# Iran’s Construction Jihad through the Lens of Ideology, 1965-89

by

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## Introduction

Hossein-Ali Azimi was a construction and water engineer. In 1979, he left his private engineering firm to join the ranks of what would soon become the most important civic organisation in Iranian history, the Construction Jihad (*jahād-e sāzandegi*; hereby referred to simply as CJ). What inspired Azimi to join was the very thing that inspired the organisation's inception: a decree by Ayatollah Khomeini wherein he called for *jahād barāye sāzandegi* ('a jihad for construction'). CJ, and its zealous new cadres like Azimi, proposed a new model for economic development. Azimi describes it as follows: 'In the view of CJ members, the most important element of construction is the human being himself. The axis around which all development and construction revolves is the human being… All other elements of construction and progress are secondary.'[1] Parham Javaheri, an environmental engineer, also cites Khomeini's decree as his motivation for joining CJ: 'The day after the Imam's decree, I got a hold of a car and made my way to the Karbal Desert. I said to myself: we need to do drainage work here.'[2] Principally, CJ was founded to build infrastructure, expand literacy, and implement other such social programmes in the Iranian countryside. However, as the statements of Azimi and Javaheri suggest, it did so within the framework of a worldview that had some degree of novelty. CJ fancied their work as being strictly a labour of love (shunning the notion of profit or careerist motivations), and sought to organise all of society in a similar manner. In this dissertation, I explore the worldview of people like Azimi and Javaheri, and while exploring what enabled their sense of a radical new moment, I will argue that CJ's mercurial rise to prominence was a product of longer run forces. In doing so, I will explore its roots in the radical discourse on economic development in Iran that emerged in the 1960s and 70s, notably touching on its connections and dialogue with (and eventual estrangement from)

[1] Ali Mashayekhi and Mohammad-Reza Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād: tajrobeh-hā-ye kār-e jam'i dar jahād-e sāzandegi* (Tehran: Rah, 1398), pp. 26-27.
[2] Ibid., p. 40. Karbal is a region in Fars province.

the global communist movement. This dissertation seeks to understand CJ through the perspective of its cadres, and – more specifically – their relationship with the ideologues who galvanised them.

For a moment in time, CJ's material and cultural presence in the Iranian nation was ubiquitous. From 1979-89, it could be argued that CJ was the largest and most important economic actor in Iran. From its inception until its eventual dissolution in 2001, CJ consistently had millions of active members within its ranks. In the 1980s, one in every fifteen Iranians was a member of the organisation. In this decade, they electrified over 9,000 villages (more than double the number of electrified villages that had existed prior to the revolution), established 22,000 rural libraries, distributed over five billion pieces of print propaganda (periodicals, placards, pamphlets, etc.), and built 25,000 kilometres of roads.[3] This is merely a snapshot of their activities in order to demonstrate the scale of their operations. Indeed, the scale of CJ's activities were unrivalled in Iran, and even after its powers were curbed after 1989, it remained an important force until its dissolution in 2001. Moreover, its footprint can still be seen today, with other self-styled *jahādi* organisations (such as Construction Basij) popping up and filling their void, explicitly claiming to be inheritors of CJ's legacy.

However, if we wish to analyse the roots of CJ and its worldview, we must consider the social context which allowed it to emerge; namely, the CIA-backed *coup d'état* against Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953 (marking the end of the oil nationalisation movement) and the social conditions that emerged thereafter under Mohammad-Reza Shah (and more specifically, his attempts to adopt a capitalist mode of development during the 'White Revolution'). The coup of Mosaddeq emboldened the opposition's antagonism towards the United States, while discontent with the Shah's developmentalism inspired radical ideas in the social sphere. In the 1950s, only around thirty percent of people in Tehran had electricity or were applying for electricity.[4] However, it was during this time that what Cyrus Schayegh refers to as the 'mass consumer society' emerged in Tehran.[5] What would follow this was the White Revolution of the 1960s, wherein the Shah sought to effectively

[3] It should be noted that from 1979-89, the Iranian road network expanded from 8,000 km to 60,000 km. CJ's 25,000 km accounted for 42 percent of all the roads constructed within this period. Statistics cited from the World Bank and CJ's official sources in Eric Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad: Rural Development and Regime Consolidation after 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 93-96.
[4] Reported by *Etelā'āt* newspaper in 1954, cited in Cyrus Schayegh, "Iran's Karaj Dam Affair: Emerging Mass Consumerism, the Politics of Promise, and the Cold War in the Third World," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July 2012), p. 625.
[5] Ibid., p. 612.

expand this mass consumer society and pre-empt radical (typically, communist) influences from gaining a foothold among the deprived classes. However, as we will observe, the discontent that these policies bred would – in the long run – allow for radical ideologies to gain more traction in Iran.

While CJ's importance within the context of Iran's revolutionary history is undeniable, and while a large body of historiography examines the Iranian Revolution and its roots, and another growing body of research examines the history of development discourses and strategies in the context of the Cold War, there is a dearth of historiography exclusively dedicated to studying CJ and its members. Fortunately, however, there is a wealth of historiography on the social and economic conditions under the Pahlavi monarchy, the rise of radical opposition to said monarchy, and the synthesis of various ideologically distinct movements which allowed for its eventual overthrowal.[6] Ervand Abrahamian has written extensively on the Iranian left, its role in the revolution, and its relationship with contemporaneous Islamic movements. Hamid Dabashi has written a thorough analysis of the 'Islamic ideology' – essential to the success of the Iranian Revolution – through the prism of Iran's most influential revolutionary thinkers. Jeremy Friedman gives a poignant overview of the crisis faced by the Iranian left in the early days of the Islamic Republic, and the circumstances that led many within the left to accede to this new order. While these scholars do not analyse CJ, they offer invaluable insight into the intellectual and ideological history of the Iranian Revolution, which is crucial to understanding the formation of CJ.

In addition, we are fortunate to have the works of Eric Lob, a vanguard in Anglophone historiography on CJ. Lob provides a narrative history of CJ while also arguing that CJ was a vehicle for soft power for the nascent Islamic Republic, and even that CJ could be viewed as a continuation of pre-revolutionary institutions of a similar vein. Outside of Lob, however, the existing historiography on CJ is sparse.[7] I will build upon Lob's work by critically assessing the relationship between CJ and the intellectual currents that preceded the revolution. More specifically, I will attempt to understand CJ through a focus on its historical roots within Iranian revolutionary discourse in the 1960s and 70s. Lob, a political scientist, adopts an institutionalist approach, tracing the organisational development of CJ; how it was influenced by and influenced the Islamic Republic in the post-revolutionary turmoil, and how

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[6] In this dissertation, I will be relying on the works of Ervand Abrahamian, Jeremy Friedman, Hamid Dabashi, and others.
[7] Even Persian-language scholarship leaves much to be desired. However, the works of Faramarz Rafipour and Issa Salmani-Lotfabadi in this field are invaluable.

it fit within the Islamic Republic's 'grassroots mobilization, state-society relations, contentious consolidation, wartime operations, bureaucratic centralization, intra-elite factionalism, associational life, foreign policy, and cultural production.'[8] I will build upon Lob's work by approaching CJ from a perspective of its cadres' worldview and intellectual and political origins. To do so, I will examine the role of *velāyat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist) – the foundational idea of Khomeini and his followers – in the formation of CJ. *Velāyat-e faqih* – the notion that the highest authority in an Islamic society must be the most learned religious jurist – is important not only in that it marked a departure from the more quietist approach to politics that had hitherto been taken by the majority of Shia *ulamā*, but also in that it laid the groundwork for the redundancies within state institutions and the rise of para-statal organisations (with CJ performing duties typically reserved for traditional government ministries) that would come to characterise the Islamic Republic (and CJ in particular, which we will review in the latter chapters).[9] Khomeini argued that the jurist with the requisite 'knowledge of the law and justice' must govern in order to 'establish a government of universal justice in the world,' and that in the *ghaybah* (occultation) of the twelfth Shia Imam, 'the just *faqih* has the same authority' as the Prophet and Imams.[10] In post-revolutionary Iran, *velāyat-e faqih* quickly went from a mere theoretical discussion within a classroom of the Najaf seminary to a formidable force in the mobilisation of the masses.[11] For example, in November 1979, a group of students seized the US embassy in Tehran, taking its personnel hostage and forever altering the nature of Iran-US relations. While there is disagreement as to whether Khomeini himself approved of the embassy takeover beforehand, the group behind it was known as the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line (*Dāneshjuyān-e mosalmān-e peyrov-e khatt-e emām*). This phrase – 'The Imam's Line' – and its underlying idea became an inextricable part of Iran's Islamic Revolution. An individual's revolutionary character was gauged by their personal loyalty to Ayatollah Khomeini, above all else.[12] As we will observe, even the secular left would not escape the impetus to frame their stances in this manner.

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[8] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 7.
[9] Sociologist Kevan Harris refers to this as a 'dual-welfare regime of overlapping organizations and fragmented coverage.' Kevan Harris, *A Social Revolution: Politics and the Welfare State in Iran* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), p. 15.
[10] Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 62.
[11] Khomeini's original lectures on *velāyat-e faqih* were given in the seminary of Najaf, Iraq; during his long exile from Iran.
[12] Maryam Alemzadeh notes this dynamic with respect to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps; however, this same dynamic was just as strong within the ranks of CJ.

Importantly, I argue in this dissertation that while pre-1979 discourse crucially conditioned what followed, CJ is more than a continuation of pre-revolutionary state institutions, nor was it strictly a vehicle for soft power, as Lob argues. While CJ's utility for exercising soft power is undeniable (and CJ's own ranks admitted as much), more can be said. I propose that CJ and its development agenda is essential to understanding the identity of the nascent Islamic Republic, and should be viewed as the culmination of two decades of radical discourse (namely, the shift of Iranian radical movements towards having a distinctly Islamic identity).

More than any other organisation or political current, CJ is essential to understanding the ideology of the Islamic Republic in the 1980s. Terry Eagleton defines ideology as, among other things, 'the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure.'[13] A revolutionary organisation that mobilised millions of mostly urban, mostly educated volunteers to the far-flung regions of rural Iran clearly offered something in the way of 'relations to a social structure'; it offered some considerable ideological motivations and rationalisations for its operations. However, Eagleton also notes that ideology is fundamentally a materialist phenomenon, and that 'consciousness alone cannot initiate any epochal change in history.'[14] The material conditions in the decades leading up to the 1979 revolution were crucial to CJ's formation. This is where we come to what could be termed as the intersection of political currents during the Iranian Revolution. While secular nationalists and Marxists of various persuasions partook in the revolution alongside the Islamic movement, even those which were secular by confession – be it the Tudeh Party (Iran's oldest and most prominent communist party) or the People's Fedai Partisans (Iran's most prominent armed communist movement), 'could not,' as Dabashi posits, 'escape the legacy of their Shi'ite heritage.'[15] This intersection altered and reformulated the dynamics of the discourse surrounding economic development. Like Frantz Fanon before them, Iranian revolutionary thinkers rejected the binary of American capitalism and Soviet socialism, instead fancying their model as something which transcended this binary.

CJ arose within a world wherein Third World socialism was an important driving force for revolutions. And, in what Friedman terms the 'extended, international process of trial and error in pursuit of a model of socialist development,' Iran was not exempt from these

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[13] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 2.
[14] Ibid., p. 33.
[15] *Hezb-e tudeh* (Party of the Masses) and *Sāzmān-e cherik-hā-ye fadāyi-e khalq-e irān* (Organisation of Iranian People's Fedai Partisans), respectively. Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (London: New York University Press, 1993), p. 17.

influences.[16] 'Third World actors,' says Friedman, 'had their own conceptions of socialism and Marxism,' and foreign influencers' 'leverage was often limited' in their attempts to 'impose their own views.'[17] In the case of Iran, the Islamic movement ultimately supplanted the communist movement entirely. Assessing the myriad of potential influences behind Khomeini's movement is not within the purview of this dissertation (and has, moreover, already been analysed in detail by scholars); however, it is necessary to touch on these influences so as to offer some much-needed context. CJ did not arise out of a vacuum. Likewise, the Iranian Revolution occurred while – in the Shia sphere – communist parties were the primary medium through which the masses engaged in radical politics.[18] It was against this backdrop that the revolution – and, thus, CJ – came to be. This dissertation will analyse in depth the ideological climate of 1960s and 70s Iran, identify the main players in how this climate took shape, and show how its cadres' worldview emerged, thus answering the question of what led CJ to emerge as the dominant force it became, as opposed to any other radical organisation or party (of which there were no shortage).

In Chapter 1, I will give a brief overview of Mohammad-Reza Shah's efforts to implement capitalistic development programmes in rural Iran as part of his White Revolution. Specifically, I will show how the influential intellectual figures of the Islamic Revolution responded to this developmentalism and how the resulting discontents with this developmentalism caused radical opposition to the monarchy to become more entrenched within the public consciousness. In this chapter, I will also assess the link between the Shah's attempts to augment the production and consumption habits of rural Iran and the emergence of what I will refer to as the new Islamic radicalism; a type of ideology which had broad mass appeal in the deeply religious Iranian nation while also offering slogans that would have otherwise been the main draw of leftist and communist movements. My source base for Chapter 1 will be government sources (official statistics, reports, and statements from officials and state organs within the monarchy), as well as secondary sources on Iranian social movements. I will be drawing heavily from Abrahamian here, as he – perhaps more than any other scholar – has written on the role of the Iranian left in the Iranian Revolution.

In Chapter 2, I will go into greater detail about the content of this new Islamic radicalism (whose formative years were the early 1960s and culminated with the revolution

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[16] Jeremy Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution: Building Socialism in the Third World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), p. 2.
[17] Ibid., p. 4.
[18] This was the case not only in Iran but also in Iraq and Lebanon, until – like in Iran – Islamic parties supplanted them.

in 1979), analysing the ideas of some of its important vanguards: Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani, and Khomeini himself. Specifically, I will allude to their conception of development (one which was both influenced by and influenced the discourse in which they were participating). I argue that their opposition to the Shah's developmentalism was a key factor in the revolutionary movement, and served as a precursor to the emergence of CJ following the revolution. In a wider sense, I seek to assess and challenge the notion (shared by some historians) that economics was 'one of the least important' considerations of the Islamic Revolution.[19] In doing so, I will pay specific attention to Khomeini's worldview as a whole in comparison to his contemporaries within the *ulamā*. Specifically, I will seek to assess the characteristics of Khomeini's ideology which lent to his role as an iconoclast of sorts. A common thread in the historiography of Khomeini and his revolution is the notion that Khomeini was, more than anything else, a populist. Lob posits that Khomeini and his followers co-opted Ali Shariati's novel interpretation of the Quranic word *mostaz'afin* (downtrodden) as a means of galvanising the masses.[20] Abrahamian classifies both Khomeini and his lieutenants as 'clerical populists' who promised 'social justice, redistribution of wealth,' and 'major economic reforms' while making sure to keep these promises as vague as possible.[21] Abrahamian's argument has been so influential precisely because it is so convincing; the revolution in Iran was possible in large part because – by the late 1970s – Mohammad-Reza Shah's support base had been whittled down considerably. It made sense for someone in Khomeini's position to use popular rhetoric which could appeal to the widest potential audience. My aim is not so much to refute Abrahamian's assertion, but rather to identify what was the substance of Khomeini's ideology rather than simply viewing it through the prism of its utility in mass mobilisation. I argue that economics was more at the core of the nascent Islamic Republic than has been hitherto assumed, and that CJ holds the key to understanding this brand of economics, as it most directly represents the intellectual roots of the Iranian Revolution's view of economics and development. This chapter will cite the speeches and writings of the aforementioned Taleghani, Shariati, Al-e Ahmad, and Khomeini, and attempt to build upon the historiography of Friedman and Nikki Keddie. Note: all Persian-language citations use their Iranian (Solar

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[19] Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 204.
[20] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 51.
[21] Ervand Abrahamian, *Radical Islam: The Iranian Mojahedin* (London: Tauris, 1989), pp. 42-46, and Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (London: Tauris, 1993), p. 31.

Hijri) years and dates (for the purpose of making them easier to refer to). However, in the case of Khomeini's speeches I have also included the Gregorian year.

In Chapter 3, I will assess the worldview of CJ and its members (from its founding in 1979 until its disenfranchisement in 1989), citing interviews with its cadres and official publications, specifically paying mind to how the formative years of the new Islamic radicalism fostered an environment wherein CJ and its ideas could emerge.[22] While the ethos of CJ was ostensibly in following the aforementioned 'Imam's Line' (i.e. Khomeini's Line), and indeed this was their most important source of influence, their existence cannot be looked at in isolation from regional and world events of that time: namely, the Cold War, the prominence of Third World socialism, and religious *ulamā* taking on a more prominent political role in the Shia world. Chapter 3 will draw from the *Jahād* periodical as well as interviews with former members, and engage primarily with the work of Lob.

Despite CJ's gradual disenfranchisement following the end of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88) – and its ultimate dissolution in 2001, its impact can still be felt to this day. This can be seen in a practical sense: in the form of various pseudo-state organisations that consider themselves the inheritors of the will of CJ, and even in a symbolic sense: such as when state officials call for *jahādi* economic management.[23] To this day, former *jahādgarān* still feel a sense of belonging to the organisation: they often join the aforementioned newer parastatal organisations and retain their old ID cards.[24] The experience of these *jahādgarān* will then be contextualised and their significance examined in light of the broader intellectual and socio-political trends of Third World revolutions, and lastly, it will be assessed how the vestiges of the organisation remain significant in the Islamic Republic today; in both a material and doctrinal sense.

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[22] While CJ was dissolved in 2001, its 'Golden Age' is considered to be 1979-89, when its influence and scope peaked. Following the end of the war and the start of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's presidency, CJ's power was scaled back considerably.

[23] One of such organisations – Construction Basij (*Basij-e sāzandegi*) copied CJ's old slogan: *hameh bā ham* ('All together') and did the same for its emblem (consisting of a sickle and a stalk of wheat, just as CJ's emblem). Another – the Association of Trench-Builders Without Trenches (*Kānun-e sangar-sāzān-e bi-sangar*), borrowing directly from one of Khomeini's words of praise for the original CJ (whose activities included building trenches in the front lines of the Iran-Iraq War). For more on the Trench-Builders' Association, see Eric Lob, "Development, Mobilization and War: The Iranian Construction Jihad, Construction Mobilization and Trench Builders Association," in *Debating the Iran-Iraq War in Contemporary Iran*, eds. Narges Bajoghli and Amir Moosavi (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 23-42.

[24] *Jahādgarān* is the plural of *jahādgar*; this is the term used to describe members of the organisation.

## Chapter 1 – The Shah's developmentalism and its discontents

While the second half of the 20th century is often defined by a worldwide conflict between two competing worldviews (liberal-capitalistic and communistic), Stephen Macekura and Erez Manela posit that the 20th century is – above all else – 'the development century'; highlighting that development was 'a shared language,' an 'object of governance' recognised by all, and 'a set of practices that transcended the ideological divisions' between capitalism and communism.[1] Iran, like many nations, was submerged in this development century. Starting in 1963, Mohammad-Reza Shah launched the White Revolution, a comprehensive programme of economic and social reforms.[2] Perhaps the most important and most divisive element of this programme was its plan for land reform. This programme was, at least in part, American in design. Nathan Citino notes that 'some researchers have evaluated Iran as a case study in Third World development and the application of Kennedy-era modernisation theory,' pointing specifically to the White Revolution and America's involvement therein.[3] Visiting Iran in 1962, then American vice president Lyndon Johnson told the Shah that 'the ultimate strength, prosperity and independence of Iran' could be achieved through 'progress made in the fields of economic well-being of the population and in social justice.' Johnson also suggested that American 'moral and material assistance' to Iran was contingent upon Mohammad-Reza Shah implementing this agenda. Johnson saw social reform as a means of avoiding the Shah losing 'the affections of the masses of his people.'[4] However, the result would be far from what Johnson had envisioned. Kevan Harris

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[1] Stephen J. Macekura and Erez Manela, eds., *The Development Century: A Global History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 4.
[2] In Persian, *enqelāb-e sefid* (White Revolution), or alternatively, *enqelāb-e shāh va mardom* ('The revolution of the Shah and the people').
[3] Nathan J. Citino, "The Middle East and the Cold War," *Cold War History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (April 2019), p. 452.
[4] Quoted in Fakhreddin Azimi, "Khomeini and the White Revolution," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 31-32 n. 30.

describes the Shah's social programmes as being 'exclusionary and corporatist' in form; that they 'were limited in reach to a circumscribed segment of the population' rather than the masses as a whole.[5] In 1978, Khomeini would declare that the Shah's 'so-called land reforms' were 'implemented for the sake of America' and made the country 'dependant on America and foreigners in every respect.'[6] Indeed, land reform – like all Iranian issues – was one in which Khomeini saw an insidious American influence. Khomeini not only declared that 'the nation plays no role in this White Revolution,' but that the Shah himself 'doesn't factor into it, either'; rather, that this was 'an American revolution through and through.'[7] Thus, land reform represented both the monarchy's impetus to establish a greater presence in the hitherto undeveloped (in the sense of being unmechanised and unintegrated into a national economy) and self-sufficient (albeit impoverished) rural regions, but also its desire to implement a particular model of development.[8] This model of development was, naturally, met with opposition from Iranian communists.

Communism had been a part of Iranian political and social discourse since the Russian Revolution. For many decades, communist movements were the most prominent manifestation of opposition to the monarchy. Abrahamian discusses the origin of communist discourse in 20th Century Iran, noting that the Pahlavi monarchy's arrest of communists goes back to at least the 1930s.[9] The priorities of the Pahlavi dynasty – and, more specifically, their capitalistic conception of economic development – pushed many toward radical political and social discourse. However, the various communist movements of Iran were, ultimately, not the victors of the revolution in which they participated. Rather, Iran became an Islamic Republic shortly after the monarchy was overthrown. In this chapter, we will analyse the social conditions (often exacerbated by the Shah's developmentalist policies) which led to the

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[5] Harris, *A Social Revolution*, p. 15.

[6] Ruhollah Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e irāniān-e moqim-e khārej darbāreh-ye risheh-hā-ye ekhtelāf-e mardom bā shāh," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 4 (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1389), p. 137.

[7] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e irāniān-e moqim-e khārej," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 4, p. 300.

[8] Another potential impetus for modernisation in the countryside was to undermine the historical independence of Iran's semi-nomadic tribes. Nineteenth century chronicler Mohammad-Taqi Khan Hakim once described these tribes as having 'never been fully under the rule of any sultan' and that in 'their impenetrable and lofty mountains, they still live according to their own old customs and ways.' Quoted in Arash Khazeni, *Tribes & Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), p. 192. Even in the late Pahlavi period, tribal population remained significant, and efforts to settle these populations had varying degrees of success.

[9] One such example is that of Taqi Arani, a German-educated Iranian who was arrested in 1937 after a student protest at Tehran Technical College. See Ervand Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firqah-i Dimukrat," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1970), p. 298.

rise of radical politics in the 1960s and 70s, as well as assess how the communists failed to emerge victorious despite this.

The historiography has written extensively on the eclectic nature of the movements that participated in what eventually became the Islamic Revolution, and their competition for the hearts of the Iranian masses. Abrahamian classifies Khomeini and his lieutenants as 'clerical populists' who promised 'social justice, redistribution of wealth,' and 'major economic reforms,' but that his movement was ultimately characterised by 'ideological adaptability and intellectual flexibility.'[10] He also notes Khomeini's propensity for using 'populist catchphrases' which were 'vague on specifics,' avoiding potential issues of contention in favour of 'issues with mass appeal.'[11] Abrahamian views Khomeini's movement as populist and pragmatist in nature; one that manoeuvred through a complex political web and emerged on top by virtue of successfully harnessing an amalgamation of religious, nationalistic, and leftist slogans and themes that had mass appeal.

Keddie expands upon this, observing the difference between Khomeini's movement and their secular counterparts, attributing the victory of Khomeini's faction in the revolutionary discourse to the perceived lack of authenticity of their rivals. While 'secular oppositionists' lacked 'contact with the Iranian masses and understanding of how they think and act,' says Keddie, the Islamic movement of Khomeini 'helped meet their material and cultural needs as they poured into the overcrowded cities.'[12] Moreover, his interpretations of Islam 'were not … really traditional,' giving him an appeal that traditional religion lacked.[13] Houchang Chehabi alludes to a dissonance of lifestyles, noting that 'Khomeini's asceticism contrasted favorably' to the lifestyle of the secular intellectuals, 'whose daily behavior was a constant affront to the sensibilities of the masses.'[14] Friedman has written extensively on the crisis of authenticity of Iran's leftist revolutionary movements, contrasting them with the Islamic movement whose 'ideological prescriptions were built upon deeply entrenched

[10] Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, pp. 42-46. Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 2.
[11] Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 425.
[12] Nikki R. Keddie, "Shi'ism and Revolution," in *Religion, Rebellion, Revolution*, ed. Bruce Lincoln (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 172. It should also be noted that in addition to the disparate content of their respective messages, there was also a disparity in how these messages were being communicated. Along with the political class and the clergy, the Iranian left – composed predominantly of university-educated people from bourgeois backgrounds – was composed of some of the most literate people in the country. Their publications reflected this literacy but also their questionable messaging. Take, for example, the official Tudeh publication *Rāh-e Kārgar*. Each volume is incredibly dense, lacks images or artwork (in contrast to Islamic publications), and consists largely of translations or summaries of Marxist theory. See *Rāh-e Kārgar*, No. 5 (Bahman 1365).
[13] Nikki R. Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, eds. Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus (London: Tauris, 1988), p. 310.
[14] Houchang Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini* (London: Tauris, 1990), p. 25.

cultural and religious traditions that provided a language, a cultural context, and an infrastructure for reaching large numbers of people in Iran.'[15]

While these arguments are all valid, and prove useful in explaining the Islamic Revolution as a phenomenon, it is also worth exploring the role of the Shah's developmentalism in augmenting the discourse. Using the sources I examine below, I will argue that – while it is true that the Iranian left 'lost' in part due to a crisis of authenticity to which their Islamic counterparts were immune, it was the manner in which the latter responded to the Shah's developmentalism – this 'inequitable modernization' to quote Mary Elaine Hegland – which factored heavily in this outcome.[16] Joseph Hodge notes that modernisation theory – advanced by US foreign policy and accepted wholesale by the Pahlavi monarchy – 'constrained the way policy makers viewed social change in the Third World,' limiting them within an 'inflexible framework' and without consideration for 'local conditions and their historical and cultural context.'[17] In this chapter, we will observe that the inflexible framework of the Shah's modernisation – and its questionable efficacy – led to an ideological vacuum in rural Iran wherein more radical approaches to the question of development could emerge. First, we will give an overview of rural Iran under the Pahlavi dynasty and the conditions which lent to unrest. Secondly, we will analyse the Iranian left's crisis of authenticity by observing the thought of influential intellectual figures who exercised considerable influence over the left: Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Mahmoud Taleghani, and Ali Shariati. Lastly, we will connect the left and left-adjacent discourse in pre-revolutionary Iran to the wider Third Worldist discourse that had been emerging concurrently.

*Rural Iran under the Pahlavis*

On the surface, it may appear that the Iranian Revolution was entirely an urban affair. In contrast to other revolutions that had taken place during the Cold War (e.g. the Chinese Revolution), wherein peasants rose to arms and rural regions were the axis of conflict, Iranian revolutionary activity was mostly limited to cities. The most effective tools of the Iranian revolutionaries were the mass demonstration and the general strike. However, as Lob has

[15] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 230.
[16] Mary Elaine Hegland, *Days of Revolution: Political Unrest in an Iranian Village* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 1.
[17] Joseph Morgan Hodge, "Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave)," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Winter 2015), pp. 441-442.

shown, this should not be construed to mean that the revolution was divorced from the affairs of rural regions. Many of those who took part in large demonstrations in cities were people who had moved to the cities from their respective villages. The 1960s and 70s could be described as a time of mass exodus from the village to the city. Lob notes that 'many villages still suffered from high rates of poverty, poor sanitation and hygiene, and inadequate infrastructure, facilities, and housing,' that 'urban-rural wealth disparities and income inequality increased,' and that these factors – coupled with the 'greater employment opportunities' that emerged within the cities – 'led to higher rates of rural-to-urban migration.'[18] It is estimated that from 1956 to 1976, the urban population of Iran nearly tripled.[19] Asef Bayat refers to these migrants to cities as the 'new poor,' and notes that prior to the Pahlavi monarchy's efforts at modernisation, 'despite the persistence of patronage linking rich and poor,' people of all socio-economic backgrounds 'lived largely side by side, intermingled socially,' and 'shared cultural traits and religious beliefs.'[20] This creation of the 'new poor' would end up being an important catalyst for Iran's primarily urban revolution in 1979.

To understand the impetus behind this mass exodus, a cursory overview of the conditions of rural regions under the Pahlavis is necessary, as well as an overview of how Mohammad-Reza Shah's conception of development served to aggravate these conditions and how subsequent debates on development responded to this phenomenon.

The rural Iran of the 1950s and 60s was described by novelist Jalal Al-e Ahmad as a realm wherein 'half of its fifty thousand villages still do not know what a match is.'[21] It possessed a certain regal indolence to the rapid changes that had been taking place in the world (and within Iran specifically). Ali Shakoori notes that in the traditional Iranian agricultural system, 'most villages were almost self-sufficient and the use of new technology in agriculture was rare.'[22] In many regions, the tribe was the 'largest and most effective' organised political group.[23] CJ itself leaned heavily into the perception of rural Iran as

[18] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 18.
[19] Cited from Iranian national censuses in Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 91.
[20] Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 24-25.
[21] Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Khārk: dorr-e yatim-e khalij* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1357), p. 12, as quoted and translated in Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 59.
[22] Ali Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 45.
[23] See Lois Beck, "Tribes and the State in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Iran," in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, eds. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 202.

backward. Their official periodical, which published profiles on different regions of the country, reported: 'The Barez region [in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province] was not even formally recognised prior to the year 1981/82.[24] A world at 1,700m elevation presents itself before your eyes, wherein a silent and voiceless people with burned faces are sometimes casualties of disease and sometimes of hunger.'[25] Azimi, likewise, narrates that CJ 'discovered' many villages whose 'names were not even on the map.'[26] Upon closer observation, rural regions were not unaffected by the sweeping changes that had been taking place. However, the key factor in triggering more sudden and dramatic change in the Iranian countryside was the Shah's developmentalist inclinations.

When the Shah's land reforms were implemented, one underlying intention was to develop the rural areas so as to subvert any potential inclination of Iranian peasants to join leftist partisan movements. The first round of land reforms did not necessarily rationalise itself in terms of improving the material conditions of peasants; rather, it simply sought to replace the old modes of production with new capitalistic methods.[27] It was perhaps for this reason that Tudeh was suspicious of land reform. Siavush Randjbar-Daemi notes that Tudeh felt the Shah's land reforms 'could at best result in a minimal "backtracking" of landowner influence and authority,' and that the party 'remained steadfastly opposed to the state's attempts at accruing political capital from the land reform initiative.'[28] Nonetheless, modernisation of the agrarian economy was crucial for the purpose of legitimising the monarchy. However, the shortcomings of this land reform programme contributed to the exodus from the villages (and, by extension, to the revolutionary movement which eventually overthrew the monarchy).

These shortcomings have been well documented. After redistribution of land, many peasants found themselves without enough land to even subsistence farm.[29] Unexpectedly, it

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[24] 1360 SH
[25] "Mahrumin-e chahārmahāl: cheshm entezār-e qadam-hā-ye asāsi-ye enqelāb," *Jahād*, No. 57 (Shahrivar 1362), p. 50.
[26] Mashayekhi and Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād*, p. 48.
[27] This is discussed in Shahrashoub Razavi, "Agrarian Change in Two Regions of Kerman," *Iran*, Vol. 29 (1991), p. 174. The principle of state involvement in the fostering of a capitalist model is not foreign to Third World countries. As Bayat observes, it is often 'the state itself that fostered capitalist (pseudo?) modernization, encouraging private accumulation' in Iran and elsewhere. Asef Bayat, "Historiography, Class, and Iranian Workers," in *Workers and Working Classes in the Middle East: Struggles, Histories, Historiographies*, ed. Zachary Lockman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 170.
[28] Siavush Randjbar-Daemi, "The Tudeh Party of Iran and the land reform initiatives of the Pahlavi state, 1958-1964," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (September 2021), pp. 624-625. It should be noted that while Tudeh's view of the Shah's land reforms was critical, it was far less critical than the security apparatus – hoping the land reforms could deal a blow to Tudeh's influence – expected.
[29] This is discussed in Kaveh Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran: The First Two Decades," *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (March 2006), p. 84.

increased stratification among peasants, with many not even receiving any land.[30] Mary Elaine Hegland, an American anthropologist who did field work in Fars province both before and after the revolution, observed that, prior to the land reform, a 'weak central government' had trouble exercising its power in many regions.[31] The sweeping reforms resulted in a power imbalance between competing tribes that had long been counterbalances to each other's power, as one tribe would become the village's main landowner at the expense of the other. Hegland recounts a case wherein a small landowner 'eventually took over perhaps two-thirds of village land,' including 'the most valuable areas, closest to water sources.'[32] Thus, the land reforms disrupted regional and local power balances, triggering a chain of events that would ultimately lead to the Shah's downfall. Khomeini was well aware of these trends, and spoke of it frequently. He once bemoaned that the Shah's land reforms 'caused the ruination of the peasants and forced them to flee to the city,' and declared that 'unfortunate peasants – from every corner of the country – are now crammed into Tehran; dwelling miserably with their families in shanties; sleeping in tents and hovels even in freezing winter!'[33] The idea that the Shah had ravaged the Iranian countryside became entrenched in the public psyche, and Khomeini successfully rode this wave.

All in all, only around 14-15 percent of Iranian peasants received any land from the Shah's land reform, two thirds of whom ended up becoming tenant farmers as they were before.[34] Of the 2.8 million peasant households that owned land in 1972, 1.85 millions (65 percent) had less than five hectares; two hectares less than the minimum required in most regions to make an adequate living.[35] The 'decline in traditional production relations,' Shakoori notes, and the accompanying rise of 'capitalist practices' resulted in 'commodification' of land and for money to play a more important role in the rural economy. In this new equation, 'landless peasants' and 'near landless and those who had only small plots of land' became unable to profitably cultivate their fields.[36] This proved fatal for a

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[30] Nikki R. Keddie, "Class structure and political power in Iran since 1796," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1-4 (1978), pp. 320, 324-325.
[31] Hegland, *Days of Revolution*, p. 1.
[32] Ibid., p. 71.
[33] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e dāneshjuyān darbāreh-ye owzā'-e irān va eslāhāt-e āmrikāyi-ye shāh," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 3, p. 521. Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e dāneshjuyān-e moqim-e khārej darbāreh-ye gheyr-e qānuni budan-e saltanat-e pahlavi," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 5, p. 67. Bayat offers a good overview of the nature of life in these slums. See Bayat, *Street Politics*, pp. 23-33.
[34] René Theberge, "Iran: Ten Years After the White Revolution," *MERIP Reports*, No. 18 (June 1973), p. 12.
[35] See Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 429.
[36] Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 57.

programme that sought to make agriculture profit-centric.[37] The failed effort to commercialise agriculture would influence later discourse on the extent to which profit motivation should play a role at all within the agrarian economy; an issue which would be expanded upon and theorised extensively by Morteza Aviny (CJ's most favoured filmmaker).[38] CJ's original vision was one in which profit was not meant to play a role. One *jahādgar* recounts that 'when someone joined Jihad, they would not immediately be given an income'; rather, they would work for months 'out of love,' until cadres could be sure of their 'sincerity and worthiness of being a part of Jihad.'[39]

Moreover, rather than disenfranchising the large landowners, the reforms resulted in a greater monopolisation of land (and production capital as a whole). Former landowners were given shares in formerly state-owned factories.[40] This is what Khomeini was referring to when he declared that 'the big landlords, who are all associates and mercenaries of the regime, have emerged as big factory owners,' and that 'if yesterday, the Iranian peasant was flogged for violating the orders of the landlords, today the Iranian worker – under the pressure of the factory owners – is shot by mercenaries of the regime for seeking his rights.'[41] Large landholders were given the option to rent land to peasants on 30 year leases, which is what the overwhelming majority of them (over 90 percent) ended up doing. Around 1.5 million *khoshneshin* (peasants without cultivation rights) – 42 percent of the Iranian rural farming population – did not gain any land from the reforms at all.[42] Contrary to the typical aim of land reform (as in the case of Algeria, for example, where lands belonging to French and absentee landowners were nationalised), the Shah's land reform 'benefited the wealthier peasants, particularly the market-oriented ones' and 'widened the gap between the social

[37] CJ would later note in their internal communications that the lack of adequate roads meant that farmers would have been ill-equipped to transport their goods anyway. Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, pp. 36-37.
[38] Yousefi says of Aviny that he was 'theoretically minded (obsessively engaged with distilling philosophical and religious truths from language) and politically engaged,' which manifested itself 'in sustained relationship with uprisings of the disenfranchised poor throughout the country.' Hamed Yousefi, "Between Illusion and Aspiration: Morteza Avini's Cinema and Theory of Global Revolution," in *Global 1979: Geographies and Histories of the Iranian Revolution*, ed. Arang Keshavarzian (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 358. In the history of the Islamic Republic, Aviny is the cultural figure most commonly associated with CJ, and he is considered to be the voice of CJ through the medium of film. He is even referred to as being among the '*jahādgar* martyrs.' See *Pol*, No. 41 (Tir-Mordad 1400), p. 31.
[39] Mashayekhi and Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād*, p. 73.
[40] *Basic Facts about Iran: Published on the occasion of the first decade of the White Revolution* (Tehran: Ministry of Information Publications Department, 1973), pp. 34-35. CJ also lamented that the Shah's land reform, instead of giving land to the peasants, 'made them indebted for many years' and ultimately caused 'their children to flee the villages.' "Naqsh-e virāngarāneh-ye este'mār-e now dar keshāvarzi," *Jahād*, No. 44 (Azar 1361), p. 34.
[41] Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā khabargozāri-ye vafā darbāreh-ye eslāmi budan-e nehzat va tashkil-e esrā'il," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 5, pp. 238-239.
[42] Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 54.

groups and created additional social tensions in the countryside.'[43] Lois Beck notes that rural and tribal populations suffered in the 1960s and 70s due to the 'national land reforms' and the 'loss of land' they suffered as a result. This, coupled with 'increased capitalist penetration' (and the lack of infrastructure to accommodate it) meant that Iran would rely increasingly on imported food.[44] Even as late as 1976, one observer noted that agriculture was the 'least developed part' of the Iranian economy.[45]

The monarchy's approach to development betrayed their detachment from the lifestyle and material conditions of the Iranian masses. The Shah neglected the peasantry, over-confident that they would always support him. He once said: 'Iran's small and relatively unproductive farmers are an extravagance that the country can no longer afford.'[46] In the 1960s, the government – seeing nomadic tribes as a sign of the country's backwardness – pre-emptively declared that they no longer existed.[47] This not only complicated the government's plans for agrarian reform, but made them heedless of the impending Islamic threat to their power. While the White Revolution's land reform was partially motivated by the desire to curb communist influences in rural regions, the impetus for it (and other American-led land reforms) was, to quote Nick Cullather, a development 'expressed in terms of yields, resources, and revenues.'[48] Thus, the principally profit-driven and capitalistic motivations of the land reforms often conflicted with the aim of raising living standards and precluding the growth of radicalism. All the while, the Shah was dismissive of the potential of an Islamic movement led by *ulamā*, even in the face of repeated warnings. Fakhreddin Azimi notes: 'He regarded the clerics as residues of the past; a force that had been confronted and discomfited once and for all.' He remained defiantly dismissive of 'the social roots of the uprising,'

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[43] Ibid., p. 59.
[44] Lois Beck, "Revolutionary Iran and Its Tribal Peoples," *Middle East Research and Information Project Reports*, No. 87 (May 1980), p. 15.
[45] Keith Watson, "The Shah's White Revolution: Education and Reform in Iran," *Comparative Education*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 1976), p. 25.
[46] Quoted in Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 107. This detachment would manifest itself in other ways, too, such as the Shah's derision of the bazaari (merchant) class; the largest class in Iran aside from the peasantry. In 1977, over one fourth of the economically active work force in Tehran and Shiraz were employed in small trade and craft activities in the bazaar and adjacent areas. However, the Shah had no qualms about alienating them; dismissing them as a 'fanatic lot' due to their traditional religiosity. This is discussed in Ahmad Ashraf, "Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Summer 1988), pp. 552, 555.
[47] See Richard Tapper, "Change, Cognition, and Control: The Reconstruction of Nomadism in Iran," in *When History Accelerates: Essays on Rapid Social Change, Complexity and Creativity*, ed. C. M. Hann (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), p. 190.
[48] Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (London: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 106.

insisting instead that his development programmes had successfully 'defused discontent' and undermined 'rigid religiosity.'

Azimi also notes that 'the structural basis of the clerics' social power was neither adequately understood nor successfully undermined,' and that 'the growing politically exploitable socio-political grievances' were left to fester. The Shah, however, simply dismissed his opponents as 'enemies of progress.'[49] Even after the revolution, Mohammad-Reza Shah's did not ammend these views. Rather than concede that his approach to development caused some degree of discontent, he suggested that the victory of the Islamic movement in the revolution was a result of a decades-old collusion between *ulamā* and communists, writing: 'Religious fanatics who did not understand the true nature of Islam had allied with the Tudeh Party back in the 40s.'[50]

While the Pahlavi monarchy's imbalanced development should have, in theory, afforded the communist opposition the very thing that the monarchy sought to deprive them of (the opportunity to establish a foothold in rural regions), they would soon find that a new type of radical discourse would supplant their own; a supplanting which was made possible through the emergence of politically active figures from within a traditionally quietist class (the religious *ulamā*).

*The Iranian communist movement: A crisis of authenticity*

The success of communist movements in the Third World were predicated on the extent to which they could recruit from among the peasant class (and landless peasants, in particular). John Lewis and Kathleen Hartford note that in the case of 'Asian revolutions attempted in the twentieth century,' most of them arose 'in countries whose peasant populations were exploited, wretched, and illiterate.'[51] In the case of the Iranian communists, there were concerted efforts to make inroads into the worker and peasant classes. However, they were largely unsuccessful. While Iranian communists – unlike many in the ruling elite – were aware of the material conditions within the country, they struggled to navigate within a deeply traditional and Islamic landscape. Bayat notes that for the Iranian working class, Islam not only constituted 'a significant part of the workers' subjectivity and consciousness,' but

[49] Azimi, "Khomeini and the White Revolution," pp. 39-40.
[50] Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi, *Toward a Great Civilization: A Dream Revisited* (London: Satrap Publishing, 1994), p. 170.
[51] John Wilson Lewis, ed., *Peasant Rebellion & Communist Revolution in Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), p. 5.

that 'Islamic ideology and language play a vital part in articulating a form of working-class consciousness'; that in the formative years of the revolutionary movement, religious discourse became 'political' and indeed 'an arena of social struggle.'[52] As such, the Iranian left struggled to proselytise their worldview, despite growing opposition to the state. However, while Islamic traditions are often perceived as a barrier to the development of socialism, there have been historical cases where the opposite was the case. Dating back to the 1920 Conference of the Peoples of the East in Baku, the question of Islam's compatibility with the socialist project was a hotly debated subject in the early history of the Soviet Union. One of the most influential figures to emerge from these debates was Sultan Galiyev, a Tatar Bolshevik who, among other things, thought Islam to be 'a religion which transcends classes' and that various rules of Islamic jurisprudence (such as the prohibition of alcohol and usury) were of great benefit to the masses.[53] While part of this discourse could be attributed to the political realities of Soviet Communist leadership inheriting a vast, multinational and multiconfessional Russian Empire, Thomas Hodgkin suggests there is also a deeper synthesis between Marxist analysis and the Islamic worldview, arguing that both Christianity and Islam were 'revolutionary movements' during their emergence. Hodgkin also references Marx's statement that 'religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature' (the oft-forgotten companion of 'religion is the opiate of the masses').[54] In Iran, likewise, this dynamic was present. Islam had the potential to serve as either an impediment or a primer to socialism. However, a confessionally Islamic movement would emerge which supplanted its communist counterpart.

The demographic makeup of the Iranian communists was overwhelmingly non-working class. One data analysis revealed that these movements 'were largely composed of urban, highly educated, and professional Iranians.'[55] Rasmus Elling observes that while the People's Fedai Partisans – guerrillas who advocated for an armed uprising against the monarchy – 'used religious language to present themselves as relatable to the shantytown-dwellers,' they privately lamented the religious sentiment of said shantytown-dwellers.[56] Dabashi observes that even the 'most professedly secular movements' of the revolution – to include Tudeh and the Fedai Partisans – 'could not escape the legacy of their Shi'ite

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[52] Bayat, "Historiography, Class, and Iranian Workers," pp. 201-202.
[53] He also wanted to establish an autonomous Muslim Communist Party. See Thomas Hodgkin, "The Revolutionary Tradition in Islam," *History Workshop*, No. 10 (Autumn 1980), p. 147.
[54] Ibid., p. 140.
[55] Ali Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 171.
[56] Rasmus Christian Elling, "In a Forest of Humans: The Urban Cartographies of Theory and Action in 1970s Iranian Revolutionary Socialism," in *Global 1979*, p. 170.

heritage.'[57] Ira Lapidus suggests that even the secular elements that make up the Iranian identity 'coincide with the Shi'i religious realm.'[58] Here, Keddie's analysis that the secular opposition to the Shah lacked 'contact with the Iranian masses' – and that secular slogans and themes were 'less inspiring than the all-encompassing and almost messianic vision of Ayatollah Khomeini' – becomes especially pertinent.[59] This is where what Friedman dubs the 'deeply entrenched cultural and religious traditions' enabled the Islamic movement to galvanise the Iranian masses as their communist counterparts never could.[60] After the revolution of 1979 (and especially with the formation of CJ), this 'deeply entrenched' worldview would come to give rise to a somewhat novel model for development. Through a combination of using a more familiar language, harnessing the influence of deep-rooted beliefs and symbols (such as Imam Hussein, for example), and using the prejudices of the Iranian populace (namely, their distrust of Russia) to their advantage, the former ultimately emerged victorious. In the coming pages, I will attempt to map out some portion of this ideological trajectory.

*Al-e Ahmad: The defector to Islam*

Its eventual defeat notwithstanding, communist discourse remained a powerful force in its own right for the duration of the Pahlavi monarchy (and for some time after). Iran was a US satellite state, and as such, Iranian revolutionaries had to define their position vis-à-vis the dominant alternative to US hegemony of the time. However, the theorists and thinkers who were able to leave the most substantial imprint on Iranian radical discourse were not Iranian leftists but rather, refugees from the Iranian left. One of the most prominent examples is the novelist Jalal Al-e Ahmad, who began his political life as a member of Tudeh but eventually came to reject both Tudeh as a party and the core assumptions of the Iranian left. The disillusioned Al-e Ahmad found in the Islamic discourse a more effective mobiliser of the Iranian masses.

Al-e Ahmad was not merely a refugee from the Iranian left; it would be no exaggeration to say that he was excommunicated from the Iranian left. One US-based Iranian leftist academic pejoratively labelled the perspectives of Al-e Ahmad, Ali Shariati, and the

[57] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 17.
[58] Ira M. Lapidus, "Islamic Political Movements: Patterns of Historical Change," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, p. 13.
[59] Keddie, "Shi'ism and Revolution," p. 172.
[60] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 230.

like as 'Islamic and Third Worldist' rather than socialist; a distinction that was significant for orthodox communists (and also illustrative of their dogmatism with respect to this emerging discourse).[61]

Although Al-e Ahmad was an apostate from Islam, his views found resonance within the militant Muslim movements.[62] Part of this was likely due to the perceived cultural and national authenticity of Al-e Ahmad's views and analyses. Al-e Ahmad understood that 'the ideological disposition of any serious revolutionary movement in Iran' would be 'religious in nature.'[63] He saw the reconciliation of revolutionary movements with Islamic religious beliefs as necessary for the survival of said revolutionary movements, as it was the Islamic religion (and the Islamic seminary) which was the last citadel defending Iran from a complete cultural onslaught. Al-e Ahmad's most lasting influence of Iranian political discourse is his popularising of the phrase *gharbzadegi* (sometimes translated into English as 'occidentosis'); a catch-all term he used to describe the infatuation of Iranians (and people of other Third World nations) with Western culture and their obsession with emulating it. His book of the same name caused an uproar in the intellectual world, as his views deeply contrasted with that of the Iranian intelligentsia. Thus, Dabashi posits that Al-e Ahmad 'should remain the key figure in any understanding of how the Islamic discourse was to succeed and supersede all other (secular) alternatives,' owing to his decisive 'recognition of Islam as a political force' in Iran.[64]

Al-e Ahmad's defection from communist circles was coupled with his being drawn towards Khomeini. He gifted Khomeini a copy of his *Gharbzadegi*, shaking his hand and telling him: 'If we continue to join hands, we will defeat the government.'[65] Another of Al-e Ahmad's works – *Dar khedmat va khiyānat-e rowshanfekrān* ('In service and betrayal of intellectuals') – includes the full text of Khomeini's historic 1964 speech condemning the

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[61] Val Moghadam, "Socialism or Anti-Imperialism? The Left and Revolution in Iran," *New Left Review*, Vol. 0, No. 166 (November-December 1987), p. 15. The author also bemoans Tudeh's support for what they saw as the progressive clerics of the early Islamic Republic. See Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[62] Al-e Ahmad spent his life journeying across a large portion of the Iranian political spectrum. Born to a religious family (his father being a cleric), he attended the seminary in Najaf in 1944 but quickly quit. His views became anti-clerical after encountering the writings of historian Ahmad Kasravi (another former seminarian who is best known for his denunciation of the seminary). He then aligned with the Iranian left and became a member of Tudeh. However, he would eventually become disillusioned with Tudeh. Toward the end of his life, he became more drawn to Khomeini (and, by extension, the Islamic tradition). He died in 1969 at the age of 45. His wife Simin Daneshvar believed he was poisoned by SAVAK.

[63] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 41.

[64] Ibid., p. 493.

[65] Mirsepassi, *Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization*, p. 106.

Shah's granting of capitulatory rights to the United States.[66] Al-e Ahmad was outspoken on the role of *ulamā* as a counterbalance to the state and to colonial influences. He observes that religious dues (e.g. *khums* and *zakāt*) – which he refers to as 'jurisprudential taxes' – are paid on a volunteer basis rather than requisitioned by force, and identifies this as the chief difference between the clergy and the military, adding that the military eats at the table of 'injustice and aiding colonialism' while the clergy eats the 'bread of the other world; of the people's faith.' He also dubs the *ulamā* 'rivals of the rulers' who have been involved in 'violent conflict and even uprisings' against the state.[67] While he identifies *ulamā* as 'defenders of tradition,' he does not consider this as equating their 'giving approval to the status quo.' The Shia belief in the reappearance of the Imam, Al-e Ahmad proposes, tempers any potential approval of the status quo. Moreover, the defence of tradition can serve useful as a tool for resisting against 'the onslaught of colonialism, whose first step in plundering is to plunder of the traditions and cultures of a region.' Thus, *ulamā* were 'a citadel against the occidentosis of the intelligentsia.'[68] Al-e Ahmad was not a traditionalist – and in fact, he qualifies his statements by arguing that the *ulamā*'s weakness is their sufficing in tradition (although he gives especial credit to the 'progressive faction' of the *ulamā*). However, the anti-colonialism of Al-e Ahmad caused him to, as Roy Mottahedeh observes, 'renew his ties with the soil of Iran and the people who lived on it.' The result was a 'politics of culture' whereby he viewed Iranian traditions – and religious traditions in particular – as a powerful tool of anti-colonialism.[69] The relationship between Al-e Ahmad and *ulamā* went both ways. *Ulamā* in Qom had no issues publishing Ale Ahmad's scathing essay on Israel despite disagreeing with his visiting there.[70] Both before and after his death – and likewise, before and after the revolution in 1979, Al-e Ahmad was on the receiving end of some scathing criticism from the secular intelligentsia.[71] This prompted Shariati (something of a kindred soul) to say following Al-e Ahmad's death: '[Jalal] dared. He dared to go against the all the values that his in-group manufactured and fabricated, and it was then that he himself became a compass direction and a reference point.' Shariati says of when heard the news of Al-e

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[66] Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Dar khedmat va khiyānat-e rowshanfekrān*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Kharazmi Publications, 1357), pp. 84-90. Al-e Ahmad refers to Khomeini as 'His Eminence, Khomeini.'
[67] Ibid., pp. 11-13. It should be noted that Al-e Ahmad uses the term *rowhāniyat*, which is the more respectful term for the clergy, as opposed to the more neutral *ulamā*.
[68] Ibid., pp. 32-34.
[69] Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 294.
[70] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 68.
[71] Ibid., p. 82.

Ahmad's death: 'I felt exactly as if I had heard the news of my own death.'[72] Shariati and Al-e Ahmad represent a breed of highly political, highly militant intellectual who grew disillusioned with the left while retaining a vehement, all-encompassing opposition to Western (and specifically, American) hegemony. In doing so, they made enemies within the intelligentsia, but in turn became towering figures within the revolutionary movement, even after their deaths.

Al-e Ahmad represented a trend toward emphasising the cultural authenticity of Iranian revolutionary thought. His views on development are also well documented. In *Gharbzadegi* – written just before the White Revolution, he pre-emptively condemns even the notion that the government may attempt to modernise the country's agriculture, bemoaning that tractors – bought with the country's income from crude oil exports – 'throw all the ancestral estates and boundaries into chaos.' He describes what was then still a proposed land reform, asserting that 'every bit of arable land is to be converted into a spiderweb of individual plots to strangle a machine in its warp and woof and render it useless.' Here, Al-e Ahmad is mocking what he viewed as the clumsiness of the 'mechanisation' efforts of the Shah's proposals; highlighting the futility of introducing the 'machine' (i.e. tractors) to an environment which was ill-suited to maintain or indeed make much practical use of them.

Al-e Ahmad paints the picture of an Iranian countryside which was a vestige of antiquity:

> We are about nineteen or twenty million people, 75 percent of whom live in the countryside, or in tents or huts, following ways from the dawn of creation, ignorant of new values, condemned to the relations of lord and serf, unfamiliar with the machine, having primitive tools and the corresponding food, fuel, clothing, and housing: the plow, barley bread, cow dung, tent cloth, and straw huts, respectively. The only things Western that have penetrated this region are the transistor radio and the draft, and these with more deadly effect than dynamite.[73]

While somewhat of a caricature, this perception of the Iranian countryside was a powerful one irrespective of its lack of nuance. Al-e Ahmad and other divergent intellectuals of his day saw in the Iranian villager as something of a spiritual refuge; a people who were as of yet untouched by Western capitalistic consumption habits. Al-e Ahmad saw the trend toward

[72] This statement is actually a reference to an incident where – while on a religious pilgrimage – a villager confused Al-e Ahmad for Shariati. Thereafter, Shariati said 'I myself began to mistake him for myself.' See Ali Shariati, "Estehmār va rāh-e sevvom" (Lecture, Higher Educational Institute for Girls, Tehran, 1351).

[73] Jalal Al-Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984), pp. 64-65.

urbanisation as vulgar, calling Iranian cities 'inflated villages'; that 'each is a knot tied somewhere on the slender thread of a highway.' He saw Iranian urbanisation as having been dictated by 'the logic of machine consumption'; that it 'uprooted' people from 'ancestral lands.'[74] One may draw the conclusion that Al-e Ahmad was opposed to industrialisation in and of itself. However, it is more so a case of him seeing the revolutionary potential within a class of people least affected by what he viewed as a corruptive Western cultural onslaught. Shariati – Al-e Ahmad's fellow traveller – was no stranger to this himself. The idealisation of rural communities was also present in Shariati's works.[75] This view would later be echoed by Morteza Aviny, whose films – notes Hamed Yousefi – featured protagonists who 'live outside metropolitan centers in areas marked by precapitalist modes of production and lack of modern infrastructures.'[76] Yousefi further notes that Aviny's 'belief in poor people's autonomy and agency' was what distinguished his approach to his subjects.[77] One of Aviny's films, *Khān-gazideh-hā* ('Bitten by Landlords'), 'involves an emotional encounter between the film crew and the peasants.' These 'real-world interactions between the politicized poor and the filmmakers' result in a film which amounts to 'a powerful challenge to middle-class subjectivity.'[78] In another film – *Bā doktor-e jahād dar bashāgard* ('With a Jihad Doctor in Bashagard') – Aviny depicts a *jahādgar* doctor who treats patients in villages across eastern Hormozgan province. These patients live in abject poverty; sleeping in rudimentary tents and surviving on the bare minimum of food. Yousefi observes an important subtlety of Aviny's framing: while Aviny 'does not hesitate to applaud the doctor's (and the revolutionary government's) service,' his story always centres the villagers, as 'it is they who offer an alternative' to modernity and its assumptions.[79] This notion of the peasants (and, by

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[74] Ibid., p. 66. It should be noted that Al-e Ahmad was not outright opposed to cities or to the mechanisation of agriculture, but instead critical of the manner in which the government had been pursuing it. This becomes more evident in the following excerpt: 'And so long as we try to promote the idea of small landowners, so long as we fail to establish a mechanics class in every village school, the machine will remain a stranger to the village, will not enter the village as anything but an agent of destruction, agitation, and turmoil.' Ibid., p. 104.

[75] This can be seen in his *Kavir* (Desert), a work wherein Shariati writes prose romanticising the life of the desert. Shariati writes that the desert 'marks the boundaries of the land of the living' and that 'in the desert, we are closer to the otherworldly realm.' Ali Shariati, *Kavir* (Tehran: Bina, 1348), p. 19.

[76] Yousefi, "Between Illusion and Aspiration," p. 361.

[77] According to Yousefi, Khomeini's dual status as a traditionalist and iconoclast 'was what enabled [Aviny] to account for the agency of the poor, on the one hand, and to disentangle Islam from the obsolete logic of tradition, on the other.' Khomeini's interpretation of religion, for Aviny, 'was an equal match for the dynamic modernism' of Aviny's filmmaking style, in contrast to the 'bucolic, and inert Islam of the nativists.' Ibid., p. 374.

[78] Ibid., p. 372.

[79] Ibid., p. 378. It could be said that Aviny was the last in a line of new wave Iranian cinema which started before the revolution. Take, for example, Dariush Mehrjiu's movie *Gāv* (Cow). Made in 1969, it was a vanguard in this space, and arguably the first Iranian film to offer idyllic depictions of village life. Ali Mirsepassi observes that this film 'presents the village as a contrast to the corruption of the modern city. It idealizes an unbroken and

extension, the Iranian working class) as a platonic ideal of humanity is consistent with what Bayat refers to as the Islamic Republic's 'populist-moralistic definition of the working class.'[80] Thus, the important features of Al-e Ahmad's thinking – the all-encompassing anti-Western sentiment and the willingness to question everything about the modern West (to include its conceptions of development) – are present in the films of Aviny, who was one of CJ's most important mouthpieces.

Nonetheless, Al-e Ahmad did not outline any specific alternative to the Shah's brand of rural development. This is in contrast to his former fellow travellers within Tudeh, who advocated for socialist construction in the vein of the Soviet Union. Thus, Al-e Ahmad represents a rejection not only of the Western model of development that the Shah sought to implement, but of the underlying assumptions of development itself. Al-e Ahmad could be described as being opposed to the very notion of Western modernity; the conception of which – says Odd Arne Westad – the US and USSR were 'locked in conflict over' and to which 'both states regarded themselves as successors.'[81] Al-e Ahmad could thus be seen as echoing Gandhi before him, who as Partha Chatterjee argues, saw 'the source of modern imperialism' to be in the 'system of social production which the countries of the Western world have adopted.'[82] Meaning, Al-e Ahmad took issue with this mode of production and consumption irrespective of to what end it was working toward.

*'Father' Taleghani: Proselytiser of the left*

While Al-e Ahmad was highly influential in his own right, one of the figures who potentially played a role in swaying him away from the secular left was Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani.[83] If Al-e Ahmad was the most prominent defector from the Iranian communist movement, Taleghani was the spiritual father of these defectors. Taleghani's political activities go back to the days of Reza Shah (Mohammad-Reza Shah's father and predecessor), when he protested the ban on hijab. Taleghani would go on to support the oil nationalisation movement of the early 1950s. Most famously, however, he was affiliated with

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unspoiled unity with nature.' Ali Mirsepassi, *Iran's Quiet Revolution: The Downfall of the Pahlavi State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 118.

[80] Bayat, "Historiography, Class, and Iranian Workers," p. 184.

[81] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 4.

[82] Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 87.

[83] Taleghani recounts that Al-e Ahmad would attend Taleghani's lectures on Quranic exegesis, and displayed much more religiosity toward the end of his life. See Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 81.

the National Front and the Freedom Movement during their agitations against Mohammad-Reza Shah. During his many stints in prison for his political activities, Taleghani was cellmates with political prisoners of communist disposition and was able to proselytise many of them by introducing them to the Islamic conception of property.[84] One political prisoner described Taleghani as someone 'suspended above all of us, the one light from which we all sought illumination'; that all prisoners, even those who were firmly materialistic and atheistic, 'read his lectures with reverence.'[85] It was while imprisoned that he wrote *Eslām va mālekiyat* ('Islam and property'), his seminal work in which he offers a novel interpretation of Quran and *ahādith* on the question of property; arguing that the Islamic notions of property have not been adequately adapted to the conditions of the time.[86] Taleghani's prison pupils would go on to found the *Mojāhedin-e Khalq* (MEK) organisation in 1965, a political party with a syncretic Islamo-Marxist ethos.[87] The founding of MEK could be seen as a precursor to the aforementioned paradigm shift whereby Islamic radicalism supplanted communist radicalism (a paradigm shift that was essential to the formation of CJ). MEK would continue to refer to Taleghani as *pedar* (father) even after their eventual falling out with the Islamic Republic. Taleghani's influence over the Iranian left was such that even Leonid Brezhnev – then general-secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) – sent Khomeini condolences for his death.[88]

What did Taleghani express in his *Eslām va mālekiyat* that made him such an influential figure in the Iranian left? In reality, he did not stray from the *ulamā*'s consensus on the principles of property. However, he was a militantly political man, and his political activity took place within the 20th century. What he did was offer a new perspective into the practical application of these principles in the 20th century. He upholds the view (an uncontroversial, consensus view among *ulamā*) that God is the ultimate owner of all property; that 'all existence is created and owned by the Source, Creator, and Director of the universe' and that this is indeed 'the basis' for monotheistic faith.[89] He writes that 'land and

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[84] Taleghani served multiple prison terms under both Reza Shah and Mohammad-Reza Shah.
[85] Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 283.
[86] *Ahādith* (literally 'narrations') refer to narrations from the Prophet and Imams. These are considered the second most important source (after the Quran) for deriving Islamic rulings.
[87] While this party was aligned with Khomeini for many years, it is perhaps more well known for its staunch opposition to him, having fallen out with the Islamic Republic in the early 1980s. It should be noted that the organisation had undergone significant transformation by then; the Taleghani-trained original founders of MEK – whom Taleghani called 'true Muslims' and 'beacons that flow in times of darkness' were long gone. From *Etelā'āt* newspaper, quoted in Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 81.
[88] "Brezhnof be emām khomeini tasliyat goft," *Keyhān*, 20 Shahrivar 1358.
[89] Sayyid Mahmud Taleghani, *Society and Economics in Islam*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1982), p. 53.

other natural resources are in the public domain and come under the supervision of the Imam (or the Islamic ruler).'[90] Here, it is the parenthetical addition of 'the Islamic ruler' which set him apart from many jurists.[91] He goes so far as to say that the Islamic ruler has special discretionary powers, and 'is empowered to limit individual ownership to a greater degree than the law may authorize.'[92] This contrasted with the approach of the likes of Borujerdi (one of the leading clerics of Qom until his death in 1961), who Mottahedeh describes as 'a master at avoiding political confrontation and public statements on political issues.'[93] Borujerdi was not necessarily a supporter of the Shah, but his approach to matters of state was one of accommodation; one of seeking to ensure that the security and continued functioning of the seminaries would not be upset due to confrontation from the state. Borujerdi did not speak publicly on the oil nationalisation movement, despite the 'nationalistic enthusiasm that surrounded' the movement (which affected many younger seminarians of the time).[94] He did not speak publicly on Palestine, despite having sympathy for the Palestinian cause in private. Fundamentally, he had a much more limited view – at least, practically – of the realm wherein *ulamā* should exercise their power.

Taleghani, by comparison, was a maximalist. He warned of the concentration of land resources, imploring that 'the power of the government and its agents must cease to back up the land-owners,' and that the widespread 'extortionate feudal pattern of ownership' in Iran and other Islamic countries 'finds no support in Islamic ordinances.'[95] This is particularly relevant with respect to the issue of land reform, as it indicates that his opposition to the Shah's land reform was not an opposition to land reform as a whole. Labour, Taleghani says, 'is the source of the right of ownership' and that this right is 'natural and innate.'[96] He suggests that class society is a deviation from Islamic beliefs: 'The appearance of classes is the result of individual and social deviations from the principles of truth and justice, and the

[90] Ibid., p. 36.
[91] Twelver Shia *ulamā*, prior to the Iranian revolution, were broadly quietist; upholding that during the occultation of the 12th Imam, *ulamā* should not concern themselves with statecraft. By extending the economic authorities of the Imams (who, in Shia belief, were infallible) to 'the Islamic ruler,' Taleghani is adopting a novel position.
[92] Ibid., p. 28. The word Taleghani uses – translated here as 'Islamic ruler' – is *vali* (*wali* in Arabic); often translated as guardian. In Shia belief, the Imams have *velāyat* (guardianship) over the people, and are believed to possess the true authority to govern. One important shift that happened concurrently with the Iranian Revolution was the extension of *velāyat* to more than the twelve Imams. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.
[93] Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 131.
[94] Ibid., p. 237.
[95] Taleghani, *Society and Economics in Islam*, p. 37.
[96] Ibid., p. 28.

strengthening of attitudes corresponding to transgression, exploitation, and imperialism.'[97] After the events of 1953, Taleghani sought to develop a cadre of Islamic intellectuals, among whom was Al-e Ahmad (who retained a relationship with Taleghani until his death).

Perhaps most interesting is Taleghani's comprehensive definition of usury (*ribā*). While the most commonly recognised definition of usury is the charging of interest when moneylending, Taleghani took this further, defining any 'exchanges in which no useful act is performed' as usurious, and that – naturally – 'usurious and quasi-usurious transactions' are forbidden in Islam.[98] CJ would later echo this definition of usury, alluding to Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's idea of middleman merchants' economic activities 'lacking of any productive substance' and being strictly for 'attaining profit,' and that permitting them to act uninhibited is 'a heavy imposition upon society.'[99] Thusly, by taking existing principles and giving them new life, Taleghani managed to both articulate an 'Islamic' alternative to the existing model of capitalistic development, as well as doing so in a language concurrent with cultural and religious norms. For many within the Iranian left (most prominently, the founders of MEK), Taleghani was the intermediary between them and an expression of religion which they had not known existed.[100]

### *Shariati: Crypto-Marxist or* ākhund *in suit and tie?*[101]

Ali Shariati could be likened to Al-e Ahmad in the sense that he was a disaffected intellectual who saw Islam as the only force which could fuel a movement of national

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[97] Ibid., p. 51.
[98] Ibid., p. 30.
[99] "Shahid āyatollāh sadr: pāyeh-gozār-e nehzat-e eslāmi dar erāq," *Jahād*, No. 30 (Farvardin 1361), p. 71. The first major work in which a Shia cleric wrote extensively on the question of economic development – and argued that Islamic teachings could independently offer a unique model for development – was Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's *Iqtisādunā* (Our Economics), written in 1961. Sadr was among the most senior *ulamā* in the Najaf seminary, and this work of his would influence much of the discourse surrounding development within the Shia world and in Iran in particular. In it, Sadr notes that the Quran condemns the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a limited class of people and instead emphasises the notion of 'social equilibrium.' This is discussed in Hamid Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," in *Social Legislation in the Contemporary Middle East*, eds. Laurence O. Michalak and Jeswald W. Salacuse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 18-19. CJ's official periodical would later dub *Iqtisādunā* 'the first book written about the Islamic economic system,' praising it for its 'academic and scientific programme.' "Shahid āyatollāh sadr," p. 22.
[100] The most prominent among these is perhaps Mohammad Hanifnejad, who founded MEK – originally simply referred to as *sāzmān* (organisation) – in 1965. Prior to this, he was affiliated with the Freedom Movement. After violent crackdowns on the mass protest movement, Hanifnejad was convinced that revolutionary struggle had to become armed. He was arrested and executed in 1972. While MEK is today the most vilified opposition organisation in Iran, there remains a street named after Hanifnejad in Masjed Soleiman, Khuzestan province.
[101] *Ākhund* is a mostly neutral (but sometimes pejorative) term referring to members of the *ulamā*.

liberation (from the monarchy, and more importantly from the dominion of Western powers). He is also the only figure whose impact rivalled (and perhaps surpassed) that of Taleghani in terms of proselytising Islam to the left. As Friedman notes, 'Shariati's significance can perhaps best be illustrated by the fact that the massive crowds that filled the streets of Tehran and other cities' during the revolution 'held aloft portraits of two men: Ayatollah Khomeini and Ali Shariati.'[102]

There are many conflicting views on Shariati, within academia and among the masses. Lob, for example, credits Shariati as the figure who inspired MEK.[103] While MEK did certainly invoke Shariati's name, they were but one among the many who laid claim to his legacy.[104] Moreover, there is no direct relationship between the two (certainly not to the extent as there is with Taleghani). Abrahamian has alluded to Shariati's dialectic of 'Red Shiism' and 'Black Shiism' as indicative of not only his anti-clericalism but his Marxist leanings.[105] Indeed, the notion of Shariati being a crypto-Marxist is a fairly common analysis. Dabashi raises the question as to whether Shariati was using religious language to advance Marxist goals, or vice versa.[106] Hamid Algar categorically rejects the notion of Shariati's Marxist leanings, suggesting that rather than 'absorbing any ideas of Marxism, which he

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[102] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 227.

[103] Eric Lob, "An institutional history of the Iranian Construction Jihad: From inception to institutionalization" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2013), p. 36. Lob is also of the view that Shariati re-interpreted the meaning of the Quranic word *mostaz'afin* (downtrodden); a re-interpretation that Khomeini and his followers would later co-opt. See Eric Lob, "Construction Jihad: State-building and Development in Iran and Lebanon's Shi'i territories," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 39, Issue 11 (May 2018), p. 2106, and Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 51.

[104] The Islamic Republic itself has done much to lay claim to Shariati's legacy. One of northern Tehran's major avenues – *Kourosh-e kabir* (Cyrus the Great) Street – was renamed Shariati Street after the revolution. Shariati is constantly cited in schoolbooks of varying subjects. For an example of his writings being cited in schoolbooks, see *Zabān va adabiyāt-e fārsi: doreh-ye pish-dāneshgāhi* (Tehran: Iranian Schoolbook Publication Company, 1394), pp. 85-88. Other references to Shariati in schoolbooks include his wife's accounts of his daily routine, feeding into the Islamic Republic's hagiography of Shariati. See *Adabiyāt-e fārsi: sāl-e dovvom-e āmuzesh-e motevasset* (Tehran: Iranian Schoolbook Publication Company, 1394), pp. 163-166. One of the towering figures in the Islamic Republic's history – General Qasem Soleimani – recounts in his memoirs that his first exposure to revolutionary activity was when one of his friends asked him if he knew of Shariati. See Qasem Soleimani, *Az chizi nemitarsidam: zendegi-nāmeh-ye khodnevesht-e qāsem soleimāni, 1335 ta 1357* (Tehran: Qasem Soleimani Library, 1399), p. 62. Moreover, despite many conservative *ulamā* having been at odds with Shariati, the Islamic Republic has far from denounced him; instead choosing to embrace (or co-opt, depending on one's perspective) his legacy. Shariati could be dubbed the preeminent polyvalent thinker of the revolution, as seemingly all major factions who participated in the revolution seek to claim him as their own.

[105] See Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 113. Analysis of Shariati's views aside, this dialectic is the product of a somewhat misleading translation. Shariati's book *Tashayyo'-e alavi, tashayyo'-e safavi* (Alawite Shiism and Safavid Shiism) was given the title 'Red Shiism and Black Shiism' in English, presumably to avoid confusing the reader. The potential confusion would arise from the term 'Alawite' being associated with the Alawite sect of Syria, while here 'Alawite' refers to being derived from Imam Ali himself. As for 'Safavid,' it is in reference to the Safavid dynasty, the Iranian dynasty most responsible for the spread of Shia Islam in Iran. While Iran's cultural Shiism is in large part due to Shiism having been the Safavids' official religion, Shariati was critical of the Safavids for distancing Shiism from its radical and revolutionary roots.

[106] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 141.

thoroughly refuted,' Shariati confronted 'certain problems at the forefront of Marxist dialectic' in a more direct manner than most other Muslim thinkers of his time, and thus used certain nomenclature which was commonly associated with Marxism.[107] To some degree, this question may be seen as unavoidable, as the notions of an Islamo-Marxist conspiracy against the state was how the Shah rationalised his security policies. Shariati was arrested in the early 70s for spreading 'Islamic Marxism.'[108] Khomeini himself was even accused of carrying water for communists.[109] Ultimately, while some have identified Marxist influences in Shariati's thought, there is not much to suggest he was a crypto-Marxist.[110] Here, my intention is not to argue for or against these contentions, but rather to view Shariati from the perspective of him being an influential force in Iranian attitudes toward capitalistic development. More importantly for the sake of our discussion is not to what extent Shariati's worldview was 'truly' Marxist or Islamic, but rather, how the discourse he contributed to helped lay the foundations for a particular attitude toward development that culminated with the CJ of the post-revolutionary period.

The more important point of emphasis of many academics is Shariati's anti-clericalism. Shahrough Akhavi asserts: 'If Shariati's work represents anything, it is an uncompromising anti-clericalism.'[111] Sohrab Behdad alludes to Shariati's rejection of 'religious fanaticism' and condemnation of 'the clergy's political conservatism.'[112] One may get the impression from reading the historiography that Shariati can be defined primarily by

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[107] Hamid Algar, *Roots of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2001), p. 89.

[108] This event is discussed in Ervand Abrahamian, "Ali Shariati: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, p. 292.

[109] This view has persisted even until today in certain segments of the opposition to the Islamic Republic. One example is opposition figure Amir Abbas Fakhravar's *Refiq-āyatollāh* (Comrade-Ayatollah), a book whose thesis is that the Islamic Revolution was the work of the KGB.

[110] It could even be said that materialist thought did not have as much influence over Shariati's thinking as is sometimes assumed. See, for example, his dialectic between two contradictory forms of leadership (which he says encompass all leaders and governments through all of human history): the 'management of society' and the 'guidance of society'. The former, he says, seeks to give people 'comfort and freedom.' He considers this form of leadership to be regressive, likening it to a 'children's zoo,' whereas the latter – which he considers to be the authentic form of Islamic leadership – demands 'reform, discipline, and evolution' on the individual and social level. A leadership focused on 'guidance,' says Shariati, is attentive to 'the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social condition' of the people as much as their material conditions. Thus, he echoes the views of like-minded, politically militant *ulamā*, who saw the material conditions as a mean to an end. Ali Shariati, *Ommat va emāmat: nezām-e siyāsi-ye eslām, velāyat-e faqih va rābeteh-ye emām va ommat dar andisheh-ye doktor ali shari'ati* (Tehran: Teribon-e Mostaz'afin, 1391), pp. 21-22.

[111] Shahrough Akhavi, "Islam, Politics and Society in the Thought of Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Taliqani and Ali Shariati," in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (October 1988), p. 418.

[112] Behdad also says that 'Khomeini labels Shariati's views as Marxist, Leninist, and communist,' for which he provides no citation, as indeed Khomeini said no such thing. Sohrab Behdad, "A Disputed Utopia: Islamic Economics in Revolutionary Iran," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (October 1994), pp. 777, 812.

his anti-clericalism. What is sometimes overlooked by these analyses is that Shariati was among the key architects of the Islamic Republic, and contributed to it the primary basis for its identity: an all-encompassing enmity toward the West (to include the Western model of development).[113] Emphasising Shariati's anti-clericalism is strange, as while Shariati was critical of *ulamā*, he did not reject it as an institution. He was a *muqalid* of Khomeini.[114] He wrote an article, *Khomeini: rahbar-e mazhabi* ('Khomeini: The religious leader') which is effusive in its praise of the Islamic Republic's founder. He once said: 'You will find the blood of Hussein flowing within the veins of that magnanimous *seyyed*, Ayatollah Khomeini.'[115] Shariati's purported anti-clericalism was, therefore, at the very least a nuanced one. But if anti-clericalism was not the defining characteristic of Shariati's worldview, what was? I propose that it was his framing of an all-encompassing counter-hegemonic discourse in a manner that appealed specifically to university students and politically militant youths. This counter-hegemonic discourse was not merely against 'the West' in a political, military, and cultural sense, but also with respect to the liberal-capitalistic model of development pursued by the Shah.

Dabashi alludes to a symbiotic relationship between Shariati and Khomeini, saying: 'More than anyone else, [Shariati] paved the way for Khomeini's arrival,' although he qualifies this by adding that 'he and Khomeini were worlds apart.'[116] Dabashi also downplays the much-discussed falling-out between Shariati and Khomeini's most revered pupil, Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari, arguing that the 'affinity and continuity of Shariati's and Motahhari's ideas are self-evident,' and that 'they are part and parcel of the same revolutionary enterprise.'[117] Dabashi's analysis is especially relevant in light of some of the opposition Motahhari faced from conservative *ulamā* for his views on property. The delineation between 'revolutionary' and 'conservative' *ulamā* was, thus, often determined based on their respective stances on economic development, and in this debate it is evident where Shariati's loyalties laid.

Understanding Shariati's relationship with the *ulamā* is essential to identifying his unique role in the revolutionary space. Shariati's purported anti-clericalism has been

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[113] Abrahamian recognises Shariati's foundational role in the revolution, saying: 'Shariati did not live to see the Islamic Revolution; but his ideas helped to shape it.' Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, p. 110.
[114] To be a *muqalid* of someone means to follow their rulings on jurisprudential issues. This is a Shia practice known as *taqlid*; deferring to senior *ulamā* in jurisprudence.
[115] *Seyyed* refers to a descendant of the Prophet Mohammad. This quote was related by Shariati's father. Mohammad-Taqi Shariati, "Mosāhebeh bā mohammad-taqi shari'ati," IRIB TV, Date unknown.
[116] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 145.
[117] Ibid., p. 157.

discussed extensively, but such discussions often omit that Shariati revered a fair number of them. There is some evidence suggesting that Shariati and Khomeini were much more aligned than even Dabashi imagines. Shariati often expressed – in the language of a secular-educated sociologist – what Khomeini expressed in the language of a religious cleric. This includes the foundational idea of Khomeini: *velāyat-e faqih*. In his *Ommat va emāmat* (Imamate and the Islamic nation) and *Entezār: Mazhab-e e'terāz*, Shariati verbalises the same idea. Shariati defines the *ummah* (Islamic nation) as a society wherein 'a common aim' is pursued 'under a common leadership.'[118] He clarifies that by 'leadership,' he is not referring only to the Imams but to *ulamā*: '*Taqlid* is not at all incompatible with reason. Rather, the essence of reason is that when one does not know, he follows those who know.' In arguing for this, he uses the analogy of doctor and patient (with health being defined as ideological correctness). He even considers the prevalence of *taqlid* as a marker of civilisation; that wherever *taqlid* is 'more entrenched and defined,' the more 'advanced and civilised' a society is.[119]

Shariati is not merely speaking in abstractions. He says, in no uncertain terms, that during the occultation of the Imam, 'the Imam entrusts the duty of guiding the people and his followers upon the enlightened and pure *ulamā* learned in religion.' He views this form of rule as being the opposite of a democracy, arguing that 'contrary to democracy, where the elected is beholden to the people,' the leader in the Shia worldview is 'beholden to the [infallible, hidden] Imam.' One could even say that Shariati had a contempt for democracy. He says: 'It is not such that all the people must come and vote, and whoever gains the most votes is chosen as the vicegerent of the Imam,' but rather that 'reason mandates' that the masses are ill-equipped to make such a selection.[120] His opposition to liberal democracy was grounded in his 20th century application of Imamate, but this also has repercussions for his view of the 'correct' manner of pursuing development; a model that is conditionally statist (conditional upon the leadership being sufficiently righteous or 'correct') and yet depends on the mobilisation of the masses.[121]

For all his criticisms of traditionalist *ulamā*, he had a deep reverence for those *ulamā* whom he considered enlightened. He once said, after a session with the gnostic and Quranic

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[118] Shariati, *Ommat va emāmat*, p. 20.
[119] Ibid., p. 116.
[120] Ali Shariati, *Entezār: mazhab-e e'terāz* (Tehran: Hoseiniyeh-ye Ershād, 1971), pp. 24-29.
[121] This type of statism would later become an inextricable part of the Khomeini faction's modus operandi. Mojtahed Shabestari – longtime member of the Assembly of Experts – once declared that 'the Imam' (i.e. Khomeini) is the only one who can clarify 'the political and economic line of the revolution.' "Khatt-e siyāsi va eqtesādi-ye enqelāb rā faqat emām bāyad moshakhas konad," *Keyhān*, 28 Mehr 1358.

exegesist Mohammad-Hossein Tabatabaei: 'It was as if Socrates himself were standing before me.'[122] It was Motahhari who invited Shariati to Tehran and to speak at Hoseiniyeh Ershad.[123] In a 1973 letter, Motahhari defended Shariati (against the attacks he had been on the receiving end of) and upheld that differences of opinion should be respected.[124] This lends some credence to Taleghani's insistence that Shariati and Motahhari's views were not contradictory.[125] Moreover, two major ayatollahs in Shiraz held memorial services for Shariati, to say nothing of the fact that Imam Musa Sadr of Lebanon (founder of the Shia Islamic movement of Lebanon) performed his funeral prayer.[126] This is indicative both of his holding a position of respect among a subset of *ulamā*, but also of his being influential within the transnational Shia political world.

Shariati's opposition to capitalistic development can be seen most clearly in his *Māshin dar esārat-e māshinism* ('The Machine in the Captivity of Machinism'). Machinism, as defined by Shariati, is a type of 'global cultural colonisation' whereby colonised peoples are compelled to adopt the modes of production and consumption of their colonisers. However, this is not purely an economic issue. Rather, under this arrangement, a people becomes estranged from their 'religion, culture, tradition, history, morals, and tribal and social values,' raising a generation 'that is vacuous and cut-off.' After being debased on a collective level, only then will the dominant hegemon consider them to be 'civilised.'[127] Some posit that Shariati's Islamic ideology 'belongs within a larger Iranian discourse of Occidentalism, or Orientalism in reverse'; that in Shariati's view, the West not only 'represents an oppositional binary to an authentic Islamic self' but is 'the source of all social, cultural, economic, and political ills in Iranian society.'[128] Shariati's discourse could thus be classified as Third Worldist. His writings also betray an all-encompassing rejection of capitalistic development, as he brings into question the underlying mechanisms of this mode of development. Shariati goes so far as to deride the notion of specialisation within the context of modernity, suggesting that it makes people 'one dimensional'; that the

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[122] "Bemonāsebat-e rehlat-e allāmeh-ye kabir āyatollāh seyyed mohammad-hosein tabātabāyi," *Jahād*, No. 22 (1 Azar 1360), p. 54.
[123] Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 204. Algar posits that Shariati was 'the most important lecturer' at Hoseiniyeh Ershad. Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," p. 27.
[124] Quoted in Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 208.
[125] See Mangol Bayat, "Mahmud Taleqani and the Iranian Revolution," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer (London: Mansell Publishing, 1987), p. 89.
[126] This is discussed in Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism*, p. 210.
[127] Ali Shariati, "Māshin dar esārat-e māshinism" (Lecture, Hosseiniyeh Ershād, Tehran, Date unknown).
[128] Siavash Saffari, *Beyond Shariati: Modernity, Cosmopolitanism, and Islam in Iranian Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 134.

phenomenon of specialisation arose 'when man became alienated from himself,' and that it causes 'the soul to wither.' He argues that 'the epoch of the Prophet' was a time wherein specialised roles were abolished; wherein 'all the Muslims – universally – were men of action, men of intellect, men of faith, men of armed struggle, men of labour,' and so on. Shariati would have likely appreciated CJ's simultaneous presence in the fields of war, construction, and ideological work. CJ – with its categorical rejection of profit motivation and its reliance on volunteer labour – could be viewed as a crystallisation of this all-encompassing rejection; going beyond socialism or even statism.

Thus, not only was Shariati vehemently opposed to a liberal-capitalistic form of development, but he strayed considerably from the materialistic analysis which was so often attributed to him. Not coincidentally, *Māshin dar esārat-e māshinism* is one of the works in which Shariati cites Frantz Fanon. One could argue that the contemporaneous emergence of Fanon and Shariati represented a new wave – if not a shift – in Third World leftist intellectual circles. Shariati, like Fanon, was operating in a space that was immersed in communist discourse. Also like Fanon, he rejected the dichotomy between the American and Soviet blocs, and even the notion of socialism as an identifying marker. Like Fanon, he emphasised the need for a culturally authentic expression of the need for radical social change, and derided what he perceived as Eurocentric tendencies in more orthodox communist parties. Shariati wrote extensively on the Algerian Revolution (the quintessential 'Third Worldist' revolution) as it was happening. CJ would also come to proliferate these ideas (often citing Shariati explicitly), which we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3.

*The wider Third Worldist discourse*

While Shariati and Al-e Ahmad were outliers within the Iranian intelligentsia, they did not arise from within a vacuum. In the 1960s, with the growing wave of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, there was a small but growing strand of socialist thinking that did not fit within the dialectic of Western bloc vs. Eastern bloc. Algeria was of particular interest to Iranian revolutionaries. Algeria's *Front de libération nationale* (FLN), notes Jeffrey Byrne, 'did not perceive any inherent contradiction between religion and socialism,' and took inspiration from existing socialist models while

seeking to adapt 'to the cultural realities of Algerian society.'[129] The Algerian War of Independence was, likewise, heavily influenced by the exploitative dynamics of the country's agrarian economy, as '[European] landowners expanded their export-oriented farms and vineyards' while Algerian peasants 'subsisted on ever-shrinking plots of land.'[130] Friedman cites the mid-1970s as the 'climax' of the Third Worldist movement. This climax, unsurprisingly, coincided with the Iranian Revolution gaining considerable momentum.[131] The volatility of the anti-colonial movements was such that even the United States – emboldened by the Sino-Soviet dispute – saw an opportunity to compete with the Soviet Union in this space. Hence, they took a special interest in the procedural matters of the Bandung conference and sought to avoid a scenario where a wave of radical anti-Americanism would 'railroad their resolutions.' In doing so, they recruited the help of Mohammad-Reza Shah, who in a conversation with Johnson assured him that 'we shall do our duty and we are very grateful to you.'[132] As Byrne notes, the US primarily saw the conference (and the struggle to get in the good graces of Third World internationalism) 'as a contest between capitalist and communist development models.' However, their success would be 'achieved over the dead body of the Afro-Asian movement and the dissipated spirit of Bandung.'[133] Third Worldist discourse was in full swing, but Bandung predated the Iran's primary contribution to it, and although a new pole (China) was seemingly emerging, it was still communist.

Nonetheless, the Third Worldist current was gaining steam. Frantz Fanon, who became acquainted with Shariati during the Algerian struggle against France, began to gain renown in Iran. His works were translated – sometimes by Shariati himself – and distributed en masse. Algar suggests that Shariati was responsible for kindling Iranian interest in Fanon; one that is 'still alive' to this day.[134] Arash Davari alludes to Shariati and Fanon being 'cut from the same cloth,' and that Fanon not only 'provided [Shariati] with a direct and generative link to a broader tradition of insurgent and anticolonial political thought,' but that

[129] Jeffrey James Byrne, "Our Own Special Brand of Socialism: Algeria and the Contest of Modernities in the 1960s," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (June 2009), p. 428.
[130] Ibid., p. 429.
[131] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 4.
[132] This is discussed in Eric Gettig, "Trouble Ahead in Afro-Asia: The United States, the Second Bandung Conference, and the Struggle for the Third World, 1964-1965," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (January 2015), pp. 140, 142.
[133] Byrne, "Our Own Special Brand of Socialism," p. 155.
[134] Algar, *Roots of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*, p. 89.

Shariati's *Bāzgasht be khishtan* ('Return to the Self') 'drew directly from Fanon.'[135] However, Fanon's impact in Iran was not limited to Shariati. Keddie notes that 'there is some convergence between the Manichean world outlook of Khomeini and other Muslim thinkers and the more widespread phenomenon of Third Worldism,' adding that 'Khomeini himself [had] probably not been immune to such currents' (i.e. the ideas of Fanon and his ilk).[136]

While Fanon was a Marxist by confession, his experience as a psychologist who treated both French colonialists and Arab colonial subjects gave him some insight into the mind of both coloniser and colonised. While Marxism has always been a broad and factionalised church (with a vast, eclectic arrangement of 20th century thinkers all laying claim to it), Fanon's analysis still stands out as unique. He felt that Marxist analysis was deficient when it came to the question of colonialism, writing that 'Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem,' and that everything 'must here be thought out again.'[137] He argues that the struggles of the Third World transcend the choice 'between the capitalist and socialist systems,' and that 'the Third World ought not to be content to define itself in the terms of values which have preceded it'; that they should instead 'find their own particular values and methods' that are 'peculiar to them.'[138] He expresses disdain at the notion of 'want[ing] to catch up with anyone,' insisting instead that the Third World mustn't 'pay tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions, and societies which draw their inspiration from her'; that uplifting one's own people requires looking 'elsewhere than in Europe.'[139]

The central axis of Fanon's thinking was anti-colonialism, and his anti-colonialism is heavily informed by his experience in clinical psychology. It was through this lens that he saw Islam as a type of salvation. Alluding to the liberative potential of religious faith when discussing the Algerian Revolution, he writes: 'Up above there is Heaven with the promise of a world beyond the grave; down below there are the French with their very concrete promises of prison, beatings-up, and executions.'[140] This is a notable reversal of early Marxist materialist analysis. He also commented on Islamic hijab through an anti-colonial lens, writing:

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[135] Arash Davari, "A Return to Which Self?: Ali Shariati and Frantz Fanon on the Political Ethics of Insurrectionary Violence," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2014), pp. 88-89.
[136] Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, p. 311.
[137] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 40.
[138] Ibid., pp. 98-99.
[139] Ibid., pp. 314-315.
[140] Ibid., p. 309.

> After each success, the authorities were strengthened in their conviction that the Algerian woman would support Western penetration into the native society. Every rejected veil disclosed to the eyes of the colonialists horizons until then forbidden, and revealed to them, piece by piece, the flesh of Algeria laid bare. The occupier's aggressiveness, and hence his hopes, multiplied ten-fold each time a new face was uncovered. Every new Algerian woman unveiled announced to the occupier an Algerian society whose systems of defense were in the process of dislocation, open and breached. Every veil that fell, every body that became liberated from the traditional embrace of the *haik*, every face that offered itself to the bold and impatient glance of the occupier, was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer. Algerian society with every abandoned veil seemed to express its willingness to attend the master's school and to decide to change its habits under the occupier's direction and patronage.[141]

This is consistent with Judith Surkis' suggestion that the French colonisation of Algeria 'was sexualized from the outset,' with Algerian women being depicted as a spoils of war eager to be liberated from the veil.[142] James McDougall observes how the French colonial authorities' lack of deference toward Algerian religious sensibilities 'had the unintended effect of provoking symbolic resistance' in certain elements of outward religiosity.[143] Political scientist Glen Coulthard considers 'Fanon's "stretching" of the Marxist paradigm' – specifically, his attention to issues like racism and colonialism which were 'historically relegated in Marxism to the superstructural realm' – to be 'one of the most innovative contributions to classical Marxist debates on ideology.'[144] Iranian revolutionaries, likewise, embraced expressions of religiosity as markers of opposition to the monarchy, and this would later become a major factor in the extent to which CJ – whose female members donned the hijab and whose male members wore simple civilian clothing (in contrast to the military uniforms of their pre-revolutionary predecessors) – was able to establish a foothold in rural regions.

Of particular relevance to our discussion is that Fanon – like Shariati and Al-e Ahmad – dismisses the notion of material progress as inherently good, writing: 'If the building of a bridge does not enrich the awareness of those who work on it, then that bridge ought not to be

[141] Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp. 42-43.
[142] Judith Surkis, *Sex, Law, and Sovereignty in French Algeria, 1830-1930* (London: Cornell University Press, 2019), p. 1.
[143] James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 220.
[144] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 34.

built and the citizens can go on swimming across the river or going by boat.'[145] He took aim at the unbridled individualism that 'the native intellectual' learned from 'his [colonial] masters,' declaring: 'The motto "look out for yourself," the atheist's method of salvation, is in this context forbidden.'[146] Some of what he wrote could even be confused for the religious moralising of *ulamā*, bemoaning that youth in undeveloped countries had become exposed to 'detective novels, penny-in-the-slot machines, sexy photographs, pornographic literature, films banned to those under sixteen, and above all alcohol.'[147]

Fanon is part and parcel of the discourse that led to the Islamic Revolution. To this day, he remains revered and oft-cited by those who commemorate the revolution. But while Fanon's materialist credentials were questionable, Shariati would take this a step further and reject materialism in its entirety. Davari observes that Shariati's conception of material existence 'constitute expendable forces whose negation turns into the affirmation of an ideal.'[148] This is how, notes Dabashi, Shariati was able to find resonance at the intersection of the 'religious-minded' and the radical left through an 'indigenously concocted language.'[149] In other words, Shariati took Fanon's notion of 'that bridge ought not to be built' and conformed it to Islam's primacy of incorporeal over material.

*From vanguards to the back seat*

We alluded earlier to the crisis of authenticity of the Iranian left. This culminated with many of their parties and movements occupying a secondary role; taking a back seat to the Islamic movement.[150] This was at times done cynically, as a sort of necessary evil (as mentioned earlier with regard to the case of the People's Fedai Partisans). However, in some cases (one of which we will analyse in the coming paragraphs), there was a sincere deference for the themes of Shia Islamic belief.

One of the most visible and beloved communist revolutionaries in Iran was the poet Khosrow Golsorkhi, who was arrested on charges of plotting to kidnap Reza Pahlavi (son of Mohammad-Reza Shah and then crown prince). Before his execution by firing squad in 1974, Golsorkhi – whose trial was televised live – gave a rousing speech. After reciting some

[145] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 200-201.
[146] Ibid., p. 47.
[147] Ibid., p. 195.
[148] Davari, "A Return to Which Self," p. 100.
[149] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 109, 139.
[150] Some leftist groups – such as MEK – never even bothered to identify themselves as socialist, communist, or Marxist by confession.

poetry, he said: 'I begin my speech with the words of my master Hussein; the great martyr of the peoples of the Middle East.'[151] He affirmed, 'I am a Marxist-Leninist,' but noted that he arrived to this destination after 'finding social justice in the Islamic school of thought.' He then declared: 'I affirm the Husseini Islam and the Islam of my master, Ali.' He quotes the Imams on numerous occasions, referencing the narration of Imam Ali (whom he refers to as 'the world's first socialist') that 'No palace is built without making a thousand people poor.' This reverence for Imam Ali among segments of the Iranian left was not limited to Golsorkhi. The otherwise rather anti-religious leftist newspaper *Āhangar* would halt their operations on his death anniversary.[152] The newspaper *Shuresh* – not as far left as *Āhangar* but vehemently anti-monarchy – had a narration of Imam Ali at the front page of each issue.[153] Golsorkhi's ideology was more of a synthesis than strictly Islamic, but his Islamic influences were undeniable. Most relevant for the purposes of our discussion, he condemned the Shah's land reform programme, declaring: 'The only thing land reform in Iran has done, is pave the path for making our society a consumption society and strengthening imperialism's shoddy industries.'[154] This angle of criticism of the land reform programmes – where he highlights the American interest in securing Iran as an emerging market for American goods – could be confused for a statement from Khomeini himself, who condemned land reform in these terms on countless occasions (examples of which we will explore in the coming chapter). Thus, criticism of the Shah's programme for development (and land reform, in particular) was at the intersection of ideological opposition and nationalist sentiments concerned with sovereignty and independence. As a result, it managed to unite an eclectic collection of

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[151] Imam Hussein was the name most frequently invoked among Iranian revolutionaries across the ideological spectrum. CJ would continue this tradition, declaring in 1981: 'Will against iron is the slogan of Ashura. The flagbearer of this great army is the master and commander of our people, the founder of the immortal struggle of Karbala: Imam Hussein, the oppressed martyr.' "Āshurā hemāseh-ye mokarrar-e tārikh," *Jahād*, No. 20 (1 Aban 1360), p. 12.

[152] See *Āhangar*, No. 16 (16 Mordad 1358), p. 2, which includes the note: 'In the upcoming week, out of respect for the anniversary of the martyrdom of Ali (peace be upon him), the great combatant of Islamic history, *Āhangar* will not publish any issues.' Another interesting note: while this newspaper routinely expressed contempt for religious people – using the depiction of *tasbih* (Islamic prayer beads) in their political cartoons as shorthand for reactionary (and even depicting the ones who held them as possessing simian qualities) – they also seemingly had at least some degree of reverence for Khomeini, referring to him as 'the pure-natured and kind imam' who 'severed the hand of tyranny,' although this was perhaps a means of making their criticisms of the Islamic establishment more palatable. See *Āhangar*, No. 14 (2 Mordad 1358), p. 7, and "Ey emām-e mehrabān," *Āhangar*, No. 12 (19 Tir 1358), p. 5.

[153] Every issue featured the same narration: 'Fight! Instead of the stain of ignominy, let your funeral garb be adorned with your pure blood. Fight, as an honourable death is a thousand times more praiseworthy than a dishonourable life.' See *Shuresh*, No. 29 (13 Aban 1330). The newspaper's editor – Amir-Mokhtar Karimpour Shirazi – benefited from a brief period of greater press freedoms following the end of the Second World War, but was executed in 1953 following the coup against Mosaddeq.

[154] Khosrow Golsorkhi, "Defā'iyāt-e khosrow golsorkhi dar dādgāh-e nezāmi," transcript of speech delivered at military tribunal in Tehran, 29 Bahman 1352.

movements and people. While Golsorkhi was a Marxist-Leninist by confession (affirming this fact until his death), one can identify a common lineage between his thinking and the worldview that would make CJ possible: a radicalism that is fiercely anti-American and anti-capitalist but also unapologetically Shia in its slogans and beliefs.

Aside from having the advantage of perceived cultural authenticity, the Islamic movement also had a keen understanding of how to galvanise the masses. The link between clergy and masses in Iran was an important one, and its capacity for spurring mass movements had been seen in the past with the Tobacco Protest of 1890 and the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. In the protest movement of the 1960s and 1970s, this link was supplemented with 20th century media and technology. During the zenith of revolutionary struggle, music stores would include 'blank' tapes (which, in fact, contained speeches of Khomeini) with the purchase of music tapes. Sreberny describes this as 'Khomeini's electronic pulpit,' and that 'for a population with 65% illiteracy ... this electronic pulpit was a powerful channel.'[155] This pulpit – underutilised by the orthodox left – was used to great effect by Khomeini's faction. What would come to pass after the 1979 revolution would, as Akhavi says, confirm that Khomeini's vision was what 'prevails in revolutionary praxis.'[156]

After the revolution, Tudeh (the party favoured by the USSR) acceded to the newly established government of Khomeini; releasing an official statement noting that 'anti-imperialist forces are active under the leadership of Khomeini.'[157] They supported the Islamic Republican Party (IRP)'s consolidation of power, rationalising this in terms of what Friedman describes as 'applying the lessons of previous episodes in Third World socialist revolutions – in particular, the overthrow of Allende in Chile.' In this scenario, they 'identified Khomeini as the Allende figure.'[158] In public debates between Islamic and Marxist thinkers after the revolution, Tudeh representatives were deferential toward the Islamic religion and said they did not see Marxism as inherently hostile toward religion.[159] This is significant not only in the context of the relationship between communists and Islamists, but

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[155] Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, "Small Media for a Big Revolution: Iran," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Spring 1990), p. 358. Dabashi alludes to this electronic pulpit, saying: 'Khomeini's was a cassette revolution… A sense of expectation seems to have anticipated Khomeini's words in Iran whenever the king or his government was about to indulge in yet another pompous ceremony, engage in yet another totalitarian vanity, or experiment with yet another measure of political tyranny.' Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 419.
[156] Akhavi, "Islam, Politics and Society in the Thought of Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Taliqani and Ali Shariati," p. 429.
[157] Quoted in Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 297.
[158] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 17.
[159] This is discussed in Mirsepassi, *Iran's Quiet Revolution*, p. 194.

also in illustrating how other Third World movements served as frames of reference for Iranian discourse.

Tudeh's sponsors in Moscow had also adopted a softer policy toward Islam in the 1970s. However, there was disagreement in Soviet academic circles as to the extent to which Islam and Soviet socialism were reconcilable. One Soviet academic – Elena Doroshenko – had a more favourable view of Khomeini than she did of other *ulamā*, crediting him for his opposition to the White Revolution and to the Shah in general.[160] She went so far as to say that under the Khomeini's leadership, Islam not only became 'an offensive weapon against the tyrant-shah and "Westernisation,"' but that this movement ultimately served the interests of 'the oppressed majority.' She also notes that 'among all the Muslim clergy the Shi'ite clergy is distinguished by its socio-political activism.'[161] Doroshenko is correct inasmuch as Shia clergy have historically had political factors working in their favour. Firstly, they long enjoyed a relative independence from state affairs (at least, in comparison with their Sunni counterparts, for whom the ruler was a direct sponsor and benefactor). They also had the tool of *taqlid*, which clarified a clear hierarchy both among *ulamā* themselves and between the *ulamā* and the masses. Through the mosque and the *hoseiniyeh*, they also had a means of reaching the most dispossessed within society, regardless of their literacy level.[162] As we will see in Chapter 2, Khomeini would use this entrenched cultural infrastructure to bring forth a view of economic development that was both familiar and novel.

[160] Parts of her work is translated and quoted in Muriel Atkin, "Soviet Attitudes toward Shi'ism and Social Protest," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, eds. Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 281-282.
[161] Ibid., p. 288.
[162] A *hoseiniyeh* is a place of worship which is not officially a mosque but is used for various communal acts of worship, especially mourning ceremonies.

## Chapter 2 – Ayatollah Khomeini's Discreet Economic Radicalism

Maryam Alemzadeh has spoken of the 'long history of informal collective work in Iranian Shia communities' wherein 'neighborhood communities, mosques and informal religious groups' serve 'as non-state, grassroots centers for upholding Shia rituals and addressing community needs.' 'With some modifications,' says Alemzadeh, this brand of social action was deployed during and after the revolution. Khomeini, who rejected 'distinguishing activists based on group membership' and felt that 'operating under specific flags defeated the purpose' of a true Islamic movement, was the best equipped to deploy these.[1] Many thinkers contributed to the discourse against the Shah's developmentalism. However, it was Khomeini who manifested this discourse into a mass movement. Some scholars, most notably Abrahamian, have classified Khomeini as a populist. Abrahamian posits that he used 'populist catchphrases' which were 'vague on specifics'; that through his 'masterful grasp of mass politics' he avoided potential issues of contention and instead emphasised 'issues with mass appeal.'[2] Abrahamian defines Khomeini's movement by its 'ideological adaptability and intellectual flexibility.'[3] Keddie also considers populist to be 'the closest political adjective' to describe him, although she qualifies this by noting the difficulty of locating Khomeini 'on a right-left scale.'[4] Harris observes that 'Khomeini

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[1] Maryam Alemzadeh, "Revolutionaries for Life: The IRGC and the Global Guerrilla Movement," in *Global 1979*, p. 184.
[2] Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 31. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 425.
[3] Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 2. While Abrahamian dubs Khomeini and his lieutenants 'clerical populists' who did not offer much in the way of robust economic theory (Abrahamian, *Radical Islam*, pp. 42-46), he also concedes that the Islamic Republic's constitution 'has far more to say about economic matters than most Western constitutions' (Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, p. 36).
[4] 'On the one hand, he believes in a literalist application of scripture (except when it does not suit him); on the other, he is not only a fierce anti-imperialist, with a particular dislike for the United States and Israel, but also a man with concern for the poverty-stricken, a concern that has been manifested in such programs as free urban housing and state-supplied utilities.' Keddie, "Iranian Revolutions in Comparative Perspective," p. 307.

frequently sided with the populist radicals until his death in 1989.'[5] While any movement that successfully galvanises the masses could be described as populist on some level, by labelling Khomeini a populist we run the risk of overlooking the substance of his ideas and why they appealed to the populace. Ahmad Ashraf, for his part, recognises the anomaly of Khomeini as a member of the religious *ulamā*, likening him and his 'small minority' of revolutionary *ulamā* to 'Lenin's vanguard.'[6] Mehrdad Haghayeghi summarises Khomeini's economic views as, simply: upholding Iran's economic independence while building a substantial welfare state for the poor.[7] This, on the surface, may seem in concordance with the de facto 'socialism with Islamic characteristics' of Gaddafi's Libya.[8] However, Khomeini was – notes Algar – 'profoundly rooted in traditional modes of thoughts' which he so happened to 'put to revolutionary use.'[9]

Many of his views on economics and development contrasted with that of his peers within the *ulamā*. And no one else – within the *ulamā* or otherwise – had a more prominent role in the revolution. Abrahamian says 'Khomeini is to the Islamic revolution what Lenin was to the Bolshevik, Mao to the Chinese, and Castro to the Cuban revolutions,' and attributes his success to leading 'a life as austere as that of a Sufi mystic' while 'most politicians lived in luxury'; that he appeared to his followers as 'incorruptible.'[10] I posit that, in order to more fully understand how this came to be (i.e. how the people flocked to Khomeini more than any other individual), we must assess his view of the Shah's developmentalism.

In this chapter, we will assess the discreet radicalism in the economic views of Khomeini (and his lieutenants), and argue that his opposition to the Shah's developmentalism was at the core of the revolutionary movement. First, we will give an overview of the basic dialectics behind Khomeini's worldview, analyse Khomeini's various positions compared to his peers within the *ulamā* (particularly his positions with respect to land reform), analyse the policies of the Islamic Republic he helped to found, and finally, analyse the complex

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[5] Kevan Harris, "The Rise of the Subcontractor State: Politics of Pseudo-Privatization in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (February 2013), p. 50.
[6] Ahmad Ashraf and Ali Banuazizi, "The State, Classes and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution," *State, Culture, and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Spring 1985), p. 27.
[7] Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Agricultural Development Planning under the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (1990), p. 6.
[8] Indeed, one of the questions foreign journalists asked Khomeini before the revolution was whether he wanted Iran to become another Libya. See Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā ruznāmeh-ye los ānjeles tāimz darbāreh-ye dowlat-e eslāmi," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 5, p. 182.
[9] Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," p. 35.
[10] Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp. 531-532.

relationship between Khomeini and Iran's oldest Communist party. This will build on the analysis of the previous chapter, wherein we identified the roots of the Iranian Revolution in the discontent with conditions in the countryside.

*Khomeini's dialectic*

To understand Khomeini's angle for opposing the Shah's development programme, we must first observe the most important dialectic of Khomeini's mass politics. One of his more common oratory techniques was to invoke a conflict between two antithetical forces. He often declared the Islamic Revolution to be a revolution of 'pure Mohammadan Islam' (represented by his movement) against 'American Islam' (represented by the monarchy): 'You must show how the people rose up against tyranny and oppression, reaction, and conservatism, and upheld pure Mohammadan Islam as a replacement to monarchical Islam, capitalistic Islam, eclectic Islam, and in one word: American Islam.'[11] The most important dialectic in Khomeini's thought was that of *estekbār* vs. *estez'āf*. These words are both derived from the Quran. *Estekbār* is sometimes translated as 'arrogance'; considering oneself to be above all others. However, in its Iranian revolutionary usage, it often seems more closely an approximation of 'imperialism.' *Estez'āf*, conversely, refers to downtrodden ness. The dialectic of *estekbār* vs. *estez'āf* can be more conveniently translated as oppressor vs. oppressed; however, the Quranic roots of these words played an important role in their becoming ubiquitous in Iranian mass politics.

Khomeini defined all historical conflicts in these terms. Of the conflict between the Prophet Mohammad and the Quraysh, he said: 'It was the poor, the downtrodden, the third class who had not even a home; it was these people who the Prophet armed against the Quraysh,' adding that 'Islam and other religions were all galvanic [of social movements];

[11] While he invoked this dialectic frequently, this example is from a letter to Hamid Rouhani, a historian of the Islamic Revolution. Khomeini, "Nāmeh be āghāye seyyed hamid rowhāni," 1989, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, p. 240. He even used this language in the context of elections, saying: 'The valiant people of Iran must, with attentiveness, vote for representatives who are obedient to Islam and loyal to the people; representatives who feel themselves responsible for serving the people, and who have tasted the bitterness of poverty; representatives who are – in their words and deeds – defenders of the Islam of the barefoot, the Islam of the downtrodden, the Islam of the tormented peoples of history, the Islam of the combative and pure-hearted gnostics, and in one word: the pure Mohammadan Islam.' He also said that people must repudiate 'individuals who support a capitalistic Islam, the Islam of the *mostakberin*, the Islam of the opulent and carefree, the Islam of the hypocrites, the Islam of the comfort-seekers, the Islam of the opportunists, and in one word: American Islam.' Khomeini, "Payām be mellat-e irān," 1989, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, p. 11.

they awakened the people.'[12] Islam, he says, 'arose from the heart of the masses and works for their benefit,' and could not have possibly come from the ruling class. 'The Noble Prophet was from the underclass, and he rose up from out of these masses. His companions were, likewise, from the underclass; from the third class.' This is in contrast with 'those who opposed the Prophet,' who came from the ruling class.[13] He declared that the purpose of prophetic missions – in addition to freeing people from their desires – was to 'extricate the people – the downtrodden – from the rule of *estekbār*.'[14] Referencing a verse of Quran, he said: 'I give thanks to the God who said he would make the downtrodden rule over the *mostakberin*, purify the land from the pollution of the *mostakberin*, and make the downtrodden the rulers of the land.[15] Furthermore, he said that 'Islam was sent for the very purpose' of 'giving the downtrodden the governance of the land'; that all prophets in history 'mobilised' the 'needy' in order that they 'put the pillagers in their place and bring about social justice.'[16] More specifically, he rejected the liberal-capitalistic model which the Shah was implementing in Iran, denouncing as 'ignorant' those who suggest that Islamic governance supports 'unbridled capitalism and property,' asserting that their interpretation is born of a 'crooked understanding' which 'conceals the enlightened face of Islam.'[17] Traditional *ulamā* could consider Khomeini's militantly political application of the *estekbār* vs. *estez'āf* dialectic to be a contrivance born of political utility, but for the sake of our discussion, the Quranic purity of this linguistic device is secondary. Rather, we will seek to identify key slogans of Khomeini's discourse which allowed him to compete with (and in some cases, absorb) the Iranian left, and trace the lineage of CJ to this discourse.

*Khomeini and the jurisprudence of land reform*

Within Khomeini was two seemingly contradictory currents: his seniority as a cleric (and one who was loyal to the seminary as an institution), and his radicalism with respect to

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[12] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e nābināyān-e madreseh-ye abā basir-e esfahān," 1979, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 8, pp. 456-457.
[13] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e goruhi az pāsdārān," 1979, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 6, pp. 313-314.
[14] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e mas'ulān-e nezām va aqshār-e mokhtalef-e mardom," 1983, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 17, p. 527.
[15] *Mostakberin* refers to those who embody the characteristic of *estekbār*.
[16] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e a'zā-ye hey'ati az libi," 1979, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 7, p. 117. Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e pāsdārān-e qom va kārmandān-e sherkat-e naft-e ābādān," 1979, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 8, p. 293.
[17] This was expressed in his last will and testament. See Khomeini, "Vasiyatnāmeh-ye siyāsi-elāhi," 1989, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, p. 444.

social and political issues (especially in comparison with some of his peers). Yousefi points to Khomeini's Islam as a 'political Islam'; one which for his zealous followers 'was a new kind of Islam which advocated revolution' and was not necessarily bound to tradition.[18] Ahmad Khomeini – one of his sons (and a prominent seminarian in his own right) once said that his father's greatest achievement was not founding the Islamic Republic but 'that he fought the backward, stupid, pretentious, reactionary clergy.'[19] The radical nature of Khomeini's views can be gleaned by studying both his own speeches and writings as well as those of his closest associates. I have referred to this faction – colloquially referred to as *khatt-e emām* (the Imam's Line) – as simply Khomeini's faction; the ultimate 'victors' of the Iranian Revolution. This is the 'authentically Iranian' movement whose language and slogans were more effective in galvanising the people. I will posit that it was Khomeini's opposition to the Shah's development and land reform programmes which are most illustrative of his radical worldview in comparison with his peers.

One window into this radicalism is Khomeini's view of Ali Shariati. While he is often viewed as having an antagonistic position towards Shariati, there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Khomeini's physician Sadeq Tabatabaei recalls that when some *ulamā* came to Khomeini bemoaning that Shariati considers himself to be 'on the same level as the prophets,' he responded: 'Don't pay heed to such rumours.'[20] Contrary to the *ulamā* who saw Shariati as a deviant, Khomeini – according to Tabatabaei – 'never had this belief.' Tabatabaei recounts: 'I felt that the Imam favoured Dr Shariati somehow.'[21] Khomeini was familiar with Shariati's works, and praised as least one of them: *Niāyesh* (Supplication).[22] At a time when the likes of Shariati had an audience rivalling that of major *ulamā*, Khomeini said he did not object to non-clerics speaking about religious affairs.[23] As discussed in the previous chapter, there were some parallels between the two men with respect to their beliefs on Islamic leadership. Likewise, there is a parallel between the two with respect to their love of dialectics, with Shariati's *Mazhab aleih-e mazhab* (Religion vs. Religion) and *Tashayyo'-e*

[18] Yousefi, "Between Illusion and Aspiration," p. 374.
[19] Quoted in Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 296.
[20] Sadeq Tabatabaei, *Khāterāt-e siyāsi-ejtemā'i-ye doktor sādeq tabātabāyi*, Vol. 1 (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1388), p. 112. According to Tabatabaei's account, he went on to add that Motahhari had similar accusations levied against him by these same *ulamā*.
[21] Ibid., p. 143.
[22] He once said: 'How could someone who has written a book as beautiful as *Niāyesh*, attack *Mafātih*?' Ibid., p. 143.
[23] When asked about this issue, he responded that 'if he is really propagating [religion] effectively, why do the gentlemen (i.e. the *ulamā*) object?' It is unclear who is the 'he' being referred to here is, other than that it was someone preaching religion without clerical robes. Khomeini, "Nāmeh be āghāye seyyed mohammad-rezā sa'idi," 1969, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 2, p. 251.

*alavi, tashayyo'-e safavi* mirroring Khomeini's 'Pure Mohammadan Islam vs. American Islam.' Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi's analysis that 'Khomeini saw similarities between his own and Shariati's revolutionary project' may suffice in explaining why Khomeini did not lend his support to a petition – signed by a decent number of senior *ulamā* – banning their followers from attending Shariati's lectures.[24]

Shariati was not the only point of contention between Khomeini and his peers. Ashraf observes that 'only a limited number' of *ulamā* were 'actively involved' in the revolution; that 'the majority … maintained their conservative stance through the entire revolutionary course, remaining suspicious of radical youth and of Khomeini.'[25] Ghamari-Tabrizi notes that his 'growing revolutionary constituency' in the 1970s were to a large extent 'disconnected from the seminary traditions.'[26] Said Amir Arjomand alludes to Khomeini's background and upbringing as a potential factor contributing to his divergence, attributing his 'courage and unswerving determination in challenging the Shah' to the fact that he 'was an orphan and highly conscious of this fact,' and that this is perhaps what gave him 'the making of a revolutionary transformer of tradition.'[27] It is not without reason that Akhavi describes Khomeini as 'heterodox' within the Shia tradition.[28] Commentators who allude to Shariati's anti-clericalism may be surprised to see some of Khomeini's own statements on *ulamā*. He once said that – in the hands of governments and 'malignant *ākhund*s who are worse than even the tyrants,' the Quran has been used as nothing more than 'a vehicle for establishing tyranny, corruption, and rationalising oppressors'; that such a Quran had no role except for 'in graveyards and the processions of the dead.'[29] One of the recurring themes of his statements against these members of *ulamā* included references to 'court *ākhund*s'; *ulamā* whom Khomeini felt were too apolitical and too accepting of the monarchy (and the status quo as a whole). 'If the Prophet had reached his goals, these court *ākhund*s would not have been around today.'[30] He called for these 'court *ākhund*s' who 'sell the religion' for their

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[24] Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, the People, and the Faqih: On Khomeini's Theory of Sovereignty," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, pp. 226-227.
[25] Ashraf and Banuazizi, "The State, Classes and Modes of Mobilization in the Iranian Revolution," p. 26.
[26] Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, the People, and the Faqih," p. 229.
[27] Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 100.
[28] Akhavi, "Islam, Politics and Society in the Thought of Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Taliqani and Ali Shariati," p. 420.
[29] Khomeini, "Vasiyatnāmeh-ye siyāsi-elāhi," 1989, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, p. 395. Note that when he compares these *ulamā* to tyrants, he uses the word *tāghut*; a Quranic epithet applied to tyrannic powers (which, in Quranic verses, is frequently juxtaposed with God himself).
[30] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e mas'ulān-e nezām," 1985, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 19, p. 437.

personal gain, to be disrobed and 'expelled from the seminaries.'[31] He considered them more dangerous than a military invasion, because 'they are a tribe that – if they are corrupt – will corrupt the entire world.'[32] Thus, his loyalty to the seminary must not be construed as an in-built conservatism or an aversion to criticising elements within it. Ghamari-Tabrizi observes that while 'Khomeini's political philosophy is often understood as an "attempt to create a Shi'a theocracy in which the state is totally subordinated to the clergy and its powers are drastically circumscribed,"' in practice, the Islamic Republic 'expanded the authority of the state to the remotest quarters of the seminaries'; that while Khomeini may have set out to 'sacralize politics,' he ended up 'secularizing Islam.'[33]

Ali Rahnema notes that prior to Khomeini's movement, 'the provision of a systematic and formal religious justification for revolution and rule by an Islamic jurist' was unprecedented.[34] However, his deference to the *ulamā* as an institution would sometimes temper his more radical views in a practical sense. After writing *Velāyat-e faqih va hokumat-e eslāmi* (The Guardianship of the Jurist and Islamic Governance) – the work in which he first outlined his theory of *velāyat-e faqih* – he told Ayatollah Borujerdi (then the most senior cleric in Qom) that 'printing and publishing this depends on your own discretion.'[35] This seeming internal conflict – between his radicalism and his fealty to the *ulamā* – has been noted by scholars. Algar notes that Khomeini's affinity for gnosticism 'modified his loyalty' to an *ulamā* often at odds with gnostic views and practices.[36] Moreover, he was – observes Shaul Bakhash – 'sensitive to criticism, on doctrinal grounds, from his peers, and he was reluctant to see serious division emerge among the senior clerics.'[37]

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[31] Ruhollah Khomeini, *Velāyat-e faqih: hokumat-e eslāmi* (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1394), p. 137.
[32] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e mas'ulin-e nezām-e jomhuri-ye eslāmi," 1984, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 18, p. 503.
[33] Ghamari-Tabrizi, "The Divine, the People, and the Faqih," p. 238.
[34] Ali Rahnema, "Ayatollah Khomeini's Rule of the Guardian Jurist: From Theory to Practice," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, p. 91.
[35] Khomeini, "Nāmeh be āghāye borujerdi," 1973, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 2, p. 511.
[36] Hamid Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1962: The Pre-Revolutionary Years," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, p. 269. While Khomeini's Islam was a militantly political one, he also wrote and spoke extensively on philosophy and Islamic gnosticism. He once said: 'All the disputes between people, between rulers, or between the possessors of power' are rooted in the desires 'within the self.' Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e aqshār-e mokhtalef-e mardom-e tabriz," 1981, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 14, p. 390. He wrote a book entitled *Jahād-e akbar: jahād-e bā nafs* (The Greater Struggle: The Struggle within Oneself). He once stated that pre-Islamic Greek philosophy achieved its full potential through the elucidation of Islamic gnostics. Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e mas'ulān-e nezām," 1983, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 17, pp. 430-431, 433. Moreover, he both recited and composed gnostic Persian poetry. One example of this can be seen in his *Chehel hadis* – a book intended for seminarians – where he cites the poetry of Hafez and Saadi. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Chehel hadis* (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1394), p. 183.
[37] Shaul Bakhash, "Islam and Social Justice in Iran," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer (London: Mansell Publishing, 1987), p. 104.

We can also observe Khomeini's divergence from other *ulamā* in some of his religious edicts, e.g. his endorsement of paying religious dues (*zakāt* and *khums*) to Palestinian resistance organisations, regardless of their ideological affiliations (be they Islamist, Arabist, communist, or nationalist). He said it was 'absolutely proper, even incumbent' for such funds to be allocated to the Palestinian resistance.[38] This principle of this ruling would be seen again when CJ was formed, when he encouraged donating money to CJ in lieu of religious pilgrimage to Mecca.[39] This is consistent with some of his other divergent views, such as when he declared his belief that 'the Iranian nation and its masses of millions, in our current epoch, are superior to the nation of Hijaz in the epoch of the Messenger of God.'[40] Another substantive difference between Khomeini and his peers in his capacity as a religious leader was the manner in which he denounced the Shah's land reform programmes. If we observe the statements and actions of Khomeini and his lieutenants both before and after the revolution, we can reasonably reach the conclusion that Khomeini was in favour of land reform on a theoretical level. Thus, his condemnation of the Shah's land reforms cannot be seen as coming from a conservative perspective (i.e. preserving the existing property relations).

There are numerous accounts of his father Mostafa struggling against 'oppressive landlords.' This may very well have left an impression on a young Khomeini and shaped his future views.[41] His own views on land and landlords were certainly not in concordance with the status quo of monarchical Iran. His view of landlords was generally not a positive one, and this is reflected in his attitudes to Iranian history. He once said that – since the constitutional revolution – the Iranian people were 'suffering at the hands of the khans and the landlords as well as at the hands of the government.'[42] On another occasion, he declared that under Ahmad Shah, real power was in the hands of 'khans and landlords.'[43] Once, he suggested that landlords were affecting the outcomes of elections; that 'the landlords and their thugs would bring people to the ballot boxes and force them to vote the way they wanted.'[44] Khomeini also opposed the notion that *ulamā* had a self-interest in opposing land reforms (due to the land endowments that were a source of funding for the seminaries),

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[38] He mentions this directly in a 1968 interview. See Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā nemāyandeh-ye al-fath," 1968, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 2, p. 199. Dabashi discusses this in Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 433.
[39] "Emām e'lām-e jahād kard," *Keyhān*, 27 Khordad 1358.
[40] Khomeini, "Vasiyatnāmeh-ye siyāsi-elāhi," 1989, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, p. 410.
[41] This is discussed in Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1962," pp. 265-266.
[42] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e farmāndārān darbāreh-ye vizhegi-hā-ye sarān-e hokumat-e eslāmi," 1979, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 9, p. 124.
[43] Khomeini, "Payām-e rādio-televizioni be mellat-e irān," 1980, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 12, p. 180.
[44] Quoted in Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902-1962," pp. 266.

insisting that 'anyone familiar with the living conditions of the clergy knows very well that the clergy do not own and have never owned lands.'[45]

In 1962, before land reform became official policy, Khomeini bemoaned that then Prime Minister Asadollah Alam considered *ulamā* to be 'obstacles' to land reform, stating that 'if he means the clergymen and *ākhund*s, they are the supporters of the reforms,' adding that 'if the government builds factories … promotes the modernisation of agriculture, or commits itself to developing industry, medication and health,' the *ulamā* would support them.[46] While this was not necessarily reflective of many within the *ulamā* (who opposed land reform outright, arguing that it was at odds with Islamic jurisprudence), Khomeini's more permissive attitudes toward land reform in principle was one shared by his closest comrades within the seminary.

Even before land reform had become official policy, he established that he did not disagree with it on a theoretical basis. He did not criticise land reforms until after they were implemented, and these criticisms were directed at the manner in which they were implemented. In 1977, he said: 'Indeed, this is what they mean by "land reform": opening up the domestic market for use by foreign countries.'[47] He also condemned them from a national perspective, bemoaning that 'the result of the Shah's so-called land reforms' has been that 'Iran imports 93 percent of its food products.'[48] While in exile, when asked questions about land reform, he emphasised that 'the Shah's land reforms were specifically meant to create a market for foreign countries, and specifically America,' but clarified that 'the land reforms we seek will enable the farmer to enjoy the fruit of his labour while penalising the landlords who have acted against Islamic laws.'[49] Khomeini saw both the Shah's land reform and his

[45] Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā nashriyeh-ye al-beyraq," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 4, p. 482. On another occasion, he clarified that he was referring to members of the clergy who oppose the Shah. See Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā kerk keroft darbāreh-ye eslām," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 5, p. 296.
[46] Khomeini, "Bayānāt dar didār-e ro'asā-ye shahrbāni va sāvāk-e qom," 1962, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 1, p. 122.
[47] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e rowhāniyun darbāreh-ye qodrat-e rowhāniyat va khadamāt-e olamā-ye shi'eh," 1977, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 3, p. 250. He would later clarify that by 'foreign countries,' he was referring primarily to the United States. See Khomeini, "Nāmeh-ye tashakkor be āghāye yāser arafāt va bayān-e jenāyāt-e este'mār va shāh," 1977, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 3, p. 255.
[48] This statistic – which Khomeini cited from the Prime Minister of the time (Jamshid Amuzegar) – was for the years 1976-78. Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā lusien zhorzh darbāreh-ye masā'el-e siyāsi va ejtemā'i-ye irān," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 3, p. 368. He would end up citing it on more than one occasion. See Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā nashriyeh-ye unitā darbāreh-ye eslām va modernizeh kardan-e irān," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 5, p. 231, and Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā khabargozāri-ye vafā darbāreh-ye eslāmi budan-e nehzat va tashkil-e esrā'il," p. 239.
[49] Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā lusien zhorzh darbāreh-ye masā'el-e siyāsi va ejtemā'i-ye irān," p. 369.

industrialisation programmes as having 'taken the majority of the impoverished and the deprived peoples and put them at the service of a gang of capitalist aggressors.'[50]

This conditionally statist (conditional upon who possesses the organs of the state) attitude toward agrarian policy was further cemented in a sermon where he ruled that 'the guardian of the affairs' is permitted to 'appropriate' property from an individual, 'even if their property is [jurisprudentially] legitimate,' so long as this appropriation is to the benefit of the masses.[51] Note that this was a religious edict; Khomeini was clarifying his ruling on this issue in his capacity as an Islamic jurist. After the revolution, when asked if his newly formed state would return the lands confiscated under the previous regime's land reform, he said: 'Not necessarily,' because those lands belonged to 'those same landlords' who 'hoarded' wealth for years and did not follow Islamic ordinances; that they held the wealth which 'was the right of society.'[52] Sometimes, he went even further, saying unequivocally: 'No, the lands will not be returned to the landlords. Throughout history, landlords have not paid Islamic taxes. Thus, all their lands will be appropriated by the state.'[53] This view of property was reflected in the doctrinal works of one of his most prominent lieutenants, Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti. Beheshti wrote that all of what we consider property – to include all natural resources – 'belong, principally, to God.' Natural wealth, therefore, is not such that 'someone can claim it to be their own property and for others to be deprived of it… No, it belongs to God and is for everyone.'[54] Beheshti even suggests that the proportion of the work force 'in the space between production and consumption must be kept to the bare minimum.'[55] These principles were not controversial in and of themselves. However, there were specific practical applications of said principles where Beheshti's view contrasted with that of more conservative *ulamā*.

This was reflected in the post-revolutionary land reform bill, written by three of Khomeini's closest comrades. This circle saw themselves as devotees rather than theorists in their own right; however, they wrote and spoke far more than Khomeini on the specifics of an

[50] Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā majalleh-ye haftegi-ye āmesterdām niuruv-e holand darbāreh-ye hokumat-e eslāmi," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 4, p. 414.
[51] Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e dāneshjuyān-e esfahān," 1979, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 10, p. 481.
[52] Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā lusien zhorzh darbāreh-ye masā'el-e siyāsi va ejtemā'i-ye irān," pp. 369-370.
[53] Khomeini, "Mosāhebeh bā ruznāmeh-negārān darbāreh-ye hāl va āyandeh-ye irān," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 5, p. 142.
[54] Mohammad Beheshti, Mohammad Javad Bahonar, and Ali Golzadeh Ghafouri, *Shenākht-e eslām* (Tehran: Rowzaneh, 1390), p. 408. Beheshti also writes that 'absolute property' – that which belongs to its owner 'without any limitation' – is 'unique to God.' Ibid., pp. 515-516.
[55] Mohammad Beheshti, "Mālekiyat, sarmāyeh va hall-e mas'aleh-ye estesmār," *Jahād*, No. 36 (2 Mordad 1361): p. 35.

Islamic conception of development, and as such are invaluable resources in understanding this faction's worldview with respect to development. The controversial D clause of the land reform bill stated that in areas where arable land was scarce, landlords were given a chance to volunteer to distribute their surplus land among landless peasants. If they did not comply, the state had the legal right to appropriate and distribute the land itself.[56] Although Khomeini's inner circle was campaigning fervently for this programme, many within the *ulamā* called for its suspension on the basis of its purported incompatibility with Islamic jurisprudence. Ultimately, land reform under the Islamic Republic would end up being rolled back significantly, as the D clause of this bill would be suspended in November 1980, leaving a far less radical programme for agrarian reform. Beheshti lamented that 'the understanding of Islam' of conservative *ulamā* 'does not sufficiently accord with the understanding of Islam that is the basis of our revolution.'[57] Ayatollah Abdol-Hossein Dastgheib, a well-known cleric and Khomeini's representative in Shiraz, lamented:

> A conspiracy is about to happen. Some elements under the guise of Islam, in cooperation with the feudals [feudal lords] and the khans, are acting in the direction of weakening bases of the Islamic Revolution. The silence of the Revolutionary Council is by no means justifiable. The people must be much more alert, and should not allow the large landowners to infiltrate the revolutionary institutions and, under the cover of religion, stop the seizure of their lands.[58]

Algar attributes the suspension of the D clause to Khomeini's 'desire, wherever possible, to maintain consensus – or at least the appearance of it – in the religious establishment.'[59] Mansoor Moaddel suggests that Khomeini's hand was forced, as landlords and conservative *ulamā* 'petitioned Ayatollah Khomeini, and filed many complaints in courts against these [land reform] committees.' Some landlords 'went so far as to send threatening telegrams to the office of Ayatollah Khomeini,' as well as secure religious rulings from other *ulamā* against land reform.[60] Ultimately, by then, the war had started and Khomeini chose to emphasise national unity, declaring that 'sowing disunity will lead to rule by foreigners' and that foreign powers were working to undermine the revolution which belonged to 'everyone;

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[56] This is discussed extensively in Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Agrarian Reform Problems in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (January 1990), pp. 38-39. The land reform bill is quoted almost verbatim in "Joz'iyāt-e taqsim-e arāzi dar irān e'lām shod," *Keyhān*, 11 Esfand 1358.

[57] Quoted in Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," p. 43.

[58] Quoted in Mansoor Moaddel, "Class Struggle in Post-Revolutionary Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (1991), p. 322.

[59] Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," p. 44.

[60] Moaddel, "Class Struggle in Post-Revolutionary Iran," p. 326.

the farmer and worker and downtrodden classes in particular.'[61] The war did not halt economic radicalism; however, it did re-centre the focus of economic policies. The focus of the 'war economy plan' was 'overcoming American economic sanctions against Iran'; in other words, the foreign enemy rather than the domestic.[62] The war provided Khomeini the perfect out to a divisive issue. However, his views on this issue are more clear when looking at the context behind the suspension of the D clause.

Alexander Knysh observes that 'in principle, Khomeini was ready to accept non-Islamic theories provided they were sanctioned by the tradition within the contours of which his thought operated.'[63] Knysh's analysis could also inform Khomeini's delicate relationship with conservative *ulamā*. Because Khomeini was walking a thin line between iconoclast and traditionalist, some insight can be gained into his views by looking at that of his closest comrades. Beheshti – who, before his assassination, was the most likely successor to Khomeini – was less bound by the stringent etiquettes of the senior *ulamā*, and thus expressed himself more directly on matters pertaining to land reform and property. On the revolution as a whole, he declared that 'the line of the revolution is anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and anti-feudalism.'[64] His views were published incessantly by CJ's official periodical and can offer us insight into the views of Khomeini which he was less open to expressing.

Beheshti suggests that Islamically, no one has the right to 'excessive' profit, suggesting: 'In my view, whatever is beautiful or ugly about economic systems boils down to the mechanisms for attaining the most just rate' (by which he means rates of pay, prices of goods, and so on). He suggests that an economic system must seek 'an absolutely just rate which till today has not manifested itself in human society; neither under Marxist systems, nor under capitalist systems, nor under Islam.'[65] He elaborates on this 'just rate' further, noting that there is nothing inherently wrong with profit 'within reason,' but puts forward a rather limited definition of that which is within reason. Profit – up to a certain threshold – should not be considered profit but rather 'rightful remuneration.' However, anything more than that – according to Beheshti – has 'no logical basis' in the Islamic conception of

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[61] "Emām: ijād-e ekhtelāf mowjeb-e solteh-ye khāreji khāhad shod," *Keyhān*, 25 Farvardin 1360.
[62] "Barnāmeh-ye eqtesādi-ye jangi-ye dowlat e'lām shod," *Keyhān*, 26 Farvardin 1359. However, as we will see in the final chapter, domestic and foreign enemies were perceived as going hand in hand.
[63] Alexander Knysh, "Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Autumn 1992), p. 639.
[64] Quoted in Moaddel, "Class Struggle in Post-Revolutionary Iran," p. 321.
[65] Mohammad Beheshti, "Mabhas-e sarmāyeh: gardesh-e sud dar jāme'eh," *Jahād*, No. 33 (5 Khordad 1361), p. 40.

property. The manner in which he defines rightful remuneration can only be described as revenue sharing: 'If the businessman [with 100 workers in his employ] makes a 20 thousand toman profit from a one million toman investment, 200 tomans is his rightful remuneration, while [the extra] 19,800 tomans are a type of indirect plundering of the workers.'[66] He also advocated for a price cartel; that the state, 'in order to combat exploitation,' must 'oversee everywhere' to ensure that 'just rates' are being charged for goods.[67] Thus, while there was much opposition (among *ulamā* and others) to the Shah's upsetting the economic order in the countryside, the Islamic Republic would establish a nanny state that far surpassed that of the Shah. And it did so within a theoretical framework and religious justification established by Khomeini and his inner circle.

Beheshti also wrote extensively on cooperatives, conceding that while they have not been mentioned in any Islamic texts (in the sense that they were understood in the 20th century), there is a need to 'innovate based on *ijtihād*,' taking into consideration 'the conditions of the time' in order to reach a conclusion about the place of cooperatives in an Islamic economy.[68] He then identifies the necessary characteristics of a cooperative, making sure to note that 'if there are workers who do not possess capital even as they are working, this cannot be called a cooperative,' and that 'principally, in a cooperative, there must be no vestige of the separation between labour and capital.'[69] While land reform was derailed, the Islamic Republic did manage to utilise the cooperative to some effect, with their purpose being to 'minimise the disadvantages of small subsistence units without eliminating private landownership.' Each cooperative had at least five members (functioning like a council), with their holdings ranging from 20 to 60 hectares.[70] Mo Moulton notes that cooperatives have often been used as 'part of a broader interest in using communities … as vehicles for

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[66] Mohammad Beheshti, "Āyā sarmāyeh mostaqelan sud-āvar ast?" *Jahād*, No. 32 (22 Ordibehesht 1361), p. 31.
[67] Mohammad Beheshti, "Mabhas-e sarmāyeh: ejāreh, mozāre'eh, mosāqāt va hall-e mas'aleh-ye estesmār," *Jahād*, No. 34 (22 Khordad 1361), p. 33.
[68] *Ijtihād* is the Islamic practice of deriving jurisprudential rulings based on four sources: Quran, *ahādith*, consensus, and reason. Beheshti's statements can be found in "Naqsh-e ta'āvoni dar mahv-e estesmār," *Jahād*, No. 40 (Mehr 1361) p. 57. For what it's worth, the Islamic Republic invested considerably more resources into the cooperative sector than the previous regime. See Haghayeghi, "Agricultural Development Planning under the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 29. Shakoori analyses the *moshā* cooperative system implemented in the 1980s, which Iranian revolutionaries championed as being both just and as having traditional and indigenous roots. See Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, pp. 92-94.
[69] "Ta'āvoni-hā pāyān-e jodāyi-ye kār az sarmāyeh ast," *Jahād*, No. 41 (2 Aban 1361), p. 37.
[70] Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, pp. 92-93.

remaking societies, particularly in colonial or postcolonial settings.'[71] These were put to use in Iran, particularly in cases where more radical methods were met with violent opposition.

On property, Beheshti says that just as God's creation belongs to him and him alone, a person is 'the owner of his labour and likewise, of the fruits of his labour'; albeit making sure to clarify that this is only true in the context of social relations, as the 'absolute ownership' of all things is still exclusive to God.[72] Thus, in the temporal sense, 'human beings are the owner of their own labour,' and 'human ownership [over something] is in accordance to their labour.' He then rationalises the idea of collective property using a narration from the Prophet, saying: 'It is narrated that Muslims have shared ownership of water, fuel, and pasture,' and that 'no one can claim that he [alone] owns these.'[73] Beheshti established an Islamic theoretical framework for debates on land reform and economic development; a framework which CJ was then more than willing to proliferate and implement.

When CJ interviewed then president (and now leader) Ali Khamenei on the third anniversary of the revolution (in 1982) and asked to what extent 'social justice' has been established, he alluded to land hoarding that occurred under the previous regime by those with government ties, and that those who had hoarded property are now 'either in exile, or were executed and their property seized'; that under the Islamic Republic 'you don't see multi-hundred hectare plots of land belonging to one person.' He also claimed that 'the downtrodden have come to power' in post-revolutionary Iran (and that the duty of the Islamic Revolution was indeed to 'help the downtrodden of the world to attain power within their countries'; that 'the efforts that have been made in the last three or so years has been in the service of alleviating the poverty of the downtrodden and deprived; more so than in the preceding twenty years.'[74]

It is also worth taking a cursory look at those who were not particularly close to Khomeini but fancied themselves his devotees. Take, for example, one of the more extremist of the Islamic revolutionary factions: the *Fadā'iyān-e eslām*. The *Fadā'iyān* were most

[71] Mo Moulton, "Co-opting the cooperative movement? Development, decolonization, and the power of expertise at the Co-operative College, 1920s-1960s," *Journal of Global History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (November 2022), p. 422.
[72] Mohammad Beheshti, "Mansha'-e mālekiyat kār-e movalled ast," *Jahād*, No. 25 (16 Dey 1360), p. 45. Beheshti was partial to collective ownership, telling workers: 'Today, all factories and workplaces belong, in the first place, to you.' Quoted in Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," p. 49.
[73] Mohammad Beheshti, "Āyā kār-e khadamāti mansha'-e mālekiyat ast?" *Jahād*, No. 27 (22 Bahman 1360), pp. 82-83.
[74] "Tadāvom-e enqelāb dar in ast ke enqelāb bā harekat-e enqelābi bāqi bemānad," *Jahād*, No. 27 (22 Bahman 1360), pp. 26-27.

known for their assassination attempts on high level officials of the monarchy. However, they were also radical with respects to economics. Their proposed economic programme included: the construction of public housing, re-appropriation of land resources, universal free health care, and so on.[75] After the revolution, we also see the likes of Sadeq Khalkhali, chief judge of the revolutionary courts. While he is best known for his summary executions of people deemed to be counter-revolutionaries, he not only fervently defended land reform but advocated for a redistribution of urban housing; referring to large land owners as 'feudalists.'[76] Neither Khalkhali, nor the *Fadā'iyān*, were close to Khomeini in the way that Beheshti was. However, their views on land reform are indicative of the direction that the wider radical Islamic discourse had taken.[77] While land appropriation was met with its fair share of opponents among conservative *ulamā*, the pro-Khomeini factions – almost without exception – supported them on a theoretical and practical level.

*Policy of nascent Islamic Republic*

While it would be reductive to equate the Islamic Republic to only Khomeini, his lieutenants, and parastatal organisations like CJ, these were the most influential forces during the nascent state's formative years.[78] Nonetheless, a cursory look into the state policies of the early Islamic Republic is beneficial in showing the context in which CJ was able to emerge. The early Islamic Republic was, generally speaking, both a welfare state and a nanny state. Lob notes that the Islamic Republic, 'like other revolutionary states,' prioritised 'improving national literacy,' and that it has 'dedicated substantial resources' toward 'improving development and eradicating poverty in rural and peripheral regions'; that Iran 'has, in many respects, excelled as a developmental state' with its 'healthy GINI co-efficient and high

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[75] This is discussed in Algar, "Social Justice in the Ideology and Legislation of the Islamic Revolution of Iran," pp. 24-25.

[76] See "Taqsim-e zamin-hā-ye keshāvarzi va shahri-ye fe'udāl-hā āghāz shod," *Keyhān*, 28 Bahman 1358, and "Agar fe'udāl-hā moqāvemat konand sarkub mishavand," *Keyhān*, 29 Bahman 1358.

[77] It may also be worth observing some semi-official publications after the revolution, like *Ettehād-e Javān*, which suggested that 'the existence of private schools conflicts with the Islamic spirit of equality,' and called for the 'dissolution' of such schools nationwide. See *Ettehād-e Javān*, No. 7 (23 Mordad 1358), p. 43. The same publication supported the nascent government's nationalisation efforts and argues that the appropriation of the property of capitalists is a 'revolutionary action.' See Hamid Arbab, "Kāpitālism yā 'nezām-e mozd-begiri," in *Ettehād-e Javān*, No. 7, p. 25.

[78] Harris has an alternative position; positing that while 'Khomeini held forth on the just order and egalitarian society to be produced by a revolutionary state,' he 'did not elaborate this social order in much detail,' leaving officials to advance their own competing visions. Harris, *A Social Revolution*, p. 80. However, while Khomeini himself was not a theoretician in economics, his inner circle were not strangers to this discourse, and their views held major sway in policy-making.

human development rates – especially in the areas of health and education.'[79] Shakoori notes that 'agricultural policy,' specifically, 'underwent a considerable change after the revolution,' citing the mobilisation of CJ as one of these changes.[80] Harris points to the war as a catalyst – rather than an impediment – to the Iranian welfare state, noting: 'To survive war and achieve development without foreign assistance, the Islamic Republic's project of state building became necessarily intertwined with a welfare-building project.'[81] Bayat notes the paradigm shift that came with the revolution; that 'it was not until after the Islamic Revolution that the poor were granted an element of agency,' in particular when the term *mostaz'afin* 'began to dominate the public language.'[82] Thus, the Islamic Republic was – and, to a lesser extent, still is – a welfare state; what Harris dubs a 'martyrs' welfare state.'[83]

One important characteristic of the Islamic Republic's formative years was its internationalism; an internationalism which would certainly not be lost on CJ (which was active not only within Iran but also in Lebanon, Ghana, Tanzania, and other countries). Ali Mirsepassi argues that 'there is no question that the Iranian Revolution was a transnational revolution.'[84] The newly-formed Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) was emblematic of this.[85] Alemzadeh observes that 'the IRGC was much more entangled with global, mostly leftist, armed movements than is imaginable today,' and that many revolutionary guards 'had lived, trained, and fought alongside revolutionaries of diverse national origins.' IRGC, says Alemzadeh, was 'aspiring to reach the [MEK]'s level of influence, and shared the global dream of liberating all the wretched of the world.'[86] While, in the years since, the IRGC's influence as a military force has mostly remained limited to the Islamic world, its economic arms now stretch as far as Latin America, with its engineers recently having been deployed to construct rail infrastructure in Venezuela.[87] CJ was, in a manner of speaking, a civic version of the IRGC, and shared its revolutionary and

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[79] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, pp. 106-107. Eric Lob and Nader Habibi, "The Politics of Development and Security in Iran's Border Provinces," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (July 2019), pp. 263-264. Lob, "An institutional history of the Iranian Construction Jihad," p. 116.
[80] Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 95.
[81] Harris, *A Social Revolution*, p. 14.
[82] Bayat, *Street Politics*, p. 33.
[83] Harris, *A Social Revolution*, p. 15.
[84] Ali Mirsepassi, "A Quiet Revolution: In the Shadow of the Cold War," in *Global 1979*, p. 22.
[85] In Persian: *Sepāh-e pāsdārān-e enqelāb-e eslāmi*.
[86] Alemzadeh, "Revolutionaries for Life," p. 207.
[87] "Qarārgāh-e khātamol anbiyā vāred-e porozheh-ye sākht-e metro dar kārākās va porozheh-ye nafti-ye venezuelā shod," *Iranian Labour News Agency*, 22 Azar 1401.

internationalist ethos.[88] It also shared its unconventional approach to chain of command.[89] Khomeini's representative in CJ – Abdolla Nouri – had a particularly ambitious internationalism, having claimed that 'free-thinking people' in countries he had visited viewed Khomeini as a 'liberator.'[90]

Early economic policies are also an important indicator. Kaveh Ehsani classifies the Islamic Republic as a 'developmental regime,' and that its development was 'populist, distributive, and statist.'[91] There was, of course, the aforementioned land reform, whereby 'large lands held by large land owners' were redistributed, with large lands defined as plots 'three times as large as what is needed for one person, as per regional norms.'[92] The Islamic Revolutionary Foundation for Providing Housing – founded by Khomeini himself – began implementing its policy of providing cheap and free housing to those in need.[93] In autumn of 1979, the housing ministry ordered 90 thousand empty homes in Tehran to be distributed among the 'downtrodden.'[94] Khosrowshahi, chairman of the board of trustees of the Housing Foundation, encouraged 'those who do not have much money to purchase a home' to not buy homes, as they will be provided for them.[95] It was not until over two years after the revolution that buying and selling of homes was permitted, and even then it could be done so only under the oversight of the government.[96] The Revolutionary Council nationalised lots of things, including properties of 230 of the richest capitalists (accounting for 80 percent of all private industry).[97] Programmes for full employment were implemented shortly after the new

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[88] It should be noted that the IRGC itself – along with Basij – each established their own cooperative foundations (the former in the early 80s, the latter in the 90s). See Hesam Forozan, *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran: The evolution and roles of the Revolutionary Guards* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 76.

[89] Regarding the IRGC's chain of command, one army officer noted of an IRGC battalion: 'It was just a battalion in size; it entailed neither a clear chain of commands, nor the specialised forces that the army arranges in a battalion.' Quoted in Maryam Alemzadeh, "The attraction of direct action: the making of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in the Iranian Kurdish conflict," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 21 October 2021, p. 18. Despite growing in size (enough to become an army in its own right), in the war years the IRGC had neither formal rankings nor officer's uniforms.

[90] In a trip to Greece and Spain, Nouri observed that 'most of the Greek intellectuals [I met with] were gleeful at the fact that American interests were being harmed by the Imam.' "Adam-e ensejām va hamāhangi, bozorgtarin za'f-e mā dar tablighāt-e berun-marzist," *Jahād*, No. 29 (26 Esfand 1360) p. 21. While Nouri would later become a cabinet member under Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, whose presidency (1989-97) was characterised by economic liberalisation, during Khomeini's life he – at least ostensibly – towed the 'Imam's Line.'

[91] Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran," p. 91.

[92] "Joz'iyāt-e taqsim-e arāzi dar irān e'lām shod," *Keyhān*, 11 Esfand 1358.

[93] "Sharāyet-e dādan-e khāneh-hā-ye arzān-qeymat be mostamandān e'lām shod," *Keyhān*, 8 Ordibehesht 1358.

[94] "90 hezār khāneh-ye khāli-ye tehrān benaf'-e mostaz'afin zabt mishavad," *Keyhān*, 20 Mordad 1358. "Khāneh-hā-ye khāli bā yek tarh-e enqelābi be mardom vāgozar mishavad," *Keyhān*, 16 Mehr 1358.

[95] "Khāneh nakharid, hameh rā sāheb-khāneh mikonim," *Keyhān*, 21 Azar 1358.

[96] "Kharid va forush-e khāneh bā nezārat-e dowlat āzād shod," *Keyhān*, 25 Khordad 1360.

[97] This is discussed in Moaddel, "Class Struggle in Post-Revolutionary Iran," p. 324.

constitution was ratified.[98] Workers' wages were increased.[99] Even after the breakout of war, polices such as national unemployment insurance were implemented.[100] It is not without reason that Behdad views the Iranian brand of Islamic economics as 'more radical' than that of other Islamic countries.[101] This is also why the bazaari class, when expressing opposition to the Islamic Republic, 'specifically targeted the regime's command economic policies,' notes Benjamin Smith.[102] This broadly radical environment allowed an organisation like CJ to emerge.

*Tudeh following the 'Imam's Line'*

As discussed in Chapter 1, the rise to prominence of the Islamic movement caused the communist movement to take a backseat in the revolutionary struggle. Nonetheless, some within Iranian communist circles had sympathy for the Islamic Republic and for Khomeini personally. The welfare state and the impetus for land reform contributed to this. Friedman notes that this context 'ultimately facilitated the alliance of the oddest of bedfellows in Iran,' with Tudeh's support for the nascent Islamic Republic 'helping to produce one of the strangest outcomes of the Cold War: an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, modernizing theocracy in the Islamic Republic of Iran.'[103] Therefore, it is relevant to analyse the behaviour of Tudeh towards the nascent Islamic Republic and Khomeini.[104]

Shortly after the revolution, various parties of varying ideologies decided to unite under the Islamic Republic's banner, ostensibly as a stand 'against imperialism.'[105] This included Tudeh. Friedman has written extensively on Tudeh's stances and activities during this period, particularly on the manner in which they framed Iranian affairs to their handlers in East Berlin and Moscow. He writes that both Tudeh themselves and their 'patrons in East Berlin and Moscow' viewed the Iranian *ulamā* as a 'progressive force, and consequently a

[98] "Tarh-e eshteghāl-e kolliyeh-ye bikārān-e keshvar tasvib shod," *Keyhān*, 20 Azar 1358.
[99] "Dastur-e emām barāye afzāyesh-e dastmozd-e kārgarān," *Keyhān*, 28 Esfand 1357.
[100] "Tarh-e bimeh-ye bikāri-ye kārgarān-e sarāsar-e keshvar tahiyeh shod," *Keyhān*, 25 Tir 1360.
[101] Behdad, "A Disputed Utopia," p. 776.
[102] Benjamin Smith, "Collective Action with and without Islam: Mobilizing the Bazaar in Iran," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 198.
[103] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 13.
[104] Ramin Mazaheri – a socialist by confession and Press TV's Paris correspondent – goes so far as to say that Tudeh 'absolutely deserved to lose' to Khomeini's faction, 'despite the many decades of efforts' of his family members who were active within the party. Ramin Mazaheri, *Socialism's Ignored Success: Iranian Islamic Socialism* (Jakarta: Badak Merah, 2020), pp. 21-22. Thus, the intersection between the Islamic Republic and the far left is not entirely dead.
[105] "Ahzāb va goruh-hā dar mobārezeh bā ampariālism mottahed mishavand?" *Keyhān*, 24 Farvardin 1359.

natural ally of the party at this stage of the revolution.' Tudeh assured the East Germans in 1979 that the *ulamā*'s 'demands for struggle against the monarchy and foreign paternalism' and their desire for 'the fulfilment of the social demands of the broad popular masses' gave them 'a progressive character' in the context of the Iranian political situation of the time.[106] Friedman notes that for Noureddin Kianouri (then general secretary of Tudeh), 'the embassy seizure not only reconfirmed the anti-imperialist (and, specifically, anti-American) direction of the revolution,' but that 'the defeat of the bourgeoisie opened new horizons for socioeconomic transformation, signalling a new stage of revolution.' Tudeh was – as Randjbar-Daemi describes – 'generally satisfied' with the early draft of the Islamic Republic's constitution, and thought it was 'reflective of the demands and needs of the Iranian people.'[107] Kianouri saw Khomeini and his comrades 'as representing the "progressive" elements of the revolution, comparing them to the Narodniki, the Russian Populist revolutionaries of the 1870s.'[108] Kianouri presented Khomeini in such a light to Moscow and East Berlin, even while his (and his party's) stance towards the *ulamā* as an institution was sometimes tepid and sometimes antipathetic.

While Tudeh's alignment with the Islamic Republic may not have been strange in and of itself, Kianouri's seeming personal fealty to Khomeini was more curious. Friedman notes that Kianouri 'evaluated the revolutionary standing of various political actors in Iran not on specific policies but on the basis of their perceived loyalty to Khomeini.'[109] Kianouri supported the revolutionary tribunals, declaring in May 1979: 'The progressive forces support therefore all measures of Khomeini and the "Revolutionary Tribunals" that serve to smash the old state and repression apparatus.'[110] In November 1980, Kianouri even invoked the decidedly non-Marxist rhetoric of the *mostakberin* / *mostaz'afin* dialectic that was such a pillar of Khomeini's rhetoric.[111] When Bani-Sadr was ousted as president, Kianouri hoped that the next president would be unquestioningly loyal to 'the Imam's Line' (another rhetorical device that Tudeh had borrowed from the Islamic movement).[112] Tudeh's stances were not entirely divorced from that of their handlers. Mikhail Kriutikhin, TASS (main

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[106] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 234. However, it should also be noted that the East German embassy declared that 'the utopian conceptions of Khomeini of an exploitation-free society on the basis of Islam do not represent a viable model for society in Iran in the twentieth century.' Quoted in Ibid., p. 211.
[107] Siavush Randjbar-Daemi, "Building the Islamic State: The Draft Constitution of 1979 Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (July 2013), p. 657.
[108] Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution*, p. 248.
[109] Ibid., p. 251.
[110] Quoted in Ibid., p. 238.
[111] This is discussed in Ibid., p. 255.
[112] See Ibid., p. 256.

Soviet news agency) correspondent in Tehran, endorsed Tudeh's support of Khomeini, arguing that he was aiming 'to make the transitional period as short as possible to prevent the counter-revolutionaries from closing their ranks and endangering the people's achievements and plans.'[113] Soviet observer Leonid Medvedko wrote in *New Times* in September 1979 arguing that the Islamic Revolution was against capitalism and that anti-capitalism was especially compatible with Shiism, which came into existence as a religion of the weak and oppressed.[114] Thus, the initial Soviet stance toward Khomeini and his Islamic Republic was cautiously optimistic. For his part, Khomeini was cognizant of the eclectic nature of the movements that supported him, and called on students to not denounce those who had materialist-leaning interpretations of Islam, because Islam – in his words – calls for class balance.[115] Thus, while Khomeini may not have been a communist – and indeed was critical of it both as a worldview and as a vehicle for advancing pro-Soviet policies in his country, he was not necessarily hostile toward every individual communist in Iran, and in some cases saw them as potential recruits into the Islamic movement.

One decisive factor in the Iranian left's support for Khomeini was his uncompromising anti-Americanism. While one of his slogans was 'Neither East, nor West,' his words and actions betrayed a more serious enmity directed toward the West. Despite Khomeini once saying, 'If they wish to live a dignified life, the downtrodden peoples of the world must join hands and limit the powers of those in power who have the right of veto' (referring to both the United States and the USSR), in practice (and even in theory), he always considered the United States to be Iran's primary enemy. At a time when the Islamic Republic had severed ties with the US, its officials held meetings with the USSR to discuss Afghanistan.[116] After the 7th of Tir terror attacks, the newspaper *Keyhān* asserted: 'The hands of America detonated this bomb and has martyred tens of the Imam's comrades.'[117] These attacks were carried out by MEK, who despite their leftist views were thought to be American-backed. CJ itself contributed to this line of thinking, with Abdolla Nouri declaring: 'We are delighted that the [Western] mass media speak against us, as this is an indication that

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[113] Quoted in Ibid., p. 239.
[114] See Ibid., p. 243.
[115] See Behdad, "A Disputed Utopia," p. 806. Initially, he had also announced that Marxists are free to propagate their ideology. "Mārksist-hā dar ebrāz-e aqideh āzādand," *Keyhān*, 26 Dey 1357.
[116] Ruhollah Khomeini, "Fa'āliyat-hā-ye jahād-e sāzandegi ensān rā besiār delkhosh mikonad," *Jahād*, No. 27 (22 Bahman 1360), p. 5. "Irān va showravi barāye hall-e bohrān-e afghānestān tavāfoq kardand," *Keyhān*, 9 Farvardin 1359.
[117] "Ayādi-ye āmrikā bā enfejār-e bomb dah-hā hamrazm-e emām, vazir va nemāyandeh-ye majles rā shahid kardand," *Keyhān*, 8 Tir 1360.

the Islamic Revolution is one hundred percent opposed to America.'[118] No matter what challenges and crises the Islamic Republic faced, the accusatory finger was always pointed squarely at the United States. Even in the midst of the war (wherein Iraq had the support of both the US and the USSR), *Keyhān* boasted of the 'historical defeat of the Great Satan' at the hands of the Islamic Revolution; viewing the war as a conflict with the United States.[119] Later, during the Islamic Republic's crackdown on leftist groups, Khomeini accused them of being tools of America: 'They say that they support the people. Is America the Iranian people?!'[120] And while the Islamic Republic was non-aligned, it at least retained a functional relationship with the USSR. While all pre-existing agreements with the US were voided in 1979, an economic agreement was signed with USSR just a year later.[121] This agreement involved the implementation of 142 public works projects, with the aim of 'raising production and employment rates.' The Iranian ambassador in Moscow called it 'an effective step towards expanding peaceful relations' between the two countries, while also emphasising that this agreement was one of equal partners; that 'after the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran,' any pre-existing agreement with foreign governments which had made Iran 'dependant' on them, were voided. While the very idea of relations with the United States was perceived as potentially deadly, relations with the Soviet Union were normal, if tepid. Relations with the People's Republic of China were even warmer.[122]

Anti-Americanism was – and still is – a key component of the Islamic Republic's identity. This is, naturally, a stark contrast from the previous regime, which severed ties with Communist Cuba, called the Camp David Summit 'the last chance for peace in the Middle East,' and lauded 'moderate Arab countries' (referring to Saudi Arabia) for forming 'a front for combatting communism.'[123] Thus, while Khomeini's state opposed many of the Soviet Union's policies and was ideologically opposed to communism, the primacy of anti-

[118] "Adam-e ensejām va hamāhangi, bozorgtarin za'f-e mā dar tablighāt-e berun-marzist," p. 20.
[119] "Shekast-e tārikhi-ye sheytān-e bozorg dar barābar-e qāte'iyat-e enqelāb," *Keyhān*, 29 Dey 1359.
[120] "Emām: miguyand mā tarafdār-e khalq hastim, khalq-e irān āmrikāst?!" *Keyhān*, 1 Tir 1360.
[121] "Kolliyeh-ye qarārdād-hā-ye irān va āmrikā az e'tebār sāqet shod," *Keyhān*, 15 Mehr 1358. "Tarh-e hamkāri-hā-ye eqtesādi-ye irān va showravi emzā shod," *Keyhān*, 31 Khordad 1359.
[122] While this could be seen as strictly a relationship of convenience, there was in fact a level of affinity in Iran for the Chinese political order. One pro-government periodical, in its analysis of the Tiananmen Square protests, posed the question: 'How did a state which had an intimate and democratic relationship with its people, resort to military confrontation [with protestors]?' See "Seyr-e tahavvolāt-e chin: az mā'o tā teng shiā'o ping," *Rāh-e Mojāhed*, No. 55 (Mehr-Aban 1368), p. 8. This question implied the popular nature of the Chinese Communist Party rule; a view consistent with the general attitude of the Khomeini faction.
[123] "Irān bā kubā qat'-e rābeteh kard," *Rastākhiz*, 19 Farvardin 1355. "Konferāns-e kamp deyvid ākharin shāns-e solh-e khāvar-e miyāneh ast," *Rastākhiz*, 19 Mordad 1357. "Keshvar-hā-ye miyāneh-row-ye arab jebheh sari-ye mobārezeh bā komunism tashkil dādand," *Rastākhiz*, 14 Tir 1357.

Americanism (and, by extension, anti-capitalism) contributed in no small part to Iranian leftists supporting the Islamic Republic in its formative years.

An important source in analysing the primacy of anti-Americanism in the Islamic Republic is Khomeini's letter to Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989. The letter is mostly remembered as an attempt to proselytise Islam to the Soviet Union. A significant but oft-forgotten theme in the letter was Khomeini warning Gorbachev of his comprehensive reform plans (perestroika and glasnost). While making sure to note that materialism cannot save humanity from 'the crisis of lacking belief in spirituality, which is the most primal pain of human society in both West and East,' he also warned against Gorbachev 'seeking refuge in the abode of Western capitalism' to solve the issues facing the Soviet Union, and that if he were to do so, 'not only would it not alleviate any problems within your society, but your successors would have to undo your mistakes.' Khomeini even said that 'the main problem of your country is neither the issue of property, nor of economics, nor of freedom' but rather 'lack of true belief in God.'[124] While Gorbachev's response was lukewarm, one Russian scholar suggests that Khomeini's letter was widely distributed throughout the Soviet Union.[125] While Khomeini's opposition to the US could be seen as an existential antagonism, his opposition to the USSR was on a lower, more political and temporal level. He saw the USSR as something capable and worthy of reform. While the term 'socialism' is quite broad, and a label that Khomeini himself certainly did not embrace, and while placing Khomeini on a right-left scale will always be a challenge, his economic thought is certainly at least as radical as many who were socialists by confession. This, coupled with his anti-Americanism and anti-monarchism, caused him to occupy a unique space where his ideas appealed to a broad cross section of the Iranian left. The emergence of CJ following the revolution – and its rapid expansion into having ubiquity in Iranian society – could thus be considered the actualisation of Khomeini's new Islamic radicalism, which now had the force of state and military behind it.

[124] Khomeini, "Payām be āghāye mikhā'il gurbāchof," 1989, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, pp. 220-221.
[125] He claims that 'flyers seem to have first appeared at an annual book fair in Moscow and were then reproduced on photocopy machines.' See Knysh, "Irfan Revisited," p. 652 n. 81.

## Chapter 3 – Construction Jihad: A culmination of the new Islamic radicalism

CJ was the most important civic organisation in post-revolutionary Iran. It was founded to build infrastructure, expand literacy, and implement a myriad of social programmes in the Iranian countryside. Historical analysis of CJ has been limited in the English-speaking world, and has been undertaken within varied fields of historiography: 20th century Iranian political history, the socio-political history of the Iranian revolution, the intellectual history of revolutionary movements in Iran, and so on. However, one historian – Eric Lob – has given considerable attention specifically to the subject of CJ. He looks at the organisation mostly from the perspective of the power dynamics of post-revolutionary Iran and how CJ fit within that dynamic, and more specifically how CJ both exercised power and was used as a vehicle for the Islamic Republic's soft power. Lob – more than the generation of scholarship before him – argues that the early Islamic Republic, rather than leaning only on the military 'and other coercive institutions to consolidate power,' also effectively used CJ 'and other revolutionary organizations' to 'garner support and marginalize opponents.'[1] CJ itself was certainly cognizant of the consequences of their actions on the collective consciousness of the country, and admitted as much.[2] However, I argue that Lob gives insufficient attention to the ideology of CJ and the longer run forces that brought it about, and sometimes downplays how novel CJ truly was (at times suggesting that it was as much as continuity of pre-revolutionary institutions as it was a product of radical revolution).

Lob adopts an institutionalist approach, tracing the organisational development of CJ; how it was influenced by and influenced the Islamic Republic in the post-revolutionary turmoil, and how it fitted within the Islamic Republic's 'grassroots mobilization, state-society

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[1] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 6.
[2] Case in point: CJ once declared that 'the action or inaction of Construction Jihad in Sistan-Baluchestan is a political issue which will compel the people either toward the revolutionary path or toward counter-revolution.' "Jahād-e irānshahr, kār-hā va kambud-hā," *Jahād*, No. 32 (22 Ordibehesht 1361), p. 52.

relations, contentious consolidation, wartime operations, bureaucratic centralization, intra-elite factionalism, associational life, foreign policy, and cultural production,' disaggregating the nascent post-revolutionary state 'by tracing the evolution of a critical yet neglected organization and ministry from the 1979 revolution to the present day.'[3]

Lob relies heavily on interviews with former CJ members, and while these interviews are invaluable, some important content within said interviews are left underexplored due to Lob's angle of analysis. As mentioned previously, Lob focuses on CJ as a vehicle for exerting soft power. Far less attention is given to assessing the worldview, self-perception, and motivations of CJ members (*jahādgarān*) as well as the historical background that allowed such an organisation to emerge. In this chapter, we will seek to frame CJ within its historical context as a vehicle for radical politics (particularly in the field of economic development); highlighting how pre-revolutionary discourse paved the way for CJ's emergence and prominence while charting the varied views of its cadres. In doing so, we will draw from primary source materials such as *Jahād*, CJ's official periodical; building upon the first two chapters and identifying the lineage between the intellectual currents from which CJ emerged.

First, I will explore how CJ rationalised its extensive scope, citing official CJ sources. These sources often betray CJ's fundamental distrust of the conventional government (which they saw as a vestige of the monarchy) and shed some light on CJ's impetus to serve as the foil of conventional governance by adopting a 'bottom-up' order that was less formal and more egalitarian. Then, I will analyse CJ's stance on land reform. As was alluded to in Chapter 2, Khomeini's faction was characterised by an open attitude toward land reform in principle, and CJ was an important advocate for land reform as well as a weapon for implementing it in the Islamic Republic's early days. Lastly, I will analyse anti-Americanism as a pillar of CJ's thought, and specifically how its anti-Americanism fed into its anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist sentiments.

*A government unto itself*

As mentioned previously, CJ was founded in 1979 following a decree by Ayatollah Khomeini wherein he called for 'a jihad for construction.' While CJ would eventually become what Alemzadeh describes as a 'parallel state structure' – a state within a state with

[3] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 7.

millions of personnel at its disposal, its bond to Khomeini and its fealty to the ideology of *velāyat-e faqih* should not be dismissed.[4] Other observers besides Alemzadeh have also noted CJ's function as a parastatal organisation, often emphasising its redundancy (as it performed functions typically reserved for other state ministries). Ehsani calls CJ an 'awkward parallel organisation.'[5] CJ was aware of the issue of its redundancy to state ministries at least as early as 1982. In its official periodical, CJ acknowledged the criticisms of detractors who called CJ 'a government unto itself' while arguing that their existence as a parallel state was necessary.[6] The scale of CJ's operations become massive not long after it was founded. By 1982, a third of the entire country's mines were under their jurisdiction.[7] This was rationalised thusly: 'The work system of Jihad in mines is the same general methodology that governs Jihad: working without any manner of paper-pushing or official formalities but instead on the basis of sacrifice and struggle.'[8] As for the question as to why CJ was dedicated to 'rural and agrarian development' and to providing 'health services, roads, education, electricity, and so on' (while these were the official responsibilities of state bodies such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, et al.), they said defiantly: 'Here, the answer is clear. In short, we can say that the Islamic Revolution has brought about the severing of the chains of bondage and slavery, and the alleviation of oppression, discrimination, and inequality.' Because rural areas were, in their words, 'the embodiment of poverty, deprivation, abjection, and oppression' in Iran, CJ was dutybound to be active there.

CJ's redundancy was not a bug but a feature. CJ claimed that it was not sufficient for revolutionary-minded people to be working within state ministries, because the very structure of the ministry was – by nature – not revolutionary. They warned of 'bureaucracy' replacing authentic revolutionary action. CJ posed the question: 'What forces must aid in fulfilling the sacred ideals of the Islamic Revolution, serving the deprived and downtrodden, and building

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[4] Maryam Alemzadeh, "Iran's Reconstruction Jihad: Rural Development and Regime Consolidation after 1979," review of *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad: Rural Development and Regime Consolidation after 1979*, by Eric Lob, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (May 2021), p. 406.
[5] Ehsani, "Rural Society and Agricultural Development in Post-Revolution Iran," p. 89.
[6] "Jahād bāyad bemānad va be jahād edāmeh dahad," *Jahād*, No. 27 (22 Bahman 1360), pp. 1-2.
[7] There were 300 mines in the entire country, 100 of which were run by CJ. CJ's periodical uses Quranic verses to rationalise their further involvement in extracting natural resources. See Hossein Mirkalami, "Negareshi kutāh bar: tashkil-e vāhed-e ma'dan-e jahād va fa'āliyat-e ān dar ostān-e esfahān," *Jahād*, No. 28 (5 Esfand 1360), p. 53.
[8] These were the words of Hasan Dehnavi, deputy prosecutor of the Revolutionary Courts. When comparing mines before and after the revolution, he says: 'In the past, the economic politics of the regime was dependent on imperialism and was coordinated with the interests of foreign masters.' Most mines were in the hands of the private sector, which he described as 'dependent capitalists' (i.e. dependent on foreign powers, namely America), 'especially the mines which were of high value.' 'Severe exploitation of workers' also was a characteristic of that era. "Pirāmun-e ellat-e tashkil va nahveh-ye fa'āliyat-e vāhed-e ma'dan-e jahād-e sāzandegi," *Jahād*, No. 35 (16 Tir 1361), pp. 46-47.

Islamic Iran?' Their answer to this question was, naturally, CJ itself, whose members were 'sons and daughters of the revolution' who had 'absorbed themselves into the revolution with every fibre of their being.' CJ always framed itself and its members as ideologically pure and immune to becoming corrupted (as was the case with more 'bureaucratic' institutions). They were compelled strictly by 'the love of saving one's fellow man.'[9] While such slogans could be seen in a more cynical light (as a rationalisation for CJ's further expansion of influence), these idealistic motivations played an important role in galvanising CJ's cadres. Lob interviewed former *jahādgarān* who attested to this. One official he interviewed noted that members of CJ 'worked all day and night, sometimes around the clock without stopping or taking a break, and slept at work for the love of the goal, the mission, and the work itself.'[10] This is a recurring theme in the accounts of CJ's former members. Another *jahādgar* said of his experience: 'There, we had no idle people. No one was an overseer. Time and time again, we would see regional [CJ] officials working shoulder to shoulder with us.' This individual goes on to highlight the egalitarian nature of CJ: 'Wherever we were – in the cold or the heat, in the rain or sunshine – officials were there with us. No one spoke of work hours or work shifts. If it was your turn to work and you slept in, no one would wake you up to tell you it's your shift. It was a strange time; strange, but sweet.'[11] Lob observes that some *jahādgarān* saw CJ as 'a foil to the ministries and their alleged conservative, conventional, centralized, and closed organizational model.'[12]

CJ members eschewed profit motivation, instead upholding that the impetus for their work was religious, patriotic, and humanitarian. Lob interviewed dozens of former *jahādgarān* who echoed such sentiments. One such example was a university student who had been studying abroad when the revolution happened. 'After hearing Khomeini's messages to help the oppressed and dispossessed,' he recounts, he 'decided not to complete [his] bachelor's degree' and instead return to his hometown of Kashan, where he would 'establish and become the chairman' of the local CJ chapter.[13] One *jahādgar* from Esfahan said: 'Our participation was not about promoting a certain ideology' but rather, rooted in 'our patriotic duty, working for God and the people, and improving local levels of education, literacy, cultural awareness, vocational knowledge, and technical expertise.'[14] Lob, citing an

[9] "Jahād bāyad bemānad va be jahād edāmeh dahad," pp. 1-3.
[10] Lob, "An institutional history of the Iranian Construction Jihad," p. 225.
[11] Mojtaba Hasani and Amin Shahbaba Ashtiani, *Eqtesād-e jahādi: moruri bar tajrobeh-ye eqtesādi-ye jahād-e sāzandegi* (Tehran: Imam Sadeq University, 1395), p. 76.
[12] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 55.
[13] Ibid., p. 21.
[14] Ibid., p. 25

interviewee, notes that in CJ's early days, it 'depended on the personal initiative, resources, knowledge, and expertise of its members and volunteers.' CJ – especially in the early 1980s – was every bit of what Alemzadeh describes as a 'bottom-up' order. Although Alemzadeh uses this term to describe the IRGC, she classifies the IRGC as 'a "revolutionary" organisation based on direct action' and 'a successful model for other state institutions' (to include CJ).[15] The 'bottom-up' nature of CJ was reflected in its organisational structure. One *jahādgar* recounts that 'the structure of Jihad was conciliar at every level; [there was a] central committee, provincial committees, and *shahrestān*-level committees,' also noting that 'nobody was anyone else's boss.'[16] Another of Lob's interviewees – who was both a former *jahādgar* and a former member of the Literacy Corps (*sepāh-e dānesh*) – saw an advantage in this structure, citing the 'decentralization' of CJ – and the fact that it had headquarters in every city and provincial capital – as the reason for it being able 'to spread around the country more quickly and effectively' than the Literacy Corps.[17] Hossein-Ali Azimi noted that 'the central committee was responsible for addressing the duties' of *jahādgarān*, but 'did not issue orders'; that 'rankings and chain of command did not hold any significance.'[18] He frequently laments the slow erosion of CJ's bottom-up order, mourning that while CJ's technical know-how, organisational structure, and logistics improved, 'decision-making became slower and bureaucracy became bloated.'[19] Lob acknowledges, based on his extensive interview base, that members of CJ 'insisted that they had established and joined the organization for the spiritual rewards' and that their aim was 'pleasing God.' He cites one *jahādgar* who was made 'uncomfortable' when the state began to offer monetary compensation to CJ personnel, recounting that in the first year of CJ's existence, 'members did not receive salaries and were uncomfortable receiving them.' He insisted that *jahādgarān* 'did their work for the satisfaction of God and for their own hearts.' This, he says, 'summed

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[15] Maryam Alemzadeh, "An Unconventional Military's Survival: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps in the Iran-Iraq War," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 46, Issue 4 (August 2019), p. 639. Alemzadeh, "The attraction of direct action," p. 20. CJ itself welcomed such comparisons. Then president of the National Inspection Agency Mostafa Mohaqqeq Damad thought that the political system should 'like Jihad, align itself in accordance to popular and revolutionary demands,' and that government 'should act like the Revolutionary Guards in terms of order and discipline, and like the Construction Jihad in terms of self-sacrifice.' Mostafa Mohaqqeq Damad, "Nezām-e edāri-ye mā bāyad hamānand-e jahād khodesh rā bā khāsteh-hā-ye mardomi va enqelābi tatbiq dahad," *Jahād*, No. 32 (22 Ordibehesht 1361), pp. 14-15.

[16] Mashayekhi and Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād*, p. 79. *Shahrestān* is the Iranian administrative division below the provincial level. The closest English equivalent is county.

[17] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 31.

[18] Mashayekhi and Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād*, pp. 37, 43.

[19] Ibid., p. 29.

up [CJ]'s ideology.'[20] They saw profit motivation as a relic of the monarchical era, and sought to uproot it as much as they could.

In Chapter 1, we observed how the influence of the left waned as the Islamic movement gained momentum for being perceived as more culturally authentic. This dynamic also supported the rapid expansion of CJ. In Chapter 1, I explored how as a whole, the Iranian left suffered from a crisis of authenticity, wherein its worldview and lifestyle were too alien for the Iranian peasantry. CJ, conversely, was intent on making inroads into the countryside that both the monarchy and the orthodox left had failed to do. One *jahādgar* from Tabriz – who was sent to Kurdish-majority regions as part of CJ's literacy programme – notes that because she 'did not know the local languages,' CJ would have 'local women from the province' do the teaching, with her role being to train them.[21] This sensitivity toward regional languages and differences was essential. This was also reflected in CJ's Nomadic Affairs Division (*sāzmān-e umur-e ashāyer*). One former *jahādgar* recounts that him and his comrades 'migrated with the Qashqa'i tribe,' sometimes 'for two or three weeks at a time.' He recalls that they often '[slept] in their tents and [shared] meals with them.' This division procured supplies and equipment for the nomads to make migrations 'easier and safer,' and built food stores and structures that 'housed families and livestock.' CJ also provided them with healthcare services (namely, vaccinations and hygienic care).[22] By contrast, the monarchy had declared that nomadic tribes no longer existed, seeing them as a blight on their modernisation ambitions (see Chapter 1). Lob alludes to this, saying that previous regime's neglect of linguistic and religious minority-populated regions created a vacuum wherein CJ was able to step in and win over local populations.[23] In addition to their cultural and regional sensitivity, there was also the ostensible piety of *jahādgarān* (whose female members wore hijab and whose male members wore civilian clothes). By contrast, the likes of the Development Corps and Literacy Corps – comparable organisations from pre-revolutionary times – were sometimes seen as alien due to their Western and/or military attire. This supports Lob's argument of CJ being an effective instrument of soft power.

This 'praise' of CJ and criticism of pre-revolutionary civic orgs were, in Lob's words, 'partially grounded in perception and reality.'[24] But indeed, it was both perception and reality which laid the groundwork for the revolution and the emergence of CJ. And while Lob

[20] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, pp. 27-28.
[21] Ibid., p. 24.
[22] Ibid., pp. 119-120.
[23] Ibid., pp. 24-25.
[24] Ibid., p. 33.

acknowledges that CJ was often more effective than state ministries – with its members being 'younger, more energetic, and more motivated than civil servants' who 'worked longer hours as volunteers for little to no money' and 'accomplished more at a lower cost,' he questions how novel CJ was, suggesting instead that it was operating on some degree of inertia from comparable pre-revolutionary organisations: 'Rather than constituting a complete rupture from or clean break with the prerevolutionary past,' CJ's organisational structure 'revealed the political and social continuities that existed in revolutionary Iran.'[25] While the dramatic transition of revolutions demands at least some semblance of continuity from the previous regime, this analysis leaves a lot to be desired. CJ's rapid growth and eventual quasi-state level of power is something that no organisation before or since has been able to accomplish. Between 1980 and 1982 alone, two million volunteers were recruited into CJ.[26] The Literacy Corps, in comparison, never mobilised more than a hundred thousand people.[27] By 1971, fewer than seven thousand people had served in the Development Corps (which was founded in 1965).[28] On quantity, at least, there is a discernable difference between CJ and its predecessors.[29] However, I would argue that there was also an important substantive distinction between them.

We have discussed at length the revolutionary discourse that led to the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its idiosyncrasies. While Dabashi argues that the revolution 'could not have occurred without "the Islamic ideology,"' I would extend this further and suggest that without the ideological idiosyncrasies of the Islamic Revolution, CJ (or anything similar to it) could not have emerged.[30] In the following pages, I will assess the worldview of CJ – through the prism of its official statements and publications, as well as through first-hand accounts of former *jahādgarān*. Through this, I will argue that there is a direct lineage from the idiosyncratic discourse of the revolution – dating back to the initial emergence of the new Islamic radicalism in the 1960s – to the founding and rapid expansion of CJ.

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[25] Ibid., p. 52. Ibid., p. 30.
[26] Lob cites a former *jahādgar* in Ibid., p. 83.
[27] *Basic Facts about Iran*, p. 40. Khomeini once referred to the Literacy Corps as 'this corps that does nothing other than send people into towns and villages to sing the Shah's praises and promote his image.' See Khomeini, "Sokhanrāni dar jam'-e irāniān-e moqim-e khārej darbāreh-ye ma'muriyat-e shāh az suye āmrikā," 1978, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 4, p. 93.
[28] *Basic Facts about Iran*, p. 44.
[29] This is perhaps emblematic of the Islamic Republic investing more into the agrarian sector than its predecessor. Government investment in agriculture represented nearly 20 percent of government investment in 1988-89; twice as high as it was in 1979-80. This is discussed in Haghayeghi, "Agricultural Development Planning under the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 19.
[30] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, p. 7.

*Followers of the 'Imam's Line'*

If ideology is, as Eagleton defines it, 'the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure,' it is impossible to discuss CJ without also observing its inextricable tie with *velāyat-e faqih*.[31] Alemzadeh says of the IRGC that its first principle is 'commitment to the Islamic Revolution and especially its leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.'[32] This is true not only of the IRGC but of all 'revolutionary' institutions of the Islamic Republic.[33] The IRGC was founded as a parallel army to exist alongside the conventional army (*Artesh*), just as CJ was founded as a 'revolutionary organisation' to exist alongside existing government ministries. In their official periodical, CJ referred to Khomeini as 'the sun beyond the clouds,' an expression used in Islamic narrations to describe the 12th Imam.[34] The same publication compared Khomeini's return to Iran to the Prophet's conquest of Mecca, and referred to his bond with the Iranian nation as 'sacred and unbreakable.'[35] When recruiting CJ members to its literacy movement, the periodical proclaimed that it aimed to 'realise the commands of Imam [Khomeini] and eliminate illiteracy in society,' which it considered to be a 'humanitarian and jurisprudential duty.'[36] Adherents to *velāyat-e faqih* – because they believed in the absolute authority of Khomeini in all political affairs – sought to rationalise their actions in terms of being followers of 'the Imam's Line.'[37] CJ themselves were zealous followers of the Imam's Line.[38]

Lob notes that the more radical *jahādgarān* 'built structures and performed activities with a greater emphasis on promoting revolutionary values and material development, and

[31] Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 2.
[32] Alemzadeh, "An Unconventional Military's Survival," p. 631. This is echoed by Hesam Forozan, who says that unlike in Communist China, the IRGC 'was not a professional army in terms of its organisational characteristics and recruitment,' and that a key feature of IRGC was its 'personal loyalty' to the leader. Forozan, *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 20.
[33] While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to give a history of each of these institutions (which number in the thousands), some of the more prominent ones include Construction Basij and the aforementioned Trench-Builders Association. These movements seek to undermine the private sector, identifying and operating in regions which they classify as 'deprived.'
[34] "Bemonāsebat-e sālruz-e tab'id-e emām," *Jahād*, No. 20 (1 Aban 1360), pp. 8-9. The same segment uses the word *khalq* for 'people,' a word that had fallen out of favour in the Islamic Republic by this point due to its association with MEK.
[35] "Nemeiri dar āstāneh-ye soqut," *Jahād*, No. 26 (30 Dey 1360), p. 10.
[36] "Pirāmun-e tarh-e zarbati-ye nehzat-e sud-āmuzi," *Jahād*, No. 37 (Mordad 1361), p. 46.
[37] The bestowal of the title 'Imam' is in itself significant. While, in the Sunni world, *ulamā* are often referred to as imams, the Shia tradition has historically avoided this, as this title is typically reserved for the twelve imams whom they revere as infallible. However, the 20th century saw the emergence of two Shia figures whose followers referred to them as 'Imam': Musa Sadr of Lebanon and Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran.
[38] One interviewee of Lob observed that himself and other *jahādgarān* eagerly listened to Khomeini's decrees on the radio. See Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 28.

cooperated with radical IRP clerics and officials to advance these goals,' and in particular that they 'gained practical guidance and material support from the crafty Beheshti.'[39] Beheshti advocated giving CJ as much operational freedom as possible, thinking they could then 'give this model to other government bodies in order that they, too, operate like Jihad.'[40] Ashraf posits that the IRP's 'radical posture' aimed not only at discrediting its liberal predecessors in the provisional government, but also at 'disarming the left of its radical platform.'[41] For the IRP (the chief supporter and benefactor of CJ), it was not just the provisional government which was not revolutionary enough, but anything they perceived as a vestige of the monarchy. This often put them at odds not only with conservative *ulamā* but also with the traditional rural power brokers. In Kordestan, Khuzestan, Azerbaijan, and Fars provinces (among others), CJ members were hanged by local landlords.[42]

*Construction Jihad and land reform*

CJ – which defined itself as 'a revolutionary institution which has taken on the duty of reconstructing the destructive effects of the monarchical regime.' – was among the most outspoken supporters for land reform in the early days of the Islamic Republic.[43] Its periodical once declared that the 'achievements of the Islamic Revolution' were 'in severing the hand of the capitalists and providing services to the deprived and downtrodden.'[44] Nader Habibi notes that 'the majority of the government supporters' from 1979-1989 were 'from the lower classes' and that 'they supported the Islamic revolution both on ideological grounds … and economic grounds.'[45] Thus, the poor peasants who had the most to gain from land reform also happened to be the primary constituency of Khomeini and his comrades. In a manner of speaking, Khomeini's faction would use CJ's field presence as a means of applying pressure on established power brokers. Lob notes that CJ's agenda included 'expropriating land, labor,

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[39] Ibid., p. 109. Ibid., p. 58.
[40] Quoted in Mashayekhi and Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād*, p. 107.
[41] Ahmad Ashraf, "State and Agrarian Relations before and after the Iranian Revolution, 1960-1990," in *Peasants and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, eds. John Waterbury and Farhad Kazemi (Miami: Florida University Press, 1991), p. 297.
[42] This is discussed in Haghayeghi, "Agrarian Reform Problems in Post-Revolutionary Iran," p. 43.
[43] "Amalzadegi va zarurat-e kār-e ide'olozhik," *Jahād*, No. 26 (30 Dey 1360), p. 1. The word used here for monarchical was *setamshāhi*, a play on the words *setam* (tyranny) and *shāhanshāhi* (royal).
[44] Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mirhossein Mousavi, "Rahāvard-hā-ye enqelāb-e eslāmi dar qat'-e dast-e sarmāyeh-dārān va erā'eh-ye khadamāt-e be mahrumin va mostaz'afin," *Jahād*, No. 27 (22 Bahman 1360), p. 20.
[45] Nader Habibi, "Allocation of Educational and Occupational Opportunities in the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Case Study in the Political Screening of Human Capital in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (1989), pp. 42-43.

and capital away from the traditional elites toward the radical and religious youth,' all things which Khomeini and his lieutenants supported.[46]

CJ published a sometimes monthly, sometimes bimonthly periodical called *Jahād*. The periodical was mostly meant for the internal consumption of CJ members themselves. Its contents varied; sometimes delving into social issues in various regions of the country, sometimes offering analysis of geopolitical affairs (with a decidedly anti-American tinge), but more than anything serving as a loudspeaker for 'the ideals of the Islamic Revolution,' and more specifically: taking up the cause of the 'downtrodden.' This manifested itself in almost all of its contents. *Jahād* announces the purpose of CJ as such: 'In the view of the Construction Jihad, the programme of the Islamic councils in villages … are of the most urgent priority,' due to 'the necessity of uprooting the existing structures of power within the villages (and replacing them with revolutionary institutions), establishing the twenty-million-strong army, developing the cooperatives and village service centres, and so on.'[47] By 'existing structures of power,' they are referring to landlords and/or tribal khans. In a more general sense, CJ's stated practical goals were 'to increase agricultural production, build roads, provide drinking water, construct and expand small industries, as well as engage in construction, health services, and cultural activities.'[48]

*Jahād* frequently gave a platform for every and any official who was in favour of land reform. Echoing the sentiments of Khomeini before him, Mohsen Seyyedein (an MP representing Khomein *shahrestān*) said in an interview with the periodical: 'A Muslim does not have the right to hoard more wealth than what he needs, even if attained through legitimate means.'[49] Majid Ansari – speaker for the Majles' Economics and Property Commission – says 'as long as wealth is concentrated in the hands of a limited number of elites and capitalists, and the villager is afflicted with poverty and shortage, we cannot claim that we have implemented Islam.' He then expresses in no uncertain terms his support for the aforementioned D clause (the more radical clause of the land reform bill): 'If the large capitalists and feudalists are dealt with, and if the capability for production and investment is in the hands of the downtrodden and the workers' class, this will be an effective means of

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[46] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 114.

[47] "Moqaddameh-i bar zarurat-e showrā-hā dar rustā," *Jahād*, No. 17 (Shahrivar 1360), p. 34. 'Twenty-million-strong army' is in reference to Khomeini calling for the mobilisation of twenty million people (then over half the population of the country) for 'constructive' activities.

[48] "Jahād-e sistān va baluchestān dar masir-e barnāmeh-rizi," *Jahād*, No. 31 (18 Ordibehesht 1361), p. 53.

[49] "Goftogu bā barādar mohsen seyyedein nemāyandeh-ye mardom-e khomein dar majles-e showrā-ye eslāmi," *Jahād*, No. 18 (1 Mehr 1360), p. 18.

resolving the issue of property and in alleviating social injustices.'[50] 'Feudalism' and the necessity of combatting it was an important part of CJ's lexicon. In one piece of recruitment propaganda, CJ proclaimed: 'Sever the feudalist's grip on the village! By joining Construction Jihad, we can haste in helping the downtrodden!'[51] Hasan Firuz-Abadi, member of CJ's Central Committee said: 'The ignorance which existed in the villages' was rooted in 'feudal governance.'[52] *Jahād* published some previously unpublished writings of Motahhari wherein he speaks of property relations with respect to the Islamic concept of *fitrah*: 'Anti-religious movements are not always truly anti-religion. Rather, these movements may merely be against those who have affixed themselves to religion; for example, the capitalist class, the propertied class, or the class known as the clergy!'[53] Motahhari is, in effect, rationalising the anti-religious sentiments of some revolutionary movements around the world; suggesting that what they are opposed to is not truly religion but rather, dominant classes who instrumentalise religion. This is a recurring theme in the works of Khomeini's comrades: condemnation of what they saw as fraudulent religion focusing only on ritual and jurisprudence rather than social and political issues.

In an interview with *Jahād*, 'Brother Shahraki' – an MP from Zabol – says he is 'of the belief that the issue of land owning must be extricated from its current status,' in order to prevent those who are 'sitting in some corner and merrymaking' from being able 'to reap the fruits of the labour of the downtrodden people in villages.' He adds that 'the agricultural system which exists today [1982] is not in concordance with Islamic laws.'[54] This is in reference to Islamic property laws (alluded to in Chapter 1) whereby land rightly belongs to those who work it. *Jahād* reported on a seminar dedicated to 'defining the economic lines of Islam,' wherein a prominent cleric said he considered land reform as not only acceptable but 'a necessity.'[55] Invoking the most heavy-handed of messianic rhetoric, Ayatollah Meshkini, a prominent cleric and a member of the Assembly of Experts, declared: 'In the Islamic perspective, the most important justice is justice in land distribution. During the reappearance

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[50] "Goftogu bā barādar majid ansāri mokhber-e komision-e eqtesādi va dārāyi-ye majles-e showrā-ye eslāmi," *Jahād*, No. 17 (Shahrivar 1360), p. 8.
[51] An example of this recruitment advert can be seen on the back cover of *Ettehād-e Javān*, No. 27 (10 Khordad 1359).
[52] "Tā zamāni ke virāni-hā, faqr, jahl va vābastegi-ye eqtesādi vojud dārad kār-e jahād-e sāzandegi tadāvom khāhad dāsht," *Jahād*, No. 47 (Bahman 1361), p. 28.
[53] Morteza Motahhari, "Ijād-e ta'ādol dar jāme'eh bā amal kardan-e be fetriyāt," *Jahād*, No. 23 (15 Azar 1360), p. 23.
[54] "Mosāhebeh bā barādar shahraki nemāyandeh-ye mardom-e zābol pirāmun-e mas'aleh-ye zamin, khānin va jahād-e sāzandegi," *Jahād*, No. 33 (5 Khordad 1361), p. 54.
[55] Cleric's name was Afzali. "Hey'at-hā khāstār-e ta'in-e khotut-e eqtesādi-ye eslām barāye hall-e moshkelāt-e edālat-e ejtemā'i shodand," *Jahād*, No. 50 (Farvardin 1362), p. 17.

of Imam Mahdi, lands will be taken from their owners and distributed to people according to their needs, in a just manner.'[56] It was in this sense that *Jahād* dubbed the village 'the second frontline.'[57] CJ's calls for and engagement with land reform would fall short of their designed outcomes but nonetheless represent a core component of their aims and worldview.

CJ's conspicuous and unambiguous support for land reform was unsurprising considering their general worldview. It could be said that they advanced a sort of Islamic conception of class analysis (a result of the new Islamic radicalism's intellectual roots in being a refuge for disaffected leftists). The creation of CJ, notes Shakoori, 'may be seen as a reaction against the whole traditional (prerevolutionary) administrative machinery'; an affirmation that solving rural poverty 'required a revolutionary administrative system' rooted in the masses.[58] One article from *Jahād* declares that 'the Noble Quran identifies the opposition of ostentatious circles to divine movements as a historical opposition. In this matter, there is not even a single exception.' The same article later identifies 'exploiting classes of society' as being subversives; that even those who preserved 'a superficial façade of religiosity' ultimately took advantage of internal strife to 'loot and pillage the downtrodden people' in order to weaken the Islamic Republic. 'Economic terrorism is the truthful and fitting epithet which describes the pinnacle of crime and treachery of the exploiting class of society' (which the article later describes as 'devils'). Moreover, 'any unjust or un-Islamic economic system,' wherein the fruits of one's labour 'benefits a specific class,' brings about circumstances wherein 'economic terrorism' becomes prevalent.[59] Overcoming such forces meant the complete overthrowal of the existing social order: 'The [pre-revolutionary] production methods, consumption standards, ideological regimes, and values – which, by their very nature, are in concordance with the disposition of the wealthy and educated villagers, cannot be appropriate for the poor and semi-literate villagers.'[60] Thus, it comes as no surprise that CJ, 'crowded out,' as Lob suggests, the 'private sector.'[61] There was a certain in-built anti-traditionalism within CJ. They demanded, for example, that war-torn villages be 'built again, in the true sense of the term, in a manner that the desired cultural, economic, and political transformations are brought about.'[62] Their desire for the

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[56] "Gazideh-hāyi pirāmun-e masā'el-e rustā va keshāvarzi," *Jahād*, No. 62 (Esfand 1362), p. 54.
[57] "Tahlili pirāmun-e hafteh-ye keshāvarz va keshāvarzi," *Jahād*, No. 64 (Khordad 1363), p. 7. The Assembly of Experts is the state body in Iran that appoints the leader.
[58] Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 82.
[59] "Terorism-e eqtesādi," *Jahād*, No. 22 (1 Azar 1360), p. 1.
[60] "Do miliyun rustā," *Jahād*, No. 69 (Azar 1363), p. 15.
[61] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 178.
[62] "Bāzsāzi ya nowsāzi?" *Jahād*, No. 36 (2 Mordad 1361), p. 25.

appropriation of property was not limited to land. The other backbone of the rural economy – handicrafts (namely, rugs) – were also sought to be unionised, collectivised, and ultimately brought under CJ's purview and, in the words of Lob, 'away from the traditional elites.'[63] These 'elites' included not only landlords but tribal khans and others.[64]

The issue of land reform was not limited to the theoretical realm. CJ not only advocated for it; they actively appropriated land. CJ's central committees coordinated with regional land distribution committees. These bodies always had at least one official rep from Khomeini himself.[65] CJ once boasted of breaking the 'exploitation and poverty' of the 'feudalism' of the khans in Ilam's Poshtkuh region; whom they claimed owned 53 percent of the land prior to CJ's re-appropriation.[66] During 1979 land disputes, CJ supported tenant farmers in their demands for the harvests to be halved (instead of the old division, whereby sharecroppers only received one third). While that season's harvest was halved in large part due to CJ's intervention, land disputes between landlords and sharecroppers would continue for years.[67] Some lawmakers viewed CJ's actions in a favourable light. Esmail Davoudi, deputy prime minister at the time, said in a *Jahād* interview that he considers 'the existing governing order' to be 'an inheritance from the previous regime,' which was polluted by 'the ruinous values of occidentosis.'[68] Mousavi, president of the revolutionary courts of Tabriz, declared that after the Pahlavi monarchy was overthrown and America's presence was ostensibly severed, 'America's base in Iran became the capitalists who were dependant on colonial powers'; that the existing property relations had a subversive quality and must be dealt with harshly.[69] However, CJ would eventually be forced to settle for more modest action: giving landless peasants resources to help them claim uncultivated lands, offering incentives for landlords to surrender their lands, and so on. Only the most prominent landlords had their estates forcibly appropriated. Nonetheless, CJ showed that it was not afraid of declaring war on an entire class of society, and ultimately, the subset of *ulamā* whom they revered offered them a platform with which they could offer a religious

[63] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, pp. 99-100.
[64] Also noteworthy is that CJ's opposition to the existing social order also manifested in their view of gender relations. In one regional report, *Jahād* laments that in this region, 'all the [responsibility for] housework rests on the shoulder of women' and that 'women were forced to travel kilometres through the mountains to procure drinking water.' "Lowdāb: gozargāh-e faqr va mahrumiyat," *Jahād*, No. 45 (Dey 1361), p. 41.
[65] This is discussed in Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 113.
[66] "Negāhi be poshtkuh va fa'āliyat-hā-ye jahād-e sāzandegi," *Jahād*, No. 36 (2 Mordad 1361), pp. 44-45.
[67] This is discussed in Razavi, "Agrarian Change in Two Regions of Kerman," pp. 174-175.
[68] "Goftogu bā barādar esmāyil dāvudi mo'āven-e nakhost vazir dar omur-e nahād-hā," *Jahād*, No. 39 (Mehr 1361), p. 8.
[69] "Tote'eh-ye sarmāyeh-dārān dar havādes-e khunin-e tabriz fāsh shod," *Keyhān*, 24 Dey 1358.

rationalisation for this posture.[70] But this was not merely a war against insidious forces within the country. Rather, CJ also perceived their activities to effectively be part of a larger war against the United States.[71]

*Construction Jihad and the 'Great Satan'*

Inheriting from the anti-American attitudes of the new Islamic radicalism discussed in Chapter 1, anti-Americanism was a core component of the Islamic Republic's identity from its very inception. CJ sometimes even discussed land reform in terms of the existential battle against America and Americanism, insisting that the American-backed order of pre-revolutionary Iran 'progressed without the growth of the deprived and downtrodden,' and that as part of their 'war against America,' the matter of land reform must be resolved.[72] Because their conception of development was inextricably tied with their anti-Americanism, it is worth taking a look at CJ's stances toward America as well as what they perceived as the American order of monarchical Iran.

CJ cites American imperialistic influence in Iran as having begun during the Qajar period but that their first act of directly suppressing Iranian popular will was 'their planning and participation in the disgraceful 28th of Mordad coup d'etat' (referring to the 1953 coup of Mosaddeq), the result of which was the 'plundering our country's resources' (among other things).[73] Lob recognises the anti-American internationalism of CJ, noting that in the early 1980s, 'the Islamic Republic ideologically framed its efforts to export the revolution as fulfilling the global mission of "recognizing, attracting, educating, and organizing the destitute (maḥrūm) and oppressed (mostżaʿaf) masses"' to combat the forces of *estekbār*.[74] And while CJ certainly condemned European powers (e.g. when it bemoaned France's continued involvement in its African former colonies, dubbing France 'the colonial lord who

[70] This is all in line with how CJ (and Iranian revolutionaries in general) would frame the rule of Khomeini. He was often referred to by the epithet of 'The Beating Heart of the Downtrodden Peoples of the World.' He would be addressed thusly: 'You who have awakened a new light within the hearts of the downtrodden peoples of the world.' See Mohsen Daryal'al, *Beresad be dast-e emām: nāmeh-ye javānān va nowjavānān be emām khomeini* (Tehran: Revāyat-e Fath, 1399), p. 20.
[71] One MP and member of the Industries Commission spoke of the 'economic war' (by which means the economic sanctions by the US and its allies) and how CJ's role fits into this war. "Pas az pāyān-e jang-e siyāsi va nezāmi nowbat-e jang-e eqtesādi miresad," *Jahād*, No. 33 (5 Khordad 1361), pp. 35, 70.
[72] "Jahād-e sāzandegi omid dārad qabl az hall-e moshkel-e maskan dar shahr, moshkel-e zamin dar rustā hall shavad," *Jahād*, No. 58 (Aban 1362), p. 16.
[73] "Tahrim-e eqtesādi-ye jomhuri-ye eslāmi-ye irān va siyāsat-hā-ye derāz moddat-e estekbār-e jahāni," *Jahād*, No. 48 (Esfand 1361), p. 30.
[74] Lob, "An institutional history of the Iranian Construction Jihad," p. 123. Lob's quotations are from an official statement of CJ.

never went home'), and often criticised the Soviet Union, the lion's share of its enmity was reserved for the United States.[75] In an article about America's growing military presence in the Persian Gulf, *Jahād* identifies one of the duties of CJ as being in 'the domestic front, combatting capitalism and feudalism and establishing the twenty-million-strong army,' in addition to being 'in the foreign front, preserving cordial relations with potential and active enemies of America.'[76] CJ, as was customary in revolutionary Iran, adopted the language of war and applied such language to economic development. The anti-capitalist language of the new Islamic radicalism (discussed in Chapter 1) was adapted for a political climate wherein Iran was fighting what it saw as an existential war against American-backed forces. Those whose invested interest was in preserving what was perceived as the decrepit old order were associated with the American influence. CJ declared Egypt under Sadat to be an 'American colony' and noted that with the death of Nasser, Sadat moved toward rapprochement with America and Israel, '[distancing] himself from the deprived and poverty-stricken people of Egypt.'[77] They bemoaned Morocco's growing ties with the US, and for Sudan lamented that with a strong anti-imperialist leadership, could have achieved 'economic self-sufficiency and independence.'[78] The cultural work of CJ included teaching villagers about the goals of Iranian Revolution and other world revolutions; this included showing films about apartheid South Africa, the Algerian Revolution, and Che Guevara in Cuba.[79] During the Iran-Iraq War, although the USSR and France were the primary source for Iraq's armaments imports, CJ (echoing Khomeini) framed the war as an American war intended not only to destroy the Islamic Revolution but even to 'weaken' Iraq (which was, in CJ's words, at least a nominal enemy of Israel), and make Iraq further dependant on the West.[80] In 1982, *Jahād* featured a

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[75] "Arbāb-e este'māргari ke be khāneh bar nagasht," *Jahād*, No. 17 (Shahrivar 1360), p. 44. Of course, this special hated status of America was qualified by affirmations of the slogan 'neither East nor West.' This slogan was ubiquitous enough to be invoked even in the context of cultural affairs: 'Our art is neither Western nor Eastern but Iranian, and it is Islamic in substance.' "Tārikhcheh-ye mokhtasar-e gerāfik va poster dar irān," *Jahād*, No. 31 (18 Ordibehesht 1361), p. 43.
[76] "Āmrikā va hozur-e nezāmi-ye gostardeh dar khalij-e fārs," *Jahād,* No. 19 (15 Mehr 1360), p. 8.
[77] "Mesr dar āstāneh-ye enqelāb," *Jahād*, No. 21 (15 Aban 1360), p. 10.
[78] "Marākesh dar dām-e vābastegi be gharb," *Jahād*, No. 23 (15 Azar 1360), pp. 20-21, 70. "Nemeiri dar āstāneh-ye soqut," p. 11.
[79] This is mentioned by a *jahādgar* interviewed by Lob in Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, pp. 107-108.
[80] While it may seem strange that CJ was concerned with the well-being of Iraq, this was consistent with the Shia internationalism that characterised many Iranian revolutionaries. It was also consistent with Khomeini's stance that the war was – above all else – an American war. *Jahād* interviewed Ayatollah Hakim, a prominent Iraqi cleric (and leader of the Badr Brigade, a paramilitary force consisting of defectors from the Iraqi Army fighting for the Iranian side): 'The wish of the imperialists is to frame this war – which is a war between imperialism and the Islamic Revolution – as a war between Arab and *Ajam*.' "Āyandeh-ye erāq yek āyandeh-ye eslāmist," *Jahād*, No. 32 (22 Ordibehesht 1361), p. 22. *Jahād* suggests another consequence of the war; that 'even if the ruling regime in Iran does not fall, it will not have the same revolutionary appeal as before' and that

cartoon depicting a fist (with *allāhu akbar* written on it) punching Saddam and Uncle Sam.[81] The war was framed not in nationalist terms but in internationalist (and specifically, anti-American) terms. CJ and its worldview were emblematic of the more radical internationalist politics of Khomeini's faction; indications of which could also be seen in Iran's wider geopolitical inclinations (such as their close relationship with the DPRK).[82]

CJ's brand of internationalism was deeply rooted in mistrust of America and American institutions. Likewise, their assessment of foreign governments and movements was measured in terms of their anti-Americanism. CJ expressed its support for El Salvador's FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front), noting that the lion's share of agricultural and industrial production, transport, and construction in El Salvador is 'at the disposal of the 14 wealthiest families in the country,' lamenting that 'American imperialism, when faced with a determined people and a popular uprising, quickly labels them as communists' and uses this as an excuse for intervention.[83] As mentioned previously, CJ had a presence in a handful of foreign countries. These missions were, at least in part, an extension of the Islamic Republic's diplomatic efforts. However, CJ's anti-American internationalism also played heavily into their foreign missions. In regard to its activities in Tanzania, CJ considered this to be a natural extension of the Iran's Islamic Revolution; the flagbearer of 'the Islam of the downtrodden, barefoot, and afflicted peoples of history.'[84]

### *Construction Jihad and the eternal revolution*

CJ considered itself to be the inheritor of a 1400 year old social movement, a contributor to the global revolution against *estekbār*, and a continuation of a century-long national movement for independence. CJ introduces Mirza Kouchak Khan's *jangali* partisan movement as a proto-Islamic Revolution, and Mirza himself as a martyr of the revolution. *Jahād* wrote a full-on hagiography of Mirza; no doubt inspired by ancient Iranian epics and

'the downtrodden and deprived masses of the world' would no longer look to Iran as an example. "Jang, āmrikā va moqe'iyat-e konuni-ye saddām," *Jahād*, No. 31 (18 Ordibehesht 1361), pp. 9-10.

[81] "Angizeh-hā-ye jang az didgāh-e āmrikā, erāq va irān," *Jahād*, No. 39 (Mehr 1361), p. 11.

[82] North Korean arms shipments first arrived in Iran soon after Saddam's invasion. By the end of 1982, North Korea was Iran's largest arms provider, as imports from the DPRK accounted for 40 percent of Iran's total arms imports. This is discussed in Shirzad Azad, "Iran and the Two Koreas: A Peculiar Pattern of Foreign Policy," *Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall-Winter 2012), pp. 175-176. This relationship continues to this day, with estimates from 2009 showing that Pyongyang earns over two billion dollars annually from selling missile parts and other weapons to Iran, which may contribute to DPRK's GDP by ten percent. See Ibid., p. 182.

[83] "Elsālvādur tabalvor-e qiyām va mobārezeh," *Jahād*, No. 44 (Azar 1361), pp. 66, 8.

[84] "Gozāreshi az fa'āliyat-hā-ye jahād-e sāzandegi dar tānzānia," *Jahād*, No. 109 (Khordad 1367), p. 16.

the chronicles of Imam Hussein. They recount the moment Mirza was killed as such: 'The criminals, who feared even his dead body, ordered that his head be severed from his lifeless body,' and quoted Mirza as having said: 'I lived with honour, and with honour I pursued the revolutionary path, and I will die with honour.'[85] CJ made a similar connection with the tobacco movement, further noting that whenever a movement in Iran took on a revolutionary shape, 'militant and progressive clerics' played a prominent role.[86] CJ praised Shariati as a 'great warrior against cultural colonialism' but made sure to point out that he never considered himself to be 'in the place of a jurist or *mujtahid*' but as an 'aware, impassioned, and concerned Muslim man.'[87] On the anniversary of his death, *Jahād* published an article quoting a myriad of *ulamā* who praised Shariati; including Beheshti, Khamenei, and Motahhari.[88]

Harkening to the Third Worldism of Fanon – and his eschewing of the American-Soviet binary, CJ affirmed the Iranian authenticity of the Islamic revolutionary movement; stating that 'in the early days of the revolution' there were segments of activists who sought to fit the revolution within 'pre-fabricated molds' or that they tried to adopt certain methods simply 'because in such-and-such year, such-and-such country (with its own specific circumstances), such-and-such group or faction' did so.[89]

Like any revolutionary organisation, CJ encountered problems when both it and the state it was a part of became increasingly institutionalised. While I would disagree with Bakhash's assertion that 'the revolutionaries had almost unquestionably accepted the economic model that informed the policies of the previous regime,' what can scarcely be questioned is that with the passage of time, CJ's form became progressively less radical.[90] Many within CJ were wary of the gradual institutionalisation of the organisation, characterised by its cadres becoming salaried and its administrative order becoming more centralised. Shakoori notes that – as the war against Iraq continued to rage on – 'the radical ruling groups and the revolutionary institutions (the Jihad and the Revolutionary Guard, who

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[85] "Mirzā kuchak khān: qorbāni-ye jaryān-e nefāq," *Jahād*, No. 22 (1 Azar 1360), pp. 34-35. Another statement attributed to Mirza (regarding assassination attempts against him that came from within his circle): 'I cannot agree to killing someone from among my comrades – who was by my side for years – for the crime of their temporary transgressions.' Ibid., p. 38.
[86] "Tahrim-e tanbāku avvalin gām-e rahāyi az changāl-e este'mār," *Jahād*, No. 28 (5 Esfand 1360), p. 8.
[87] "Shari'ati: mohājem-e bozorg aleih-e este'mār-e farhangi," *Jahād*, No. 34 (22 Khordad 1361), pp. 38, 71.
[88] "Shari'ati az negāh-hā," *Jahād*, No. 34 (22 Khordad 1361), pp. 40-41, 70.
[89] "Enqelāb va mardom," *Jahād*, No. 27 (22 Bahman 1360), p. 8. It should be noted that CJ seemed more wary of subversive forces of liberalism than communism: that in the early to mid 20th century in Iran, the ruling powers 'with liberal ideology – and so a lesser extent, communist ideology' tried to attract the people to itself.
[90] Bakhash, "Islam and Social Justice in Iran," p. 109.

were proponents of land redistribution) agreed that all efforts had to be directed at the war,' and thus that 'contentious issues such as land reform' should be put on hold.[91] This represented a significant hindrance to the radical revolutionaries, and could be said to represent a defanging of CJ (which would become further cemented after the end of the war, during the presidency of Rafsanjani who favoured a more technocratic approach to development).

Aviny, who was once described by Khamenei as 'the master of the martyrs who took up the pen,' said: 'If the revolutionary committees become a casualty of the revolution; if the epithet "ministry" is affixed to the Revolutionary Guards like a cancerous growth; if instead of governance becoming *jahādi*, CJ becomes governed; and if the revolution – like a disloyal cat who eats its children – consumes us all one by one… What a shame.'[92] A point of emphasis of CJ was always its anti-bureaucratic and anti-technocratic disposition. Even in banal regional reports, CJ sought to highlight the humility and hard-working nature of its cadres. In a report on the construction of 500 to 600 kilometres of roads in rural areas of Sistan-Baluchestan province, they made sure to note that this was done through 'shovel and pick' rather than more advanced equipment.[93] The organisation always prided itself on being composed of volunteers. Lob notes that *jahādgarān* did not have set schedules or fixed salaries; they 'worked long hours for meager wages or on a voluntary basis,' and many of them were 'young, committed, altruistic, and nonmaterialistic.'[94] Khomeini's representative in Hormuzgan province notes the small budget and comparative effectiveness of CJ: 'In the year 1981/82, Jihad has a budget of merely 125 million tomans, of which only 25 millions is spent on personnel.' He then laments that the provincial government's personnel expenses for the same year was 'over one billion tomans.'[95] In another instance, *Jahād* notes that the ratio between the operational costs (wages being the main cost) and the construction budget of CJ is 20/80. This is praised as 'unprecedented' and attributed to 'the revolutionary nature of this institution, its abstention from bureaucracy and paper-pushing, and likewise the faith and sacrifice of the *jahādgar* brothers and sisters.'[96] In the final analysis, CJ was influenced

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[91] Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 69.
[92] Quoted in Yousefi, "Between Illusion and Aspiration," p. 360. Morteza Aviny, "Jahād-e sāzandegi mazhar-e hameh-ye talāsh-e yek ommat," *Jahād*, No. 186/187 (Khordad/Tir 1375), p. 3.
[93] "Jahād-e sistān va baluchestān dar masir-e barnāmeh-rizi," p. 51.
[94] Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, pp. 126-127, 133.
[95] "Hormozgān bā manābe'i sarshār, az faqir-tarin manāteq-e irān ast," *Jahād*, No. 33 (5 Khordad 1361), p. 43. He also declared that CJ was 'the only institution' which successfully appealed to 'the deprived people of the province and especially the Sunni brothers.' (Hormuzgan has a significant Sunni population)
[96] "Nokāti pirāmun-e budjeh-ye pishnahādi-ye jahād-e sāzandegi barāye sāl," *Jahād*, No. 48 (Esfand 1361), p. 19.

greatly by the intersection between radical leftist and Islamic discourses that took place in Iran before the revolution (an intersection which became more visible as a result of the uneven development of the Pahlavi era and the resulting discontents). Specifically, CJ was an organ of the new Islamic radicalism which emerged in the 1960s and supplanted the Iranian left (culminating in the 1979 revolution). While its scope of activities was extensive and its presence became ubiquitous throughout the country in the 1980s, some of its more radical aims (namely, far-reaching land reform) were derailed by opposition from conservative *ulamā*.

**Conclusion**

The continued existence of parastatal civic organisations – relying, at least in part, on zealous cadres and revolutionary slogans – represents the continued impact of CJ in the Iranian polity. Ali Khamenei, when speaking to Construction Basij cadres in 2011, called it 'a popular, spontaneous movement … just like Construction Jihad at the start of the revolution.' He praised them both as movements wherein 'the work of the people is the catalyst for the policies of officials and authorities,' an allusion to CJ's 'bottom-up' order as described by Alemzadeh.[1] Construction Basij – similar to CJ in both its aims and its structure – was established in the early 1980s (albeit on a smaller scale, having had around 650,000 members), but unlike CJ still exists to this day.[2] It is a subgroup of Basij (full organisational name: *Basij-e mostaz'afin*, or 'Mobilisation of the Downtrodden'). While Basij is more well known as a paramilitary organisation, its scope of activities is quite broad, and Construction Basij is an important part of that. In the post-war years, when CJ's influence waned, IRGC and Basij were given a greater degree of sponsorship to participate in civil projects. Economic enclaves were established wherein IRGC and Basij had access to state resources while forming an independent economic base.[3] In the year 2017/18, for example, Construction Basij mobilised 860,000 of its cadres for public works projects in rural regions, and in the three-year period preceding that, it established 29,000 small scale food processing facilities throughout the country. This is all part of its adherence to the 'resistance economics' which Khamenei frequently calls for; a slogan which Basij commanders dub 'the most important path to saving the country.' [4] Khamenei's proposed resistance economics places a

[1] See Introduction, p. 8 n. 23 for background on Construction Basij. Ali Khamenei, "Bayānāt dar didār-e jahādgarān-e basij-e sāzandegi" (Speech, Tehran, 31 Shahrivar 1389).
[2] This figure is according to CJ's official records. Cited in Lob, *Iran's Reconstruction Jihad*, p. 225.
[3] This is discussed in Hesam Forozan, *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, pp. 75, 144.
[4] "Vazifeh-ye basij-e sāzandegi pā-ye kār āvordan-e zarfiyyat-hā-ye mardomi barāye komak-e be enqelāb ast," *Farhikhtegān*, 16 Ordibehesht 1397.

heavy emphasis on making Iran's economy as autarkic as possible while wresting much of the productive resources away from technocrats who favour more integration into the North American and European trade markets. Former *jahādgar* Hossein Yekta said in a recent interview: 'Some [individuals] may have struck and dissolved Jihad as an organisation, but they have never been able to uproot the idea of Jihad.'[5] CJ, as has been argued in this dissertation, serves as a counterpoint to Arjomand's argument that economics was 'one of the least important' considerations of the Islamic Revolution.[6] And if we are to accept Edmund Burke's assertion that the revolution in Iran was a 'seismic event' that 'swept away not only a regime but a view of the world,' or Mirsepassi's notion of the revolution being 'an enigma … outside the net of all established historical explanations,' then CJ should be a crucial part of understanding how the revolution came to be.[7]

In terms of material legacy, CJ's footprint is undeniable. 'As in post-revolutionary Cuba,' notes Lob, literacy rates among Iranian villagers skyrocketed: from 6 percent in 1972, to 48 percent in 1986 to 69 percent in 1996.[8] This was, by and large, due to the efforts of CJ. By just 1983, it had built more rural roads (over 12,000 km) than had even existed before the revolution.[9] Lob, while sceptical of the overall efficacy of CJ in reaching its aims, concedes that standards of living in Iranian rural areas 'have improved in absolute terms … since the revolution and due in large part to Construction Jihad's efforts.'[10] This could also explain why CJ was, for the most part, popular among the people it was intended to serve. One 1989 report by a sociologist gauged the opinion of a sample population of villagers from Esfahan, Fars, and Khorasan provinces, and found that 85 percent of respondents saw CJ as having had a positive effect on their life.[11] One *jahādgar* wrote in 1983 that 'if we know that our governance will not last any more than two more days, and that on the third day they will – God forbid – take the reins from us, these two days must be spent in awakening the downtrodden and deprived people.'[12] However, the government in question would – of

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[5] Hossein Yekta, "Jahād-e sāzandegi az ebtedā tā konun," interview by Amir-Hossein Sabeti, *Jahān Ārā*, Ofogh TV, 27 Khordad 1402.
[6] Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown*, p. 204.
[7] Edmund Burke III, "Islam and Social Movements: Methodological Reflections," in *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements*, p. 17. Mirsepassi, *Iran's Quiet Revolution*, p. 5.
[8] Statistics are from World Bank official data. Cited in Lob, "An institutional history of the Iranian Construction Jihad," p. 63.
[9] Official data via Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 91.
[10] Lob and Habibi, "The Politics of Development and Security in Iran's Border Provinces," p. 271.
[11] This report was the work of Faramarz Rafipour, who did extensive field work in this field. A good summary of this work can be found in Shakoori, *The State and Rural Development in the Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 90.
[12] "Jahād-e sāzandegi omid dārad qabl az hall-e moshkel-e maskan dar shahr, moshkel-e zamin dar rustā hall shavad," p. 17.

course – outlive CJ, and the changes in Iran's economic order since the 1980s have been complicated to say the least. The aforementioned Hossein-Ali Azimi laments that by the end of the war, 'we had adopted the monarchical system,' and that his comrades in CJ 'had either become martyred or were chewed up and spit out by the country's managerial order,' citing CJ's conversion into a ministry (among other factors) as the catalyst for its downfall.[13] While many have called for far-reaching privatisation plans – with Khamenei himself having gone so far as to say in 2006 that 80 percent of the state sector should be privatised, Harris notes that a 2010 parliamentary commission reported that 'out of 70 billion USD worth of assets of [state-owned enterprises] divested since 2006, only 13.5 percent of the shares had gone to the private sector,' with the rest going to the 'pseudo-state or parastatal sector.'[14] This new sector in the Iranian economy has been described by some as the 'quasi-state shadow sector' in the guise of private companies.[15] By 2007, the IRGC's Khatamul Anbiya construction garrison employed 25 thousand engineers and owned 812 registered companies in Iran and abroad.[16] Since then, these figures are understood to have ballooned, with some estimates going so far as to claim that the IRGC controls up to 40 percent of Iran's GDP.[17] While this estimate may not be entirely scientific or reliable, what is evident is that the parastatal sector continues to be a big player in the Iranian economy. However, while this is broadly a legacy of the 'government unto itself' that characterised CJ, a large portion of this new 'quasi-state shadow sector' is more technocratic in nature than zealously revolutionary.

CJ remains, in the mythos of the Islamic Republic, a platonic ideal. Its name is frequently invoked and there are many who claim to be their successors. Its role as a platonic ideal – and its cadres' stature alongside those who fought in the Iran-Iraq War – remains an essential element of the Islamic Republic's identity. More specifically, we see the invocation of CJ play a role in the taxonomy of the classes of Iranian society. Those who are opposed to the state (still referred to as *zedd-e enqelāb*; 'counter-revolutionaries') are classified as having the highest level of material comforts. One of Khomeini's more famous declarations was: 'Only those who have tasted the pain of poverty, deprivation, and downtrodden ness will remain with us until the end.'[18] He disliked the notion of the wealthy being in government,

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[13] Mashayekhi and Hosseini, *Rasm-e jahād*, p. 60.
[14] Harris, "The Rise of the Subcontractor State," p. 46.
[15] See Forozan, *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 154.
[16] "1500 tarh-e omrāni dar kārnāmeh-ye qarārgāh-e khātamol anbiyā; tahrim-hā va mahdudiyat-hā moshkel-sāz nabud," *Sarmāyeh*, 3 Aban 1386. In 2011, then oil minister Rostam Qasemi said that Khatamul Anbiya 'must replace large foreign companies.' Quoted in Forozan, *The Military in Post-Revolutionary Iran*, p. 149.
[17] These estimates are discussed in Ibid., p. 148.
[18] Khomeini, "Payām be mellat-e irān dar sālgard-e koshtār-e khunin-e makkeh," 1988, in *Sahifeh-ye emām*, Vol. 21, p. 86. He also credited '*pāyinshahr* dwellers' (i.e. the urban poor) as being responsible for the

warning against those who were 'middle class and above' attaining powerful positions.[19] Indeed, Khomeini's appeal among both rural and urban poor – represented in both slogans and in his support for initiatives such as CJ – was a significant reason for the Islamic Republic's survival in the 1980s despite war, instability, and economic isolation. However, while Khomeini used those slogans in the 1980s, they remain frequently-invoked slogans even today. In 2019, Khamenei made it clear which class of society he considered his constituency, declaring that 'the downtrodden are the rightful leaders and vanguards of humanity.'[20] In a 2020 speech, he dismissed some elements of the opposition, saying: 'Not only did they not sacrifice their lives for Iran, but they are not even willing to give up their comforts and their interests for the sake of country.'[21] Hearkening back to CJ's pinnacle – and emphasising its continued life after its organisational dissolution – is a rhetorical device much in the same vein; suggesting that the Islamic Republic – contrary to its privileged and cosmopolitan opposition – is founded and upheld by the will of the masses.[22] Thus, CJ's legacy continues to shape the identity of the Islamic Republic in more ways than one; not only was it the originator of the para-state model in Iran, but it serves as a platonic ideal and sometimes even a political cudgel.

As this dissertation argued in the first and second chapters, CJ must be viewed in the context of longer run forces, especially the uneven development of 1960s and 70s under Mohammad-Reza Shah. I have argued that the Shah's attempts to modernise the economy of rural Iran unintentionally aided the emergence of a new Islamic radicalism. This new Islamic radicalism drew many from the Iranian left and ultimately superseded the left as a revolutionary force, in large part due to the impact the likes of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Mahmud Taleghani, and Ali Shariati had on the discourse. This emergent discourse – which balanced a radical all-encompassing rejection of the status quo with invocations of Shia Islamic themes – also benefited from the concurrent emergence of anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa,

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republic's continued survival: 'If not for them, we would be in exile, or imprisoned, or in seclusion.' Ruhollah Khomeini, "Sokhanān-e emām dar didār bā mas'ulin-e keshvar," *Jahād*, No. 28 (5 Esfand 1360), p. 5.

[19] Ibid., p. 62.

[20] Ali Khamenei, "Bayānāt dar didār-e basijiyān" (Speech, Tehran, 6 Azar 1398). He rationalised this position using a verse of Quran: 'And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors' (Quran, 28:5).

[21] Ali Khamenei, "Khotbeh-hā-ye namāz-e jom'eh-ye tehrān" (Speech, Tehran, 27 Dey 1398). The context of this statement was in response to the slogan, 'Neither Gaza, nor Lebanon: I sacrifice my life only for Iran' (*na ghazzeh, na lobnān, jānam fadā-ye irān*), popular among anti-Islamic Republic protestors.

[22] This phenomenon was also observed by scholars. Keiko Sakurai notes that 'the majority of devotees of the Islamic Revolution … were deprived people.' Keiko Sakurai, "University Entrance Examination and the Making of an Islamic Society in Iran: A Study of the Post-Revolutionary Iranian Approach to Konkur," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2004), p. 404.

and Latin America which transcended the bipolarity of the Cold War. Concurrently, as Oscar Sanchez-Sibony mentions, 'it appeared that the mutual economic usefulness of the Soviet-Third World connection had a natural ceiling.'[23] During this Third Worldist wave, the Iranian Islamic movement was able to lean on its (real or perceived) cultural authenticity to supplant the left and become the dominant discourse in radical circles. This supports what Mirsepassi refers to as the Iranian Revolution's having 'created something new that drew deeply from multiple "residual cultural elements," in a circulatory interaction of secular revolutionary currents, religious traditions, and global pressures.'[24] In the third and final chapter, we explored how those influences came to fruition in the form of CJ. Lob devotes considerable attention to CJ as a vehicle of soft power for the Islamic Republic. However, in a more granular analysis, CJ could be seen as a vehicle of soft power for – specifically – the more economically radical elements of the nascent Islamic Republic, such as those who pushed for land appropriation. With this dissertation, we have thus built upon the foundation laid by Lob while presenting an alternative view of CJ's role in the Iranian polity which has contributed to the historiography by viewing the organisation through the frame of long run ideological trends that first emerged in the 1960s and later manifested in the Islamic revolutionary movement.

While this dissertation has thereby made a contribution to the field, further areas of research could include more first-hand accounts of *jahādgarān*, as well as more research into other modes of CJ propaganda besides text-based publications, e.g. placards and murals (which were proliferated on a large scale and were more geared toward the average person, whose literacy was often considerably lower than that of CJ's own cadres).[25] Further attention could be given to overall shifts in the discourse in the Shia world outside of Iran (such as in Iraq or Lebanon, which both had Shia political movements of varying degrees of success). There could also be a more thorough investigation into Persian-language historiography on CJ. Likewise, the scope could be expanded to more thoroughly analyse CJ's dissolution in 2001, and exploring the role that para-statal civil organisations play in Iran today while assessing to what extent these organisations are a continuation of the CJ of the 1980s. By

[23] Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 244.
[24] Ali Mirsepassi, "A Quiet Revolution: In the Shadow of the Cold War," p. 19.
[25] Raffaele Mauriello describes murals as 'a form of public art par excellence' in the Islamic Republic, as muralism is 'anti-elitist and claims to represent the masses.' Raffaele Mauriello, "The Evolution of Ideology and Politics in Iran from the Early Days of the Islamic Republic," *Journal of Research and Didactics in Geography*, Vol. 1, No. 12 (June 2023), p. 132. As such, a study of CJ's use of murals could prove to offer a more distilled version of CJ's vision than long form print materials do.

expanding our knowledge of CJ, we could potentially better understand this pivotal period in Iranian history which could lead to a broader understanding of the complexities and legacies of the revolution and hopefully enrich our understanding of Iranian society today.

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