is created to serve a specific purpose in a specific society at a specific period of time and thus is the product of certain historical circumstances. In this sense, ideology is time-bound, limited in scope, and suitable only for a particular type of society. On the other hand, religion is all-encompassing, timeless, and everlasting and concerned with long-term issues. These characteristics distinguish religion from ideology and render it incompatible with the latter since ideology is primarily preoccupied with worldly issues. Religion is flexible enough to fit itself in various understandings and interpretations (Arjomand, 2002, p. 723; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p.151-152; Hunter, 2008, p.79-80; and Kamrava, 2008, p. 159).

In the case of religious ideology, the disadvantages of the ideological frame outnumber its benefits. Soroush argues that religion is too rich and comprehensive to lock itself in the rigid inflexible form of ideology. For him, religious ideology lacks an insightful vision due to its dogmatic character and therefore presents a superficial reading of religion that has many shortcomings. Ideology undermines the ability of religion to create wisdom and helps destroy the timeless eternal message of Islam by squeezing religion in specific time and circumstances. Nonetheless, Soroush recognizes the effectiveness of religious ideologies to launch socio-political movements. However, these movements, as Soroush claims, would not be able to
establish stable social institutions. Even worse, the primary goal of ideology is mass-mobilization and thus it aims at directing people’s actions. This needs in return to have an exclusive class of official interpreters, that in the case of Shiite religious ideology, a vacuum usually filled by the clergy. In this situation, a direct ramification or a product of ideological religion is an ideologized society where dogmatism, emotionalism, blind worship, and imitation triumph over reason. This ideologized society is committed to the official version of Islam and therefore becomes highly suspicious of diversity and pluralism (Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p.151-152; Hunter, 2008, p.79-80; and; Kamrava, 2008, p. 159).

**Conclusion: Methodologies Connoting Different Goals?**

The various approaches to the text have obviously projected different images of Shiite Islam. Whereas revolutionary ideology wanted to depict Shi’ism as a revolutionary religion targeting oppression, tyranny, and injustice irrespective of the time and place, epistemological approaches attempted to give religion a more moderate un-politicized and de-ideologized standing in society. On the one hand, ideologization preferred to develop a maximalist reading of Shi’ism with a revolutionary character and a desired utopia. On the other hand, hermeneutical approaches sought to advance a more minimalist interpretation of Shiite Islam where people perceive religion as merely an individual religious experience. While, post-revolutionary reformist thinking wanted to loosen up the rigidity of Fiqh-based interpretation of Islam and offer multiple readings to promote diversity and pluralism, revolutionary Shi’ism looked for pouring religion in one single form established by an exclusive leadership whose sole interpretation was to rule supreme. Consequently, these different methodological ways of
interpretation did not only seek to construct different forms of Shiite Islam aiming at specific goals, but also to articulate diverse Islamic thought or discourses.
The Second Chapter:

Islam and Democracy: Reflections on the Views of Pre and Post-Revolutionary Discourses
Introduction: The Aim of this Chapter:

This chapter tackles the relationship between Islam and democracy as advocated by the concerned thinkers of revolutionary and post-revolutionary discourses. It highlights how the different methodologies of interpreting Shiite Islam are reflected on the positions that both discourses have developed on democracy. It addresses how changing conceptions of democracy have been constructed owing to ideological as well as hermeneutical approaches to Islam. In this discussion, democracy is argued as a major philosophical area emphasizing the differences existing between the reformist discourse before and after the revolution. Since the theory of democracy is immensely broad and complicated, the scope of this paper will be limited to looking at one principle of democracy which is popular sovereignty, a concept chosen to emphasize the different visions for the management of the society and avoids dealing with the ethical side of democracy which focuses on human rights, freedom of faith, or pluralism. This principle is specifically tackled as the reformist discourse in general discusses democracy from an Islamic angle where God’s sovereignty is above all and excessive powers are questioned.

Pre-Revolutionary Discourse: Democracy Avoided?

In fact, popular sovereignty is a broad concept attached to so many other principles such as individual freedom and political consciousness. This concept is also controversial for it often conflicts with God’s sovereignty. The Islamic intellectuals of the pre-revolutionary era including Shariati and Taleqani (Al-Ahmad not included here) devoted decent parts of their writings to the concept of popular sovereignty and how it can be reconciled with God’s sovereignty. However, Shariati did not explicitly articulate his views on popular sovereignty, but glimpses of what
might be regarded as support or rejection to it can be derived from the metaphysical foundations he laid when constructing his project of the revival of political consciousness. Yet, as will be shown later, Shariati’s views on this issue is rather contradictory; it is left open for all interpretations whether those which defend it or the others that completely reject it.

At first, it should be noted that, in general, Shariati was primarily concerned with laying down a comprehensive ideology rather than advocating democracy. He was more interested in revolutionary change than mere reform, with which is democracy often associated. So, there is no concise discussion of democracy in his works, merely few passing remarks. Moreover, Shariati makes a direct connection between democracy and popular sovereignty by defining the former as based on majority rule which regards people as the source of power and legitimacy. He reconciles popular sovereignty with Islamic principles such as popular consensus. While he assured that democracy is compatible with Islam, Shariati did not advocate it for Muslim developing countries, particularly Iran. This is due to his assumption that the masses fear change and usually have conservative views toward revolutionary developments. With powers invested in people, they would naturally elect those who will most probably protect their interests and work against making any meaningful changes that might affect their traditions. In addition, democracy entails securing individual freedoms which, in the view of Shariati, work for the benefit of those at the top of the society rather than ordinary people whose ignorance and low living standards would subject them to manipulation, thus restricting power to the privileged classes (Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 119-120; Hunter, 2008; p. 54; Rajaee, 2007, p.141; and Vahdat, 1999, p.60-61).
These fears of popular sovereignty caused Shariati to develop a notion of committed guidance. This notion assures the need for a leadership of the Muslim community; that is directing the popular will. In this type of “guided popular sovereignty”, the leadership is popularly elected through normal democratic procedures. However, this leadership is selected from among an elite group which represents an “enlightened” intelligentsia. For Shariati, an underdeveloped society needs a progressive revolutionary leadership because popular will would work against the common good of a society which he regards as ignorant and uneducated. Even for fully developed countries, Shariati saw that popular will is usually manipulated and directed by interest groups. Though, Shariati advocated a democratically elected leadership, he set limits on popular sovereignty by specifying certain qualities and functions of this leadership including the right of the leaders not to remain loyal to their electorate and act out of their will and planned vision (Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 120-124; Hunter, 2008; p. 54; Rajaee, 2007, p.141; and Vahdat, 1999, p.60-61).

By looking at the metaphysical foundations of Shariati, the inconsistency and ambiguity in his positions on popular sovereignty is further reinforced. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, Shariati focused on reviving political consciousness which he thought could be restored by reinforcing self-consciousness, achieving freedom of choice as well as creativity. Shariati considered these characteristics as divine; they constitute man’s way toward perfection and help him in the process of becoming an Insan. Most importantly, as claimed by Shariati, these features enable humans to act as God’s vicegerents on earth. Here comes the relevance between political consciousness and popular sovereignty. For humans to perform the role prescribed by God, they have to be mandated with actual powers within their hands. In this
sense, it can be argued that Shariati’s ultimate goal was to empower people so they can revolt against the Shah’s absolutism and dictatorship. The previous chapter referred to the fact that Shariati criticized the *ulama* for stripping Shiite Islam of its revolutionary fervor by institutionalizing it and disseminating the culture of quietism. This suggests that Shariati was against God’s vicegerency to be invested in the clergy, so there would not be another alternative but people to assume this task. This can be further remarked by the fact that Shariati emphasized the Quran as always addressing the people and not the individual to indicate the potentialities and capabilities that God has endowed in people, a point that has been pointed out in the first chapter. In this respect, people are regarded as the vehicle of change and thus the source of all political power.

In spite of Shariati’s contradictory views, by combining both positions, one can argue that Shariati ultimately did not support popular sovereignty to rule supreme. His metaphysical assumptions that would implicitly appear to defend popular sovereignty were primarily laid to develop political consciousness and not intended to build support for this concept. Shariati’s mistrust of popular will in developing countries as well as those under democratic regimes reinforces this view. It can even be argued that the very fact that Shariati developed a theory of the necessity of leadership completely nullifies the notion of popular sovereignty. If Shariati unconditionally defended popular sovereignty, he would not have referred by any means to the concept of leadership. In addition, Shariati’s support for democratic procedures is not enough to indicate that he advocated popular sovereignty since the popular will cannot be summarized in elections. His ideological approach to Shiite Islam caused him to look at the masses as objects to be guided but not to lead, thus dismissing the notion of popular sovereignty.
Taleqani’s treatment of popular sovereignty was no less rigid, though more concise and articulate. Unlike Shariati, Taleqani’s views on popular sovereignty are not contradictory, but at the same time they do not indicate his belief in contemporary participatory politics. It is claimed that Taleqani was concerned about maximizing the opportunities of people to participate in the public sphere, for he advocated the concept of Shura which is a synonym with popular will. Taleqani was contended that the government derives its legitimacy and stability from the people. If the government adopts rules contrary to the beliefs and thoughts of the people, it will sacrifice its power and stability, and thus would not last for long. Contrary to Shariati, Taleqani emphasized the connection between popular sovereignty and Divine sovereignty. He argued that universal authority belongs only to God. Divine rules and laws regulating this whole universe are the manifestations of God’s sovereignty. In this respect, the concentration of power in one single institution or individual constitutes a breach as well as an offense to the concept of Tawhid embodied in God’s sovereignty. So, according to Taleqani, in order to hold back the emergence of despotism, the power of people should be increased. This would be done by the application of the consultation notion which can be practiced through the centralization of authority in one single committee. Thus, contrary to Shariati, Taleqani sought to offer a practical mechanism for the realization of consultation and popular will (Hunter, 2008, p. 47; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 71-73; and Rajaee, 2007, p.82-83).

Like Shariati, Taleqani paid attention to the issue of leadership. For him, authority is to be exercised by the “just believers” who should have good religious knowledge in both primary and secondary sources of religion. According to Taleqani, people should elect their leaders in conformity to these criteria. These conditions qualify leaders to perform as God’s vicegerents on
earth in addition to a couple of other conditions including knowing the secrets of man’s creation and his hidden potentialities that would lead humans toward perfection. Thus, the leader with the highest degree of virtuousness, intellectual capabilities, and best guidance on man’s road toward perfection and salvation would be the candidate to lead people toward the realization of creation goals and help them achieve hidden potentialities. Despite the fact that these qualifications suggest that Taleqani wanted a government led or guided by the clergy, no sufficient evidence exists to prove this since Taleqani was against any sort of despotism (Dabashi, 2006, p.232; Hunter, 2008, p. 47; and Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 72-73).

Again, like Shariati, Taleqani stressed on the importance of leadership by frequently referring to the qualifications that a leader should assume and specifying what criteria people should conform to when electing their leader. This would suggest that Taleqani accepted limitations over popular sovereignty for his theory of leadership stressed strongly people’s need for guidance. This also indicates that Taleqani did not fully believe in the potentiality of popular will to fight against despotism alone and that it needs to be supplemented with a religiously inspired leadership whose religious knowledge would direct people to salvation. However, it can be argued that Taleqani might have resorted to accepting limited popular will in governance as a way to prevent the emergence of despotism that interferes with God’s sovereignty. Furthermore, in the previous chapter, it has been mentioned that Taleqani entrusted the leadership with substantial powers concerning the rights of ownership, which is again another indication of how Taleqani limited the scope of popular sovereignty. Not contrary to Shariati, Taleqani’s maintenance on the need for a leadership is a direct outcome of his ideological methodology of the interpretation of Shiite Islam since ideology necessitates the existence of a leadership.
Post-Revolutionary Discourse: Democracy Advocated:

The post-revolutionary Islamic reformist discourse has sought to treat the internal contradictions of the previous discourse. Concerning the principles of democracy, the hermeneutical approach of the second discourse focused on remedying these inconsistencies resultant from the ideological approach the first discourse adopted. The three thinkers of the third wave of religious intellectualism including Kadivar, Shabestari, and Soroush have all developed theories on the nature of Islamic governments and how principles of democracy, notably popular sovereignty and constitutionalism should be incorporated within Islamic system.

In Kadivar’s paradigm for an “Islamic government”, popular sovereignty assumes a paramount role. First, Kadivar argues that a religious government is not necessarily based on the Sharia. According to Kadivar, governance in Shiite Islam is based on the concept of guardianship which means “holding authority in combination with friendship”. He claims that the primary sources of Islam, the Quran and the Sunnah, referred only to this notion. Based on this concept, the dichotomies of the ruler and the ruled, master and subject, or superior and inferior no longer exist in the Islamic polity and that is how Kadivar establishes grounds for his advocacy of popular sovereignty. Kadivar argues that a consistency can be sustained between God’s sovereignty and popular sovereignty. This consistency manifests itself in Kadivar’s belief that popular sovereignty is a divine right which cannot be stripped away. It is a divine right because it has been delegated by God to people. People are thus empowered to elect their leaders within the parameters set by the constitution. Kadivar labelled this mediated divine sovereignty as “Divine-democratic sovereignty” since people act as mediators between God and the
government as proposed by Kadivar. Thus, in this kind of mediated sovereignty, an Islamic government derives its legitimacy, first from God’s consent being embodied in a constitution which is compatible with the principles of Shiite Islam, and second from people’s satisfaction and demands which can be compromise by making laws in accordance to the popular political will, by advocating equal rights, and increasing popular political participation (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.338; Kamrava, 2008, p. 166; Rajaee, 2007, p.215-219; and Vahdat, 2000, p.150-155).

On the question of who assumes the responsibility of guardianship, Kadivar identified two contemporary trends in Shiite political thought. The first trend deals with the view insisting on divine sovereignty being mandated in the ulama, the trend which will be discussed later in the last chapter handling the role of the clergy. The second trend focuses on works of influential Shiite thinkers who attempted to combine between both divine and popular sovereignty. Regarding this second trend, Kadivar examines five theories, one of which was immensely stressed on as closely affiliated with the Islamic polity Kadivar envisions. The first model is that of “elective limited mandate of jurisprudents” advanced by Ayatollah Montazeri. According to this theory, sovereignty is exercised by those only appointed by God or elected by people. Since only those directly mandated by God are the prophets and the infallible imams who are absent in modern day, people should constitute the entity that power can be transferred to in the occultation era. Accordingly, Kadivar argued that Islam does not advocate a particular type of governance. Since people assume power in the occultation era, it is left to them to decide what kind of political system fits them the most. For Kadivar, this system is democracy because it
complies with reason and is considered as the best political governing style of modern day (Hunter, 2008, p. 70; Rajaee, 2007, p.215-218; Sadri, 2001, p.264; and Vahdat, 2000, p.152).

Shabestari also paid attention to the notion of popular sovereignty. For Shabestari, popular sovereignty might not be specified by the Quran or any other reliable Islamic source. However, since justice constitutes a fundamental principle of Islam and in contemporary world popular sovereignty is the most plausible form for realizing this principle, popular sovereignty should be adopted and enforced by the government. Based on this argument, Shabestari argues that democracy as based on popular sovereignty should be established, for it addresses the core and essence of Islam which is based on justice. Thus, like Soroush, Shabestari necessitates the establishment of a democratic political system not depending on religious texts or a type of government that has been practiced in any given time throughout the Islamic history, but rather based on social realities that demand people to form a particular political system consistent with the current social or political conditions. After all, God has laid down the principles, but left the forms for the realizations of these principles left to what the conditions of each epoch of history determine (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.344; Rajaee, 2007, p.224-225; Sadri, 2001, p.262; and Vahdat, 2000, p. 52).

Popular sovereignty is also one of the primary preoccupations of Soroush. Like Kadivar, Soroush believes that because there is no particular form of government specified by Islam, no conflict can arise between Islam and popular sovereignty. People’s perception and understanding of each era’s socio-historical context is the determining factor of any type of political system.
Controversially, Soroush argues that principles of democracy cannot be extracted from Shiite Islam. This is not because democracy is not incompatible with Islam, but for Soroush is not basically interested in the question of compatibility. Soroush is more concerned in neutralizing discussions about the nature of political governing styles from the domain of jurisprudence. For him, these questions belong to the realm of political philosophy instead. Soroush’s endeavour to separate between jurisprudence and politics is due to the fact that this would create a *Fiqh*-based government where the state will be more concerned with the application of Sharia and the observation of people, and thus will resort to violence to enforce its laws, and even legitimizes the rule of those deemed experts in religion, notably the clergy. People will be allowed a space in the political sphere, but this is because they are believers asked to perform their religious duty. Hence, a *Fiqh*-based government will be undemocratic since it challenges popular sovereignty and reinforces elitism by building divine origins for the political authority (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.334; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 153-155).

For Soroush, a truly democratic and “religious” government has certain characteristics. According to this vision, people are entitled full political rights not based on their beliefs but by the virtue of humanity. In this Islamic polity, no privileged class is allowed to have an exclusive monopoly over the realization of God’s sovereignty on earth. It is this point that makes democracy a non-jurisprudential issue not extracted from Islam or proved compatible with it. Here Soroush is not seeking to separate between religion and politics. On the contrary, Soroush advocates the formation of a religious government. For him, a government can be labeled as religious based on the goals it pursues to realize and not along its methods of governance or the application of *Sharia*. According to Soroush, the goal that the religious government should
endorse is providing its people with material demands and a suitable environment to enable them to realize their spiritual ends. Nonetheless, this religious government like any other government has two aspects: administrative and normative. The former has nothing to do with religion; it is a dimension encompassing governance methods dealing with human experience. The normative can assume a religious character by adopting certain values derived from the Islamic teachings including justice for example. However, Soroush seeks the secularization of Islam in the sense of sidelining the ulama or any other elite group from interfering in the interpretation of Islam (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p.341-342; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p. 155-158; Matin-asgari, 1997, p.107-110; and Vakili, 1997).

**Conclusion: Distinctive Conceptions of Democracy?**

Certainly, the impact of methodologies of interpretation has been manifest on theories of democracy advanced by each discourse. The type of democracy advocated in the pre-revolutionary era questioned the effectiveness, even mistrusted popular will. On the other hand, what the second discourse has been primarily preoccupied with is to empower people and find bases in jurisprudence or contextualize Islam to come up with interpretations supporting popular sovereignty. The first discourse assigned the leadership with substantial powers to provide guidance instead of relying on popular sovereignty, while the second discourse did not compromise popular will and sought to place as much limitations on the political authority as it could. So, the second discourse has been attempting to deconstruct the inconsistencies and contradictions implanted by the ideological discourse within the current state system indicating
that the conception of democracy formed by the second discourse breaks away and sharply with that one developed by the ideological discourse.
Third Chapter:

Debating the Role of the Ulama in the Political Realm: Guardianship vs. the Secularization of Political Authority
The Aim of this Chapter:

This chapter sheds light on the role of the *Ulama* in the political realm as constructed by both discourses. It examines major issues with regard to the Shiite clergy including the views of the concerned thinkers on the impact of the *Ulama* on religion and politics, their potential leadership, and the validity of Jurist’s Guardianship theory. Similarly, the ultimate purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the different conceptions envisioned for the role of the *Ulama* in politics represent a major area where the ideological and hermeneutical methodological approaches were paramount to the construction of these theories. Nonetheless, it is important to say that all those thinkers addressed criticism to the clergy and rejected religious despotism. In this chapter, it will be argued that the ideological disposition the pre-revolutionary discourse assumed required the presence of leadership which ultimately allowed the clergy to step in and fill the political vacuum. On the other hand, the religious absolutism of the post-revolutionary era led to the development of hermeneutical methodologies for the deconstruction of Jurist’s Guardianship theory and exposing it as lacking jurisprudential bases.

Pre-revolutionary Discourse: Contradictions over the Ulama Role

The intellectuals of this discourse articulated their reservations over the *Ulama* and their writings exhibit anti-clerical tone. Al-Ahmad, Shariati, and Taleqani blamed the *Ulama* on their political quietism, their engagement in the institutionalization of religion, repressing the revolutionary fervor of Shi’ism, and going as far as supporting the Shah regime. Al-Ahmad, for example, lamented the passivity of the Shiite clerics in face of *Westoxication* and even accused them of reinforcing it. By their entrenched traditionalism and intolerance of revisionism, Al-
Ahmad argues that they discouraged the Iranian youth to retain their Islamic identity and ultimately drove them towards Westoxication. According to Al-Ahmad, conservative customs made the Shiite clerics reactionary and thus they were never able to fight against Westrunkness, and even retreated more into seclusion. Their reaction to the Shah’s massive project of westernization and anti-clerical and secularizing measures was insignificant and they usually focused their efforts on minor issues including rendering Television and Radio, for example, religiously improper. However, Al-Ahmad was contended that the Ulama have a huge potential as a capable power against nihilistic mechanization. Their defense of tradition and Islamic cultural heritage could enable them to stand up against the Westoxication of the intelligentsia. They can also turn into a politically active force against tyranny. Al-Ahmad considered the clerical establishment as “a government within a government”. Their authority over the nation is substantial since the Iranian population is essentially religious. So, if this mute power could be awakened or revived, it would form a political ideology of revolution. That is why Al-Ahmad saw Islam as the only authentic means of liberation (Hanson, 1983, p.12; Mirsepassi, 2000, p.107-108; and Omid, 1992, p.677-678).

Unlike Al-Ahmad, Shariati used every opportunity to challenge the whole legitimacy of the clergy. In discussing the differences between Alavid and Safavid Shi’ism, Shariati argues that the clergy contributed to the creation of the false version of Shi’ism, notably the Safavid one. Before the Safavid period, the clergy truly represented the oppressed and acted on their behalf and benefit, but the Ulama became soon a part of the ruling class and lost its dynamism with making Shiite Islam the official religion in 16th century. According to Shariati, the clergy was the first institution to experience Westoxication when they adopted the Western religious
practices and institutionalized Shi’ism as has been noted in the first chapter. In Shariati’s view, the clergy helped incorporate practices foreign to original Shi’ism such as the chest-beating and the mortification of the flesh during commemoration of Hussien and the mourning of martyrs of Karbala. He mocks them for their preoccupation of trivial issues while neglecting the wider issues that they should address such as the importance of Ijtihad and reforming religion. Hence, contrary to Al-Ahmad, such corrupted Ulama are incapable of guiding the people to true Islam. He even questioned their identification as the formal spiritual class in Islam since no mediation exists between God and man in the Islamic religion. Shariati called this vision as “Islam without the clergy” where the intelligentsia are the real interpreters of Islam and should so guide the Umma (Abrahamian, 1982, p.27-28; Hanson, 1983, p.18-19; Rajaee, 2007, p.137; and Omid, 1992, p.678-679).

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, Taleqani’s vagueness on the issue of leadership and its relationship to the clergy, and his opposition to any sort of despotism, make it difficult to determine what he saw as the exact place and extent of the Ulama role in the political system. However, Taleqani was clear about his opposition to religious despotism which he identified as the worst form. Taleqani opposed what he called the exclusivist policy of the leading Ulama. He attacked clerics who regarded constitutionalism as a foreign import whose ultimate purpose is to deconstruct the role of Islam in the public life and destroy established religious ordinances. Taleqani was convinced that what those leaders are most concerned with was to protect the privileged position of the clerical class. Nevertheless, in his theory that sets four levels of legitimate authority in Islam, Taleqani’s position is more complex to define. In this theory, Taleqani places universal authority as belonging only to God at the first level, followed
by the rules and laws regulating the universe that reflect God’s will, and then at the third level, authority which was exercised by the prophets and the infallible Imams. At the fourth level, authority is to be entrusted with the “just Ulama” and the “just believers”, as has been explained in the previous chapter. It has been argued that probably what Taleqani meant was assigning the Ulama for a supervisory role. It is of worth mentioning that Taleqani articulated these ideas in his annotation and summarization of the republished version of Na’ini’s 1909 book that advanced the Ulama supervisory model (Hunter, 2008, p.47; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, p.72-73; and Rajaee, 2007, p.82).

Opposition to religious despotism as a shared characteristic among the three thinkers was not sufficient to dismiss any potential role for the Ulama in the political system. Al-Ahmad, as the initiator of Islamic ideology, referred to the importance of the clergy in reviving political consciousness. Though he criticized their political silence and religious conservatism, encouraging for their political activism and believing in their capability to guide people to return to Islam meant that he was willing to accept a substantial influence for the clergy for the sake of this goal. This might be supported by the fact that Al-Ahmad distrusted the intelligentsia and this has been manifest in blaming them for Westoxicating the Iranian society as has been referred to in the first chapter. The preservation of Islam by the Ulama, the importance that Islam occupies in the lives of ordinary Iranians, and the Westrunkness of the intelligentsia assured that the Ulama represent the only capable force of leadership in the eyes of Al-Ahmad.
Shariati, on the other hand, considered the *Ulama* as the source of all problems and even wanted to strip them of the privileges they enjoy including the exclusive interpretation of Islam. In spite of his uncompromising anti-clericalism, the mere concept of leadership he stressed and highlighting the possibility for the leadership to be dominated by an exclusive class, as his emphasis on the intelligentsia shows, recognized, even if indirectly, the clergy as a potential leadership, thus ultimately paving the way their ascendance to power. For Taleqani, the situation is different in the sense that he advocated straightforwardly and from the very beginning the *Ulama* to have a role. Even his criticism to the *Ulama* was confined only to those with reactionary views, to those unwilling to accept limitations on the political authority. Taleqani ensured them a place in the political system even if it is as minor as a supervisory role would be. Significantly, the emphasis of the three thinkers on the importance of leadership that empowered the *Ulama* is a reflection of the rigid ideological approach they endorsed.

**Post-Revolutionary Discourse: Jurist’s Guardianship Dismissed**

The significance of this discourse lies in the fact that almost all thinkers associated with it attempt to refute the fundamental claims of Jurist’s Guardianship. Kadivar, Shabestari, and Soroush seek to legitimize it by resorting to both, jurisprudential as well as extra-religious approaches, notably hermeneutical and epistemological principles. Using jurisprudential approaches, Kadivar identified two trends in Shiite political thought investigating the scope of the *Ulama* role and the nature of *Velayat-e-Faqih*. As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the first trend insists on unlimited powers given to the *Ulama*, the other entrusts them with limited authority. One theocratic type of the first trend was introduced by Khomeini. This so-
called type of “absolute appointed mandate of the juristconsult”, upon which the current political system of the Islamic republic is modeled, reflects the most authoritarian form of Jurist’s Guardianship. Thus, combining the first trend with the second that advocates the right of people to rule in the occultation era, Kadivar draws certain conclusions. Based on the availability of several propositions on this issue, Kadivar claims that Velayat-e-Faqih has no theoretical or jurisprudential bases and has never existed in Hadith or the Quran. He claims that all writings referring to this concept has been in existence for merely less than two decades, which demonstrates that the issue has no religious foundation. Kadivar argues that this theory has been built based on a misunderstanding of the Fiqh. It is merely a product of Iran’s dynastic tradition which is characterized by religious autocracy. Thus, this theory only represents a theoretical proposition along tens of other competing political models that do not contradict the Sharia, but at the same time cannot be considered as central pillars of Shi’ism as has been upheld by many jurists. He suggests, however; that the clergy has only two specific functions that of judgment and issuing religious decrees, and thus they cannot claim any kind of divine authority over Muslims (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p. 338; Kamrava, 2008, p.163-164; Rajaee, 2007, p.215-218; and Sadri, 2001, p.265).

Contrary to Kadivar, Shabestari delivered a critique to the Jurist’s Guardianship relying on hermeneutical principles. Shabestari believes that the theory of Velayat-e-Faqih lacks scientific validity. He argues that there is no particular form of polity specified by Islam, and even those who believe that the reliable sources of Islam advocated a specific form of government, they in fact constitute only a minority of Muslim thinkers. He supports this argument by claiming that jurisprudence never provided the bases of any political regime in the
past, but it only served to offer solutions to questions arising “within” the institutional framework characteristic of each epoch in Islamic history. In this sense, Shabestari maintains that regime type is a non-jurisprudential issue and, therefore the Ulama are denied the right to advocate whether the type of government they represent is compatible or incompatible with Islam. Consequently, Shabestari argues that this has led to the emergence of a legitimacy crisis that the current regime experiences since it derives its legitimacy exclusively from the Sharia and not from political rationality and popular vote that comprise the fundamental ruling principles of any other modern political system (Arjomand, 2002, p.725; and Ghabadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p. 343).

Equally challenging, Soroush also questions the validity of Velayat-e-Faqih using non-jurisprudential approaches. Like Shabestari, Soroush maintains that the type of governance is an ultra-religious issue with no jurisprudential bases. So, Soroush advocates investigating the issue of government type in theological rather than jurisprudential terms, for this means the incorporation of extra-religious sources and other methods of reasoning in the examination of this issue. With regard to the concept of guardianship, Soroush identifies two forms: spiritual and political. The spiritual guardianship entails obedience and devotion, and is thus exclusive to the realm of personal relations and cannot be extended to the socio-political context. Unlike spiritual leadership, the political one does not involve submission. According to Soroush, Imam Ali and the infallibles did not possess spiritual leadership and their decisions were open to criticism by their followers. For Soroush, the very notion of Jurist’s Guardianship is not derived from either spiritual or political authority. In other words, it does not resemble anything related to their defining characteristics. In this regard, Soroush opposes the clergy’s claim as the custodians of
true Islam and hence questions their privileged status in the political system which this concept as well as their exclusive control over the interpretation of Islam guarantees (Ghobadzadeh, Rahim, 2012, p. 340-341; Jahanbakhsh, 2001, 149-150).

**Conclusion: Another Revolution Looming on the Horizon?**

This study sought to emphasize the differences between the last two waves of Iran’s religious intellectualism. These differences have been argued to constitute a direct product of the methodological approaches adopted by each discourse. The methodologies for the interpretation of Islam such as ideologization and hermeneutical approaches have grown in light of the political and intellectual contexts of their time. Ideologization as propagated by Al-Ahmad, Shariati, and Taleqani revolutionized Shi’ism as a means of fighting tyranny. The thinkers of post-revolutionary reformist discourse including Kadivar, Shabestari, and Soroush wanted to deconstruct the ideological disposition of religion and approach it in a way that would promote the diversity of Islamic interpretations. These approaches have led to the development of distinct Islamic political thought. In the realm of democratic rules, the ideological discourse imposed the concept of leadership that distrusted popular sovereignty and thus questioned the effectiveness of democracy. Alternatively, Shabestari and Soroush looked up to consolidate the right of people to rule by appealing to the principle of justice and discussing the issue in non-jurisprudential terms, while Kadivar affirmed the compatibility of democracy with Islam by arguing that the question of type of governance is left open according to time and place. With regard to the role of the Ulama, the pre-revolutionary discourse rejected religious despotism but the emphasis of Al-Ahmad on the Islamic authenticity of the clergy, Shariati on leadership, and Taleqani assigning
them with supervisory role, all enabled the *Ulama* to firm their grip on power. The second discourse, emerging in a theocratic context, sought to delegitimize *Velayat-e-Faqih* by pointing to the diversity of views on this issue and that it does not constitute a tenet of Shiite Islam.

The concluding remarks of this study address the possibility of another revolution in Iran just as the first wave of religious intellectualism with its reformist and conservative factions culminated into the Islamic revolution of 1979. Beyond the absence or presence of structural strains necessary for a revolutionary movement to erupt, a more intriguing question to focus on is whether or not the hermeneutical discourse would participate in the making of any future revolution. In order to examine these claims, the Iranian Green movement of 2009 will be analyzed with special emphasis paid to the role of post-revolutionary Islamic reformist discourse in it. The defining significance of addressing the Green Movement in this study lies in its ability in helping evaluate the effectiveness of post-revolutionary discourse in making the intellectual foundation of a large movement and in moving from elite circles to the real ground.

The Green Movement has started with street demonstrations challenging the results of 2009 presidential elections that declared Ahmadi Nejad as the winner extending Nejad’s presidency for a second term. With 80 percent of eligible voters, most of them were reported to have voted for the independent reformist Mir-Hossein Mousavi, there were serious doubts about the validity of the official results and that they might have been rigged for the benefit of Nejad. These questions have stimulated spontaneous demonstrations by the followers of Mousavi in the capital of Tehran and several other major cities. On June 15, two days after elections results had
been announced; demonstrations including more than five million Iranians have begun to turn into a wide-scale civil disobedience movement demanding the recount of votes by an autonomous entity. Major Islamic reformists, including Mohammed Khatami and Mohsen Kadivar joined protests. In an interview with BBC Persian, Kadivar regarded the fraudulence of elections as a question of justice since it constitutes a breach to public confidence, and thus it is at the jurisdiction of juridical authorities to intervene and resolve this matter. Ayatollah Montazeri, another moderate jurist whose theory on *Velayat-e-Faqih* has been examined by Kadivar, declared that the Iranian regime no longer represents Islam or republicanism. More controversially, Mousavi affirmed the demand of all reformist thinkers which is reconsidering the validity of Jurist’s Guardianship as a theory of governance and called for increasing the powers invested in the elected institutions. Thus, over the course of the following six months, the Green Movement was expanding and gaining foothold in the grounds while being simultaneously brutally and violently suppressed by several governmental practices such as kidnapping, murdering, torturing, imprisoning and raping activists and peaceful protests (Dabashi, 2011, p.23-41; Parvaz, 2012; Sinaiee, 2011; and Tafesh, 2012).

The Green movement is not a mere wave of demonstrations. In fact, it is a civil rights movement with the objectives of achieving the rule of law and civil liberties. It is a multifaceted movement possessing the spirit of a cosmopolitan political culture where no specific categorized brand, Islamic or secular, predominates and all moderate forces have a fair and balanced share contrary to the Islamic revolution of 1979 in which many several political movements were present in the political scene, but the followers of militant Islamism were able to take over the country. Unlike the Islamic revolution, the Green Movement failed to articulate an
intellectualized political discourse less intellectually daring than the ideological discourse. In fact, it depended more on populist slogans and its leaders primarily relied on hollow rhetoric. It was also never able to take the initiative and incept any action to mobilize the Iranian public unless an opportunity or an important event presents itself; even when it succeeds to do so, it usually ends in failure. Besides, Iran experienced a revolution and knows how it usually looks like, in addition to the fact that scenes in Syria and Libya do not seem encouraging, so this affirms that reformists and ordinary Iranians are more inclined toward a less aggressive approach; gradual reform rather than a revolution. Although, the movement is not dead and large gatherings are organized every year on the anniversary of the uprising, it is clearly obvious that it has lost its momentum due to its weak tactics and lack of long-term strategy. It failed to stand up in reaction to state suppression and its security apparatus. Its leaders, apart from those in exile or others put under house arrest such as Mousavi, have a limited or no common vision over how a movement can be led (Dabashi, 2011, p.66-79; Majd, 2010; Parvaz, 2012; and Tafesh, 2012).

The question still begs the answer. Will the post-revolutionary discourse lead to another revolution? Taking into account the experience of Green Movement, the answer to this question might be determined through four factors. First, the Green Movement has not delivered a new political discourse and failed to offer an alternative to the dominating discourse or how to resolve its inconsistencies which indicates that the hermeneutical discourse did not make inroad to the movement as it did with Khatami elections in 1997. Many forces may have participated in this movement, but they focused their efforts in developing broad definitions of their demands such as democratic transition and rule of law and did not seek to advance solutions for realizing these goals by appropriating ideas from the present discourses, including the epistemological one for
example. Second, revolutions are rare occurrences in history which one does not get the chance to see more than once in a lifetime. So, speaking of another revolution with its radical potentials and violent dimensions in a country that has already undergone the experience of revolution three decades before is not realistically viable. Third, it is so difficult for the Green movement, or any other oppositional movement, to survive this harsh suppression for it has to make compromises with the government and temper its disposition to ensure its longevity. Indeed, the Green Movement’s status on the street is low comparing to the early years of the uprising. Fourth, the absence of a clear vision, the adoption of bankrupt tactics, and the arrest of most of its leaders reflect the internal weakness and fragmentation of a movement which is ironically expected to lead a revolution. Thus, these factors combined demonstrate that witnessing another revolution with the proliferation of the hermeneutical discourse as its intellectual foundation will not be possible to reach.
Bibliography:


