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## A Generational Perspective on the Development of the Political History of Modern Iran

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**A GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF MODERN IRAN**

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Political Science  
in the College of Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
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2015

## ABSTRACT

Mark Twain once remarked, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme.” If such recurrences happen with some discernible periodicity it would support the view that society develops cyclically. Though still controversial, this perspective has found a home in the long wave cycle theories of economics and international relations. For decades, international relation theorists have argued over which factor has primarily driven the interstate system, but this paradigm transforms that debate into a query over which of them serves as the medium for carrying waves of social change, be it war, trade, class, or gender relations. William Strauss and Neil Howe, however, found that there is no medium. Instead, long wave cycles result from oscillations of the supply and demand for order due to generational turnover. Essentially, it is a method of error correction, of stabilizing society against the forces of disruptive change wrought by modernity. Though it broadly encompasses many long wave cycle theories, it has yet to be applied to study the modern history of a developing country. Iran offers such a case to test the limits of Strauss and Howe’s theory, which this study will perform by comparing its history over the last two centuries, particularly since the turn of the twentieth century, to their theory’s expectations. Moreover, in accounting for the deviations, this study attempts to extend their theory to include the modernization process itself, and how it relates to the generational cycle.

To my parents for all their love and support, for which I will be forever grateful.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank the chair of my thesis committee Houman Sadri for all the help he has given me with my research. Also, I am grateful for my other committee members, Kyungkook Kang and Jonathan Knuckey, for their willingness to invest the time and effort to review and offer constructive comments on my research, which were very helpful for improving upon it.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Thesis

How do societies develop? In cycles? A linear progression? Randomly? Our ancient ancestors believed changed occurred in cycles as with the seasons and the circling of the stars in the heavens. With the introduction of Christianity, Western thought began to shift towards a linear understanding of time as denoted in the Bible beginning with the Genesis story's telling of the creation of humankind and ending with Revelation's foretelling the victory of good over evil once and for all. This view in combination with the Greek's way of understanding nature through reason produced the modern world with its many advances, but it does not capture the whole of how civilizations evolve. The sense that history in some way repeats itself or at least rhymes, that there are themes and patterns to be drawn, still endures.<sup>1</sup> Though contemporary historians are often loath to draw lessons or parallels, the human mind cannot help but draw out patterns and regularity from even seeming chaos.

In that vein, Neil Howe and William Strauss crafted a theory of generations by looking at Anglo-American history through primary resources such as journals, diaries, correspondence, speeches, periodicals, etc. They noticed that the history of that people moves in a cyclic pattern with the duration lasting the length of a very long life of roughly 80-100 years, comprised of four periods, which they called turnings.<sup>2</sup> Though their theory originally was only applied to Anglo-American culture, John Xenakis, a mathematician with a strong interest in history, universalized their theory to include all societies.<sup>3</sup> This study will attempt to apply this theory to explain the developmental path of modern Iran over the course of the past century. It must be noted, however, that Strauss and Howe link the dynamics of the generational cycle to modernity, such that it cannot be expected to apply completely to Iran. Hence, deviations are to be expected.

## **Hypothesis**

There has long been a debate over the primary driver of social change, whether technology, war, class conflict, gender inequality, or some combination of these factors. The cyclical perspective transforms this into a query concerning the medium by which waves of social change propagate. Oddly enough, this was essentially the dilemma that physicists around the turn of the twentieth century faced concerning how light waves propagate. Since all wave phenomena such as sound or oceanic waves up to that point were known to require some oscillatory medium in order to travel, it was only natural to conclude that light must do so as well, though it was not at all clear what that substance may have been. Their solution was to posit that light oscillated through a substance called the luminiferous aether, which was thought to permeate throughout all of space. Yet, all attempts to determine its existence failed, which led Albert Einstein to reject the concept completely. Instead, he came to the radical conclusion that light waves must be self-propagating oscillations of electric and magnetic fields (Figure 1), an idea whose implications brought forth the theory of relativity.<sup>4</sup>

In a somewhat similar fashion, Strauss and Howe, following in the footsteps of Polybius, Ibn Khaldun, William Toynbee, and Quincy Wright, proposed that there is no medium for waves of social change. Instead, they propagate themselves simply through the generational turnover via oscillations of Talcott Parson's supply and demand for social order (Figure 2).<sup>5</sup> The other perceived media of social change are simply manifestations of this process. Though outside factors can have a great influence on how events unfold, for instance, it is the nature of the actors which determines how a society responds.<sup>6</sup> The intent of this study is to show this idea can be applied to the case of Iran. This is the first attempt to use a long wave theory to examine the political history of a developing country.

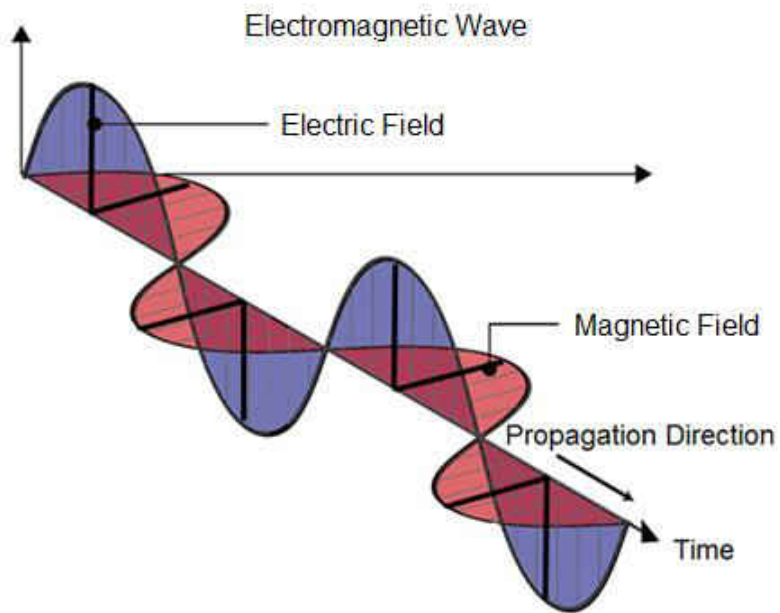


Figure 1- Oscillating electric and magnetic field.  
 Source: Florida State University National High Magnetic Field Laboratory  
<http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/electromagnetic/>

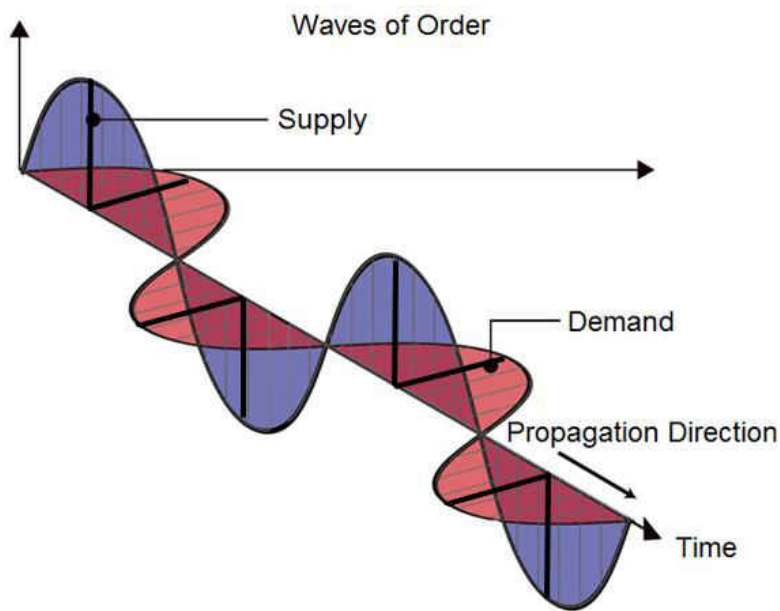


Figure 2- The supply and demand waves of order.  
 Source: Florida State University National High Magnetic Field Laboratory  
<http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/electromagnetic/>

At the core of Strauss and Howe's generational theory is the idea that the nature of and relationship between age cohorts—the elderly, middle-aged, young adults, and children—changes over time.<sup>7</sup> Undergirding this concept of cyclic as opposed to linear development is that modernity allows generation cohort roles to change cyclically versus the rather static nature of traditional societies, in which what it means to be young and old remains roughly constant. Such role changes presage shifts in the relations between a regime's leadership and the masses and the leadership dynamics within a regime. These role changes are the source of long wave cycles.<sup>8</sup>

Strauss and Howe's generational cycle of four turnings is comparable to the earth's solar cycle of four seasons. The First and Third turnings are akin to the equinoxes, being consolidating phases, called the High and Unraveling respectively. The Second and Fourth, akin to the solstices, are the most consequential for the shifts in societal trends. In the Second Turning, which they call the Awakening, relations between disciplinary elders and a recalcitrant, idealistic youth become contentious, eventually leading to a massive shift in the values of society. The Fourth Turning, the Crisis period, sees the united efforts of the elderly and the young to rebuild a new social order on the ashes of the current one whose death began with the rebellion of the youth in the Awakening.<sup>9</sup> Hence the Second Turning should feature a large chasm between a state's leadership and its young adults, while the Fourth Turning should see a unified society with much more willingness to engage in violent conflict. This dynamic should also be stronger the more developed Iran becomes, with anomalies being greatest near the cusp of the transition from a traditional society.

### **Policy Importance**

If policymakers can anticipate the changes in the dynamics between a state's leadership and its citizenry they can more easily chart a course that takes into account the necessities of

both. Such knowledge should bring methods of threat assessment and determining levels of risk into closer alignment with reality. For instance, if US policymakers had known Iran's location in its cycle circa 1953, they may have come to the conclusion that the greater gamble would be to overthrow Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq rather than risking that he would side with the Soviets if left in power. Knowing that, perhaps the US would have taken better stock of its fears and reached an accommodation with him that better took both the US's and Iran's interests into account.

US leadership could have seen that the alternative included a likely scenario in which the unwillingness of the Mohammad Reza Shah to restore representative government, given the history of the reign of his father, Reza Shah, would lead to his overthrow. They would also have been able to determine a time frame of about 22-30 years for when the events leading to that outcome would likely begin, placing them sometime between 1975 and 1983. If the uncertainties of the Cold War were such that that period of alignment with Iran merited the cost of creating a revolutionary regime that would in all probability be extremely hostile to US interests then perhaps the same choice would have been made. Nevertheless, it would have been made with much greater understanding of the possible consequences, which were only vaguely hinted at when the Central Intelligence Agency fretted about "blowback."<sup>10</sup>

### **Theoretical Importance**

If it can be shown that Strauss and Howe's theory is applicable to a developing country such as Iran, then it could prove fruitful for comparative politics. Finding the points at which societies are located within their cycles can anchor comparisons in more temporally appropriate periods. In comparing the conditions for revolution, for example, if one society is in the Second Turning and another in the Fourth Turning, the state of the societies can look similar, both often

experiencing massive protests and political upheaval. Yet in the former, revolutions often fail, such as the 1848 revolutions of Europe, while in the latter they often succeed like the French, Russian, Chinese, and Iranian Revolutions. Identifying the “generational mood” of each society should thus aid in directing the research questions that should be asked in determining the differences in outcome. In this vein, when applied to developing societies such as Iran, generational theory may further bring some insight into theories of modernization and revolution. For according to Strauss and Howe, the generational cycle is born out of the linear mentality of modernity.<sup>11</sup>

### **Literature Review**

Why use cycles to look at Iran’s historical development? Why should there be a cyclic pattern to any society’s evolution? Many phenomena in the natural world, from planetary orbits, to atomic vibrations and the circadian rhythm of the cells in our bodies operate in a cyclic fashion. Would it be so surprising to find that at least some societies develop in a cyclic fashion? By looking at Iran in this fashion we can find patterns even across very divergent institutions and periods, such as occurred between the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of the Islamic Republic.

### Kondratieff Waves

As mentioned at the beginning, thinking of life as moving in cycles was the norm for the West, though Polybius was the first known western scholar to give a systematic treatment of that viewpoint, as he sought to understand why the cycles occur. Ibn Khaldun in the fourteenth century also did much the same in his observations of the length of Islamic dynasties during the golden age of that empire.<sup>12</sup> This view, however, remained out of sight and mind in the West until the early twentieth century when in 1847 a British economist noted a pattern of severe

famines occurring every 53 years. Yet, he made no attempt to explain this pattern. It was not until 1913 that a Dutch economist, J. van Gelderen, found evidence for the existence of long waves directly within economic data. Perhaps because he only published in his native language, most only know of Nicolai Kondratieff, a Russian economist, who made the discovery independently a decade later.<sup>13</sup>

Looking at patterns in the fluctuations in price levels led them to conclude that in addition to the short business cycle of expansion and contraction, the economy also experienced oscillations between upswings and downswings on long timescales of 40-60 years. Kondratieff went further, though, stating that the long period oscillations in the economy were responsible for the more catastrophic wars that seemed to break out once every 50 years—the average length of the so-called Kondratieff wave. This idea has spawned a number of other theories of long cycles or processes based on different perspectives of the cause of the long waves and their level of analysis.<sup>14</sup>

### Longwave Cycle Theories

Joshua Goldstein, author of *Long Cycles: Prosperity in War in the Modern Age*, gives a good overview of theories concerning these causes in his article, “Kondratieff Waves as War Cycles.” Since the 1930s the main schools of thought as to the cause of Kondratieff waves have been the capital investment, capitalist crisis, innovation, and war cycle theories. Kondratieff himself held to the capitalist investment theory along with Jay Forrester and John Sterman, which posits that long waves are created by excessive large-scale investments in fixed capital such as infrastructure and buildings that occur during in an upswing and the subsequent depreciation of those assets during a downswing. With the depreciation of the downswing comes the need to make another round of investment, leading to overinvestment, thus continuing

the cycle. The capitalist crisis theory incorporates the Leninist interpretation of Marxism that the tendency towards a falling rate of profit causes a downswing followed by imperial expansion and suppression of labor, which comprise the upswing.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most accepted explanation is the innovation theory, which was promoted by Joseph Schumpeter, Gerhard Mensch, and Christopher Freeman. It basically boils down to the notion of creative destruction. On the upswing of the cycle, clusters of innovations form a new leading sector of the economy. Yet, as it matures with growing investment, further innovation is discouraged since the products are yielding healthy returns, whose rate thus begins to diminish, which slows the economy producing a downswing. The process begins a new when the downswing motivates the creation of a new cluster of innovations, with a lag between creation and market penetration.<sup>16</sup>

On the contrary, Goldstein holds to the war theory explanation. The war cycle school originates from Quincy Wright's *Study of War* published in 1942. He put forth three tentative explanations for the link between Kondratieff waves and war. 1) Generations alternately reacting against the previous one, 2) the lag in time necessary to recover economically from one war to the next, 3) and the period of party dominance lasting an average 40-60 years. From his work, three main schools of thought developed concerning the mechanism linking war with long waves—the leadership cycle school, the world system school, and the power transition school. In these schools, however, the long waves consist of a pair of Kondratieff waves, bringing Strauss and Howe's theory closer into view.<sup>17</sup>

As the author of the founder of the first school, George Modelski is its most prominent supporter, but it also includes Arnold Toynbee, William. R. Thompson, and L. G. Zuk. Global wars occur on every other upswing, and in their aftermath inaugurate a new (or renewed) world



leader, creating a new international order. Modelski actually specifies periods within his cycle based on the supply and demand for order. Immanuel Wallerstein founded the second world system school, which is akin to Modelski's theory with a Marxist twist in that he sees the economic system serving as the foundation of hegemony where Modelski argues for the severance of global politics from economics.<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between long waves and any of the factors, however, may not be so clear. Zuk and Thompson provide a more nuanced account of the causal relationship between war and the Kondratieff wave. Their research found that global wars are not responsible for price upswings, but that they intensify the height of the upswing such that without them they would be difficult to discern. Global wars also consistently correspond with the downswing in prices.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Solomos Solomou found, innovations do not come in clusters as Schumpeter and Mensch supposed, but are distributed more randomly throughout the entirety of the Kondratieff wave. Freeman, however, while conceding the continuous stream of innovation, still holds that there exists periods when the rate of invention creates a pool of innovation, or "swarms," as he puts it. Such disruptions must exist if innovation does indeed drive the long wave.<sup>20</sup> These kinds of qualifiers point toward the blurring of the distinctions between the different schools of thought, to the point where all of their causal factors could be included in a single model, with theoretical disputes being over which factor should be emphasized. Most appear to center around innovation.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the lack of understanding over the cause of long waves, researchers took up the idea and began to use it to look at economic and international affairs such as the internationalization of civil wars, changes in alliance norms,<sup>22</sup> and Brian M. Pollins and Randall L. Schweller's application of Goldstein's war cycle theory to explain Frank Klingberg's foreign

policy cycle. Klingberg supposed that over a period of 47 years the US alternated from introverted and extroverted moods with war being more likely during the latter. Goldstein divided the longwave of the global economy into periods of stagnation, rebirth, expansion, and stagflation. The first pair forms the downswing of a Kondratieff wave and the second pair, the upswing. They also recall the periods of Modelski's leadership cycle of global war, world power, delegitimation, and deconcentration (Table 1), though the period of course is only about half that of Modelski's and it starts with the period which for Modelski is the one just before global war. Pollins and Randall claimed that the long wave causes the introverted and extroverted phases.<sup>23</sup>

Table 1: Modelski Longwave Cycle of Hegemony Supply and Demand for Order

<b>Period</b>	<b>Demand</b>	<b>Supply</b>
Global War	High	Low
World Leadership	High	High
Delegitimation	Low	High
Deconcentration	Low	Low

### Criticism of the Longwave

Without a solid understanding of how Kondratieff waves are created, it is not surprising that there is plenty of skepticism about whether they even exist or are only statistical figments of its supporters' imaginations. A major criticism leveled against long cycle theories is that there is no agreement on the dating of the periods of oscillation, though there is agreement on the approximate dates. Neither do the long cycle theories agree on the identity of the hegemon and the period of their reigns.<sup>24</sup> More fundamentally, there is evidence in favor of the balance of power theory's hypothesis that conflict is more likely to occur during periods when there is great disparity between one global power and the others. This is contrary to what is expected from the

war cycle theories. However, it must be said that the results of the frequency of conflict can vary depending on which dataset is used whether, Quincy Wright's, Jack Levy's, David Singer's, Melvin Small's, Lewis Richardson's, or Bruce Bueno de Mesquita's. That still leaves the validity of war/hegemonic type of long cycle theories in doubt, though.<sup>25</sup> Even more damaging, the timing of the turning points predicted by the Kondratieff wave is not entirely in accord with the events of the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup>

The most fundamental problem critics of long wave cycle theories have noted is that spectral analysis—the breaking down of periodic time series data into a summation series of sine and cosine functions—has not consistently discovered long wave cycles. This is the case whether the analysis is performed for conflict or economic data. Supporters of longwave cycles counter that the method of spectral analysis that has been used is not appropriate for international relations data since the long cycles do not occur at fixed periods of a given length of time. Rather, the time period varies from cycle to cycle and period to period since it involves nonlinear phenomena. However, Nathaniel Beck, a critic of long waves, did actually find evidence for a long cyclic pattern to war for the post-Napoleonic era, using cross spectrum analysis—subjecting the covariance of two time series data sets to spectral analysis—to look at the interrelationship between war and economic waves.<sup>27</sup>

Two alternative methods have been put forth by Lois W. Sayrs and Luís Aguiar-Conraria et al. Sayrs models the war cycle as a Markov process with the null hypothesis being that any cyclic pattern in the occurrence of war is due to the accumulation of random error. Though his methodology did not confirm the existence of Kondratieff waves, it did find a cyclic pattern corresponding to the shorter Kuznet waves whose periods are about half that of the Kondratieff wave, lasting slightly more than 20 years. He also found the cyclic pattern more strongly evident

in the post-Napoleonic era.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the study by Aguiar-Conraria, did find Kondratieff waves using the wavelet analytic method, with periods of 60 years from the early 1700s to the mid-1800s.<sup>29</sup>

### The Generational Perspective

Even if longwaves do actually exist, there still is as of yet no agreement as to the mechanism that drives the cyclic pattern. Yet, as with the cyclic model itself, the classical philosophers have seen what may have been right under our noses all along. The forces of history ultimately have their origin in us—meaning that the turnover of the generations is likely somehow the major, though perhaps not the only, source of longwave cycles. Among modern scholars, Toynbee and Wright thought as much, since the character of who is in positions of power and subordination matter.<sup>30</sup>

This core idea has already cropped up apart from the traditional long cycle theories in the study of American history. It has long been recognized that American society has experienced a number of “Great Awakenings” at fairly regular intervals. William McLoughlin placed them at a frequency of roughly once every 60 years with a period of about 30 years in his *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform: An Essay on Religion and Social Change in American, 1607-1977*. As I will show, though, his one stroke cycle of homeostasis interrupted by a generation of revivalism misjudges the timing of the Great Awakenings since its 30 years is longer than it should be and it does not include other periods of the longwave.<sup>31</sup> Yet, can other such periodic behaviors be identified in American history? How many such periods and together would they comprise a longwave cycle?

Working within the innovation school of thought off of ideas developed by Van Duijn, Orley M. Amos, Jr. and Kevin M. Currier sought a deeper understanding of what drives the cycle

of innovations in products and processes. They concluded that the interaction between human needs and the environment was the cause, that the behavioral traits inculcated by economic conditions in turn produce future economic conditions which then feed back into the behavioral traits and so forth.<sup>32</sup> This is similar in form, though not explanation to the generational theory put forth by Edward Cheung in his *Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Social Cycles: Volume 1 North American Long Waves*. His idea is fairly simple. The upswings and downswings of the Kondratieff wave are matched by periods of energy and inactivity in political change when a baby boom type generation is young and old, respectively since the young clamor for change while the old seek stability. He assumed incorrectly, though, that the elderly cohort always possesses the desire for stability and the youth to challenge the established order.<sup>33</sup> Two periods is thus not enough to capture the entire dynamic of the generational cycle. Yet, that idea combined with Modelski's world leadership cycle theory, along with Amos and Currier's behavioral-environmental interaction explanation for the Kondratieff wave, basically provides the conceptual basis Strauss and Howe's generational theory.

### Strauss and Howe's Model

#### *Supply and Demand for Order*

Strauss and Howe looked at agency within long cycles on a very large scale by analyzing differences between generation cohorts. The interaction between the waves of supply and demand for order, which shapes as well as results from generational turnover, drives the cycle, pushing it from one turning to the next, until it completes the Fourth Turning, upon which the cycle begins anew. The First Turning, called the High, comes off the heels of a successfully resolved Crisis, the Second Turning, an Awakening that challenges the new order brought forth in the High, the Third Turning, an Unraveling which continues the erosion of the order, and

finally ending with the Fourth Turning in another Crisis. These broad trends are shown in the graph of the supply for social order in Figure 3.

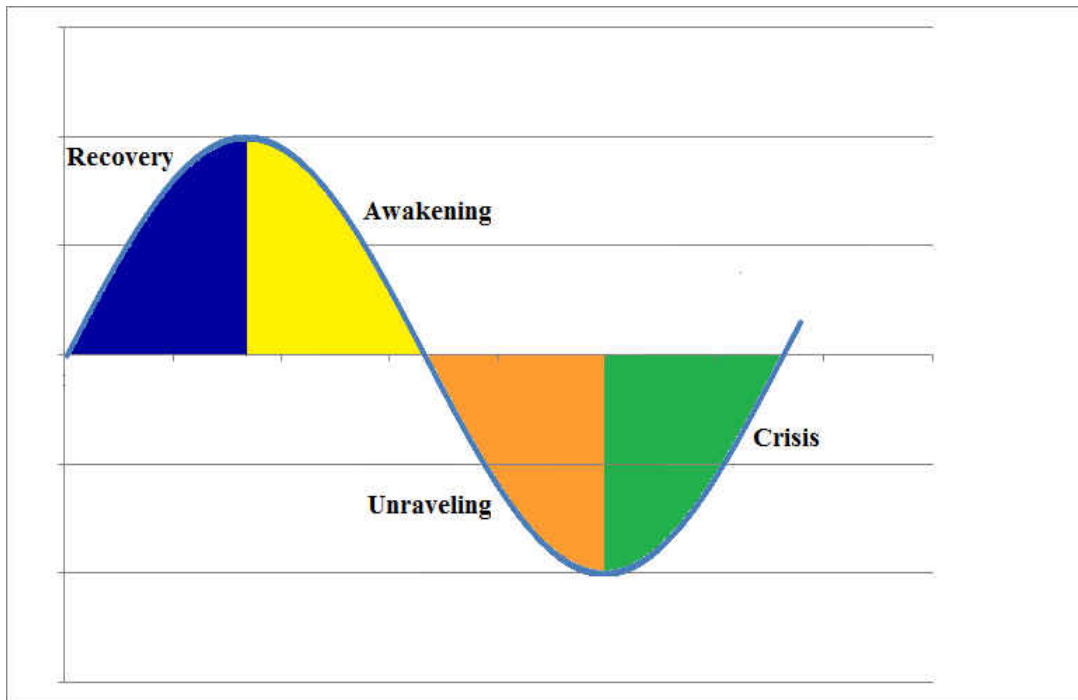


Figure 3- The cycle of the supply of social order throughout the generational cycle.

Figure 4 shows the generic supply and demand waves for social order over the course of a generational cycle in two dimensions. As can be seen, the demand actually leads the supply. Figure 5 illustrates the demand wave for the United States from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. Note that in the case of demand, the peaks, troughs, and inflection points—at the x-intercepts where the growth rate flips from increasing to decreasing or vice versa—do not mark the temporal boundaries of the turnings as they do for supply. These boundaries, indicated by the white lines, are established in this fashion because the supply concerns the passage of history simply as it happens rather than as the society wishes it would, as implied by the demand, though of course the latter still affects the course of events.

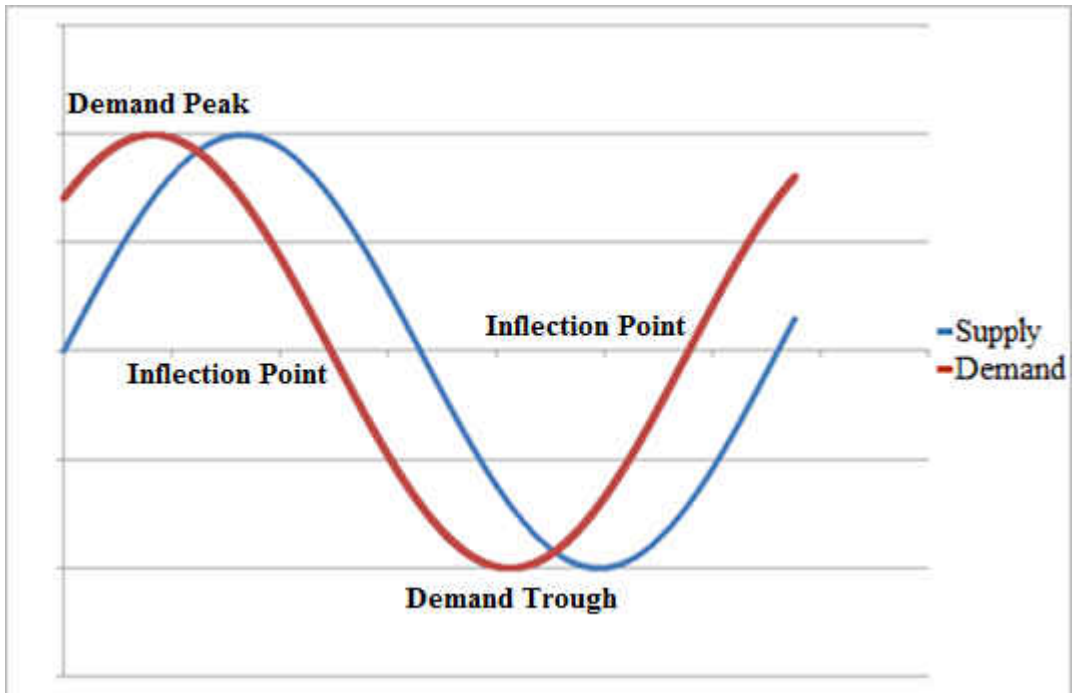


Figure 4- The supply and demand for social order throughout the generational cycle.

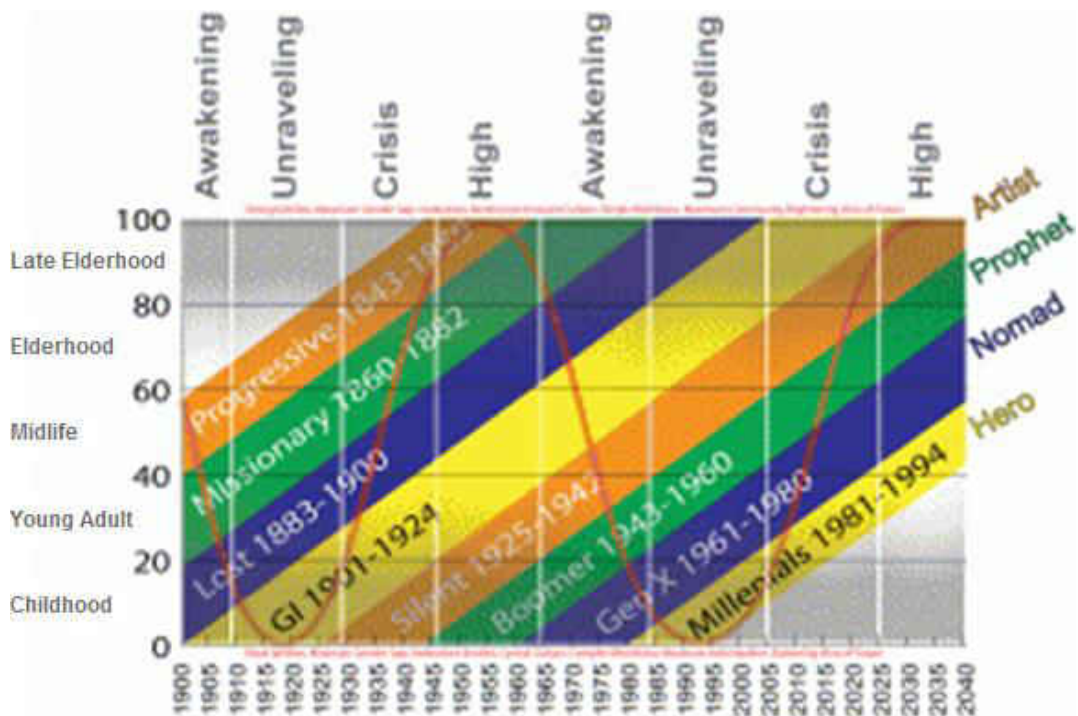


Figure 5- The cycle of demand for social order in American history from 1900 to the present.

Source: The Gen X

<http://www.thegenxfiles.com/2009/02/13/441/>

Both supply and demand are idealized as sine waves since that function follows after Strauss and Howe’s cyclic pattern, as specified in Table 2. Once the demand curve reaches an inflection point within a particular turning, the growth rate turns in advance of the supply. For example, people grow tired of the strictures and austerity that characterize a Recovery before it ends, such that the demand for social order peaks even as the supply still has yet to reach its maximum value, though it increases at a diminishing rate until petering out completely at its peak. Afterward, in the Awakening the supply contracts at an increasing rate until it reaches the Unraveling.<sup>34</sup> A simpler way to view the relationship between the supply and demand for order is to look at their values at the demand peak, trough, and inflection points. Categorizing each value as high or low (Figure 6), then yields a pair of these binary values for each turning as in Table 3. Notice the correlation to the phases of Modelski’s hegemony cycle from Table 1.

Table 2: Rate of Change of the Growth Rate after the Demand Curve’s Inflection Points

<b>Turning</b>	<b>Changing Growth Rate of Demand</b>	<b>Changing Growth Rate of Supply</b>
Recovery	Falling increasingly	Rising decreasingly
Awakening	Falling decreasingly	Falling increasingly
Unraveling	Rising increasingly	Falling decreasingly
Crisis	Rising decreasingly	Rising increasingly

Strauss and Howe further link the generational cycle to a number of other purported cyclic phenomena such as party realignment theory, Klingberg’s cycle of foreign policy orientation, and Kondratieff waves. Each of those cyclic theories are two-period cycles as opposed to Strauss and Howe’s four-period cycle. Two cyclic iterations in each of the other theories then comprises one of the latter’s. In this way, it improves upon them by differentiating between the two upswings of each four-period cycle and between the two downswings.<sup>35</sup>



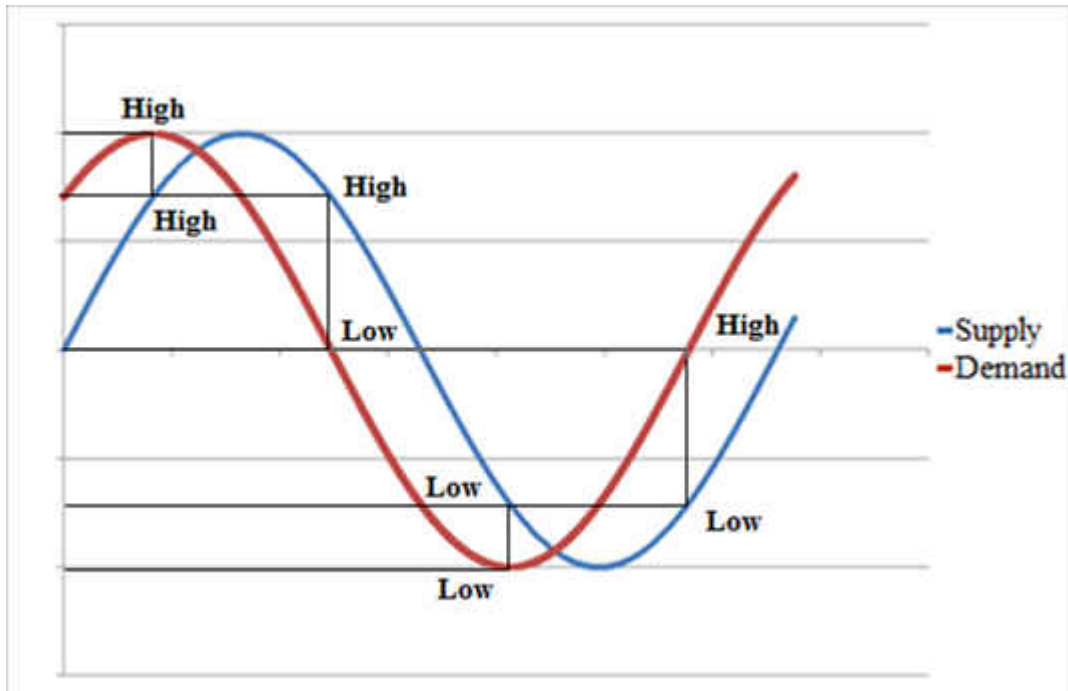


Figure 6- Supply and demand value pairs. These pairs are divided relative to each other into highs and lows. Though the demand value at the start of an Unraveling and Recovery are the same, their values relative to the commensurate supply value are different.

Table 3: Strauss and Howe Generational Cycle Supply and Demand for Order

Turning	Demand	Supply
Crisis	High	Low
Recovery	High	High
Awakening	Low	High
Unraveling	Low	Low

For instance, Strauss and Howe note, that the public energy periods of party realignment theory occur during Awakenings and Crisis periods, but that the public energy of the latter is about rebuilding a new social order and that of the former about tearing the contemporary one down. The periods of private interest align with Highs and Unravelings. In the former, private interests work to cooperate with public institutions, perceiving their usefulness, but in the latter, when they appear to be failing, these interests disengage. Likewise, Klingberg's oscillation in

foreign policy, they state that the periods of introversion align with Awakenings and Crises, and periods of extroversion, with Highs and Unravelings. For the Kondratieff wave, the upswings correspond to Highs and Unravelings, with the downswings corresponding to Awakenings and Crises. In Highs, wage growth and productivity both soar, while in Unravelings growth tends to be more unbalanced with a peak in entrepreneurship, risk-taking, and creative-destruction of the market. The downturn during the Awakening is interpreted darkly as the end of the boom times, but it is during the Crisis that a knock-out combination of depression, panic, regimentation of public life, and war, finally brings the economy to its knees, only arising once again near the end of the Crisis period.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Generational Archetypes*

The interaction between the supply and demand for social order is what drives the cycle from one turning to the next, but how do they interact and how does that interaction propagate the cycle forward? They interact through the cycling of the hierarchy of generational archetypes. What is meant by this hierarchy of archetypes? Along with the four turnings, Strauss and Howe identified four generational archetypes which they called Prophet, Nomad, Hero, and Artist. In each turning, the archetypes move up the generational escalator as they progress through the four stages of life—childhood, young adulthood, middle-age, and elderhood—after which they are succeeded by the next generation of their archetype (Table 4). Since each archetype possesses different characteristics, what it means to be at each stage of life changes depending on where in the cycle a society resides. It is this turning over the mulch that produces the different nature of each turning and the way American society responds to events, in a similar fashion to Amos and Currier's human needs-environment interaction model.<sup>37</sup>

Table 4: The Generational Archetypes over the US Cycle<sup>38</sup>

PERIOD OF LIFE	PERIOD OF CYCLE					
	UNRAVELING	CRISIS	HIGH	AWAKENING	UNRAVELING	CRISIS
Era	1908-1929	1929-1946	1946-1964	1964-1984	1984-2008	2008-?
Key Events	Four Freedoms World War I Prohibition Scopes Trial	1929 Crash New Deal Pearl Harbor D-Day	McCarthyism Levittown Affluent Society Little Rock	Kent State Woodstock Watergate Tax Revolt	Perestroika National Debt Culture Wars Simpson Trial	Banking Crisis ? ? ?
ENTERING ELDERHOOD	Artist (Progressive)	Prophet (Missionary)	Nomad (Lost)	Hero (GI)	Artist (Silent)	Prophet (Boomer)
ENTERING MIDLIFE	Prophet (Missionary)	Nomad (Lost)	Hero (GI)	Artist (Silent)	Prophet (Boomer)	Nomad (X)
ENTERING YOUNG ADULTHOOD	Nomad (Lost)	Hero (GI)	Artist (Silent)	Prophet (Boomer)	Nomad (X)	Hero (Millennial)
ENTERING CHILDHOOD	Hero (GI)	Artist (Silent)	Prophet (Boomer)	Nomad (X)	Hero (Millennial)	Artist (Homeland)

Source: The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy

Yet, how exactly is this accomplished? Wright and Toynbee hinted at it when they gave the generations reacting to each other as the explanation for the Kondratieff wave. Why do they react against the previous generation, though? The answer is as simple as it is obvious. The parents unintentionally raise them to do so, regretting the shortcomings of the way their parents raised them. It is not just parents, but all the institutions that surround a child during their formative years which do so. Ironically, though, they usually end up disappointed with the fruits of their labor, in reaction to the difference between themselves and their progeny. This difference does not refer to the “generation gap,” that exists between a Prophet archetypal generation and their Hero parents, which concerns values rather than character traits.<sup>39</sup>

The parents of each generation are comprised of those who are in middle adulthood and young adulthood, but the former holding the positions of leadership predominate in terms of the shaping the environment in which children grow up. Since the generation reaching middle

adulthood in each turning has its own general approach towards child-rearing and everyone within a generation experiences events at roughly the same stage of life, those raised among each of the four generational archetypes share common traits. This does not mean, of course, that every person within a generation behaves uniformly. Each person's personality is determined to some extent by their genetic makeup. What environmental conditions can affect are the contrasts of an individual's personality, attenuating or intensifying their inherent traits. For example, an individualistic person raised among the Hero archetype will be less so than he or she would be if raised within a Prophet archetype, and vice versa for a conformist person.

Prophets are raised in an indulgent environment during the post-Crisis era, which gives them a narcissistic bent when they come of age as young adults. They have no memory of the reason the rules and strictures their elders implemented, against which they rebel to establish a new set of values, which they then implant themselves when they ascend into leadership positions in midlife and elders. Upon the death of the civic order, they usher in a new one based on that value system as elders. By contrast, the Nomads experience grow up underprotected, even neglected, during an Awakening, such that as young adults they become alienated against an order to which they feel they have little stake. During the Crisis, as they mature into middle adulthood, however, they mellow into pragmatic leaders, and tough-minded elders tasked with rebuilding society in its aftermath.

The mirror opposites of the Prophet and Nomad archetypes are the Hero and Artist, respectively. The Hero generation, while indulged as children, unlike with the Prophet generation, the trend is on the upswing rather than the downswing. Most importantly, they draw their energy from the need to remake what their Prophet forbearers atomized to open society up to greater individual expression. Though they have a great sense of civic collectiveness, they

develop the hubris in midlife that comes from having successfully fought towards resolving the Crisis as young adults, setting themselves up for the fall when they take the reigns as elders during the Awakening, at the height of the supply of civic order. The Artist generation's mirror of the Nomads is clearer, being the most coddled in childhood, as the latter are the least. Hence, when the Crisis is over they remain sensitive and sheltered young adults after its passage. Again, tracking opposite to the Nomads, they seek to break free from their shackled youth in middle adulthood during the Awakening. This is the so-called midlife crisis, a concept that has its origins in the study of the American Silent generation's reversion to more youthful behavior in middle adulthood, though they retain their indecisiveness. That quality bequeaths a more conciliatory, empathic style of leadership in elderhood.<sup>40</sup>

As each generation progresses through the stages of life they are first shaped by the history forged by those generations older than them, but then do the same to those younger than them as they mature. The generational archetypes always cycle around in that order—Prophet, Nomad, Hero, and Artist, producing the waves of supply and demand for social order that characterize the four turnings.<sup>41</sup> But what happens once a cycle is complete? A key aspect of generational theory is that the time horizon for most people falls short of the boundary of the previous cycle so that the lessons so painfully learned by those who lived through the trials of the Crisis are forgotten, leaving their descendants to repeat their mistakes. Strauss and Howe claimed that this mechanism of forget arises ironically because modern societies understand historical development in linear rather than cyclic terms.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Universality of the Generational Cycle*

Why should a linear mentality produce this result? In traditional societies, there is no systematic evolution of the roles of elderhood, adulthood, and childhood. This is because they

do not possess the freedom to reconfigure their natural and social environment. Thus even if what Karl Mannheim termed a “crystallizing event” were to occur the roles each age cohort took on to overcome the great period of distress would recede beyond the lifespan of those who experienced it leaving them to continue on in relative stasis. Hence, this belief led Strauss and Howe to limit their generational theory’s scope to the elites of Europe and the whole of American society.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, Xenakis, extended their theory to every human society throughout history. It is his extension that this study intends to apply to account for the shifts in Iran’s developmental path.<sup>44</sup>

Xenakis’ theory differs in some other key areas from Strauss and Howe’s upon which the latter is based. His version is more robust in some ways, as it allows for a reset of the cycle if external events or internal developments are severe enough to push a society into a Crisis period early, after which it continues on with the cycle as usual. Further, since not every society has been fortunate to resolve their Crisis periods as successfully as the US, Xenakis generalizes the High to a Recovery period, the difference being in that the latter is not one of triumph but tragedy, as a society has to rebuild itself from a position of defeat. Most importantly, he believes that if there is any merit to their theory at all it should apply to all societies at all times.<sup>45</sup>

In that vein, Xenakis views the Kondratieff wave, which he attributes to the Schumpeterian innovation cycle, as separate from the generational cycle.<sup>46</sup> This makes sense, as he holds that every society traditional and modern develops according to the generational cycle. Hence, the generational cycle is not spawned by the transition to modernity. I disagree with him on this point since the cycle appears to grow stronger with increasing development, and moreover, appears not to be self-sustaining for traditional societies, that it dissipates beyond the lifespan of a Mannheimian “crystallizing event.” Strauss and Howe’s connecting the cycle with

the linear mentality and the continuous nature of social change in modern societies is compelling. Thus, it seems better to suppose that the signal of the cyclic pattern is stronger the more a society holds to such a mentality since the mechanism of evolution of age cohort roles is stronger.

This idea finds some empirical support in the observation that the pattern of long wave cycles in the data is more coherent in the post-Napoleonic era, which is just when the Industrial Revolution really began to transform the political economy of the West from an agrarian-based society. In this vein, it makes sense that modernity is connected to it in a more direct and practical way as well as indirectly from the way it impacts how people understand and remember their path of societal development. This connection between modernization and the generational cycle will be elaborated upon as we review the last century of Iranian history, a link which I believe can shed some light on the difficulties of development and how revolutions may fit in with that process.

As a society in the midst of a transition between traditionalism and modernity, Iran presents an interesting case study to test the robustness of Strauss and Howe's generational theory. Iran's historical development should not contain a strong pattern of cycles much before its constitutional crisis of 1906. Thus, in terms of universal application of the generational cycle, I align more closely with Strauss and Howe than Xenakis, as I contend that the cycle is stronger the more modern the society. Because Iran is not yet fully developed, particularly its political system, it will show more deviations than is the case for the history of Western countries over the past century. I will attempt to account for the points at which it departs from the expectations of generational analysis. In doing so, it may help illuminate some aspects of the developed world's own modernization process, in particular, and development theory, in general.

### *Criticism of Strauss and Howe*

Much of the criticism of Strauss and Howe lies in their approach to generation cohorts. For instance, if the generational differences tend to be very minor, then the nature of each stage of life only changes with historical context, and that what it means to reside in each one is otherwise roughly constant. Others have remarked that the behavior of children does not appear to vary substantially between different generations. Less damagingly, others have said that the characteristics Strauss and Howe impart to each of his generational archetypes are not representative of the American populace as a whole, but only the white middle class.<sup>47</sup> However, they point out that generation cohorts can actually have more in common than people of the same ethnic group but from a different age cohort, and that their polling reflects these archetypal characteristics across the whole of American society.<sup>48</sup> This argument would also not necessarily work against the generational cycle, as middle class whites have represented a majority of the population until recently. It would simply not apply to every demographic group in American society.

Demographics may have an unacknowledged impact on a society's development in another way as well—population size. Strauss and Howe do not account for the differences in sizes of generational cohorts within their cycle as smaller ones should have less power in democratic societies. For instance, the Baby Boomer cohort is much larger than that of the Gen Xers, meaning its impact as voters and consumers has been much more pronounced.<sup>49</sup> Strauss and Howe's only discussion of this issue is limited to their observation that the birth rate increases during each High period.<sup>50</sup> Though it may appear otherwise, this seems like a rather minor oversight, since it does not necessarily contradict the generational cycle, and might even be quite easily incorporated because the relative size of the Prophet archetype's cohort would only



reinforce its self-infatuation and also further explain why they tend to be victorious over their elders in the end.

For the purposes of this study, the major weakness of Strauss and Howe's approach is that it provides no systematic comparison of cross cyclic iterations. In other words, it does not address how the corresponding turnings differ from one another between the various iterations of the cycle? Since the expectation of this study is for Iran's political history to more closely align with Strauss and Howe's model the more developed it becomes, variation between corresponding turnings must be examined. The lack of such an accounting poses a significant challenge, but their characterization of modernity provides the starting point to begin addressing it.

## **Methods**

### **Identifying the Transition to Modernity**

James Bill provides a very general yet descriptive definition of modernization, characterizing it as, "the process whereby men and women increasingly gain control over their surrounding environment."<sup>51</sup> From this process of unshackling man from nature's constraints, a linear view of history and progress arises. Conversely, when a society reaches a sufficient level of development, it becomes increasingly independent of nature's cycles, leaving the human cycle of life as the predominant influence in the historical path that it takes.<sup>52</sup> A good example of this shift at the individual level is Ahmad Kasravi, who rejected his religious training in 1910 upon learning that European astronomers had predicted the return of Halley's Comet. He became enamored of the European's technological advances, as it showed progress was possible, and his thoughts on constitutionalism and secular government would later influence Iran's rising middle classes in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>53</sup>

Strauss and Howe noted the relationship between human life cycles and modernity in their review of the etymology of the words “century” and “saeculum.” Saeculum comes from the Latin, *saeculum*, meaning the cycle, having the dual meaning of 100 years and the length of a long natural human life, a so-called natural century, with the latter being the primary meaning. The romance languages Italian, Spanish, and French retain this form in their words for cycle, *secolo*, *siglo*, and *siecle*, respectively. Century comes from the Latin word *centurio*, recalling the centurion commanding 100 soldiers, refers to a fixed period of a hundred years.<sup>54</sup>

The first recorded categorizing of history and naming by centuries occurred after the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1580. Previously, eras were denoted by the name of whichever king reigned in that period. The French essayist Rémy de Gourmont perceptively highlighted this change saying, “We think by centuries when we cease thinking by reigns.” It was precisely this change in mentality, wrought by the Renaissance and the Reformation, which reintroduced the saeculum to the modern West. Hence, even as calendars and almanacs began routinely labeling centuries by their ordinal number, paradoxically, over time that word also acquired the connotation of a life cycle as well. Historians would refer to the previous golden Spanish century or the grand century of Louis XIV. Even unto present they refer to the American Century, and some speculate about a Chinese Century. This was alluded to with Modelski’s longwave war cycle, as each period of hegemony in the interstate system is somewhat akin to the reign of a king over a state.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to technological advancement and mastery over the environment, political and social advancement must bring about a more unified society for a generational cycle to emerge in a population at the state level. Without a broadly shared identity, it stands to reason that the cycles could be out of alignment within a state. Interestingly, the cycles of the closely related

British and colonial Americans diverged, according to Xenakis, because the break with the mother country and the establishment of a new society in a land thousands of miles away were sufficiently jarring disruptions to reset the colonists' cycle back to Recovery. Thus, on the eve of the American Revolution the British were in an Awakening and the Americans were in a Crisis.<sup>56</sup> This is, of course, not to say that the US cycle was not in effect before 1776, but rather to highlight the importance of a shared identity for the existence of a cycle for a group of people.

Yet, even for societies further on the developmental path than Iran, there can be deviations from what the theory predicts, though the fundamental periodicity remains. Thus, it would be ideal to observe a society for the significance of the context of events is minimal relative to the signal of its cycle. Strauss and Howe assert that the United States is the closest approximation to a society with a linear progressive mentality, minimal external influences, and without any national traditions at its beginning to constrain its development. In other words, a true cycle of a society, being necessarily self-generated, can be more clearly discerned without the "noise" of history to distort the part of its developmental path that is solely due to the turnover of the generations.<sup>57</sup>

Since Iran has not developed under such ideal conditions, it cannot be expected to follow Strauss and Howe's theory as closely does the United States. For modern Iran was in its infancy only a century ago, often experiencing frequent intervention in its internal affairs by great powers for the past millennium. Foreign intervention does not matter so much for the overall dynamics of Iran's generational cycle, but it matters a great deal for the nature of Iran's foreign policy, which should follow a pattern of introverted and extroverted orientations if Strauss and Howe's generational cycle is correct. As the Awakening and Crisis turnings experience most of the social and political unrest, it is not surprising that the Klingberg's periods of introversion overlap with

those turnings. A society should demonstrate extroverted foreign policy behavior with the consolidation of the new social order and value system that occurs during a Recovery and an Unraveling, respectively. Relatively weak states such as Iran may not have a choice as to how they behave as outside forces can overwhelm their ability to cope on terms of their choosing. In these cases, foreign policy behavior is no longer primarily predicated on periodic patterns of change in how societies respond to events, but what is simply required for their survival.<sup>58</sup>

Its set of traditions, particularly autocratic rule, however, produces significant deviations from what Strauss and Howe would predict beyond the distortions wrought by external influences. The nature of these deviations challenges Xenakis' interpretation, since he claims that in every society individuals matter little, with the social structure shaping events and their leaders being swept up in the currents of history.<sup>59</sup> The idea that societies existing across the developmental spectrum also vary in the strength of the signal of their generational cycles, instead implies that individuals should matter more the less developed the society. Because this is the point in time where a complete cycle can be observed to have begun, there should be the greatest number of deviations from the cyclic pattern. As Iran proceeds through its generational cycles and continues to modernize, the history of its political development should converge with Strauss and Howe's theory.

### Units of Analysis

Unlike war cycle theories and long wave economic theories, Strauss and Howe's theory applies at the nation-state level rather than at the inter-state level. However, due to what John Xenakis refers to as the principle of localization each society's generational cycle is unique to itself such that they can be out of phase with one another. According to him, for instance, Western and Eastern Europe are out of phase by roughly one turning, with the latter leading the

former. For instance, Russia was in a Crisis period during its Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, which occurred when Western Europe was in an Unraveling.<sup>60</sup> Though Xenakis himself would not draw this conclusion, his principle of localization implies that a shared identity must be considered an intrinsic part of establishing a modern society. Such a society is self-contained, separate from that of other peoples, yet on the scale of a state's population. It does not always completely overlay the territorial boundaries of a state, though, such that there can be faultlines with the potential for civil war, which again are more likely in Fourth Turnings.<sup>61</sup> If one has already broken out it is during those periods that they are likely to peak and be resolved, such as the Sri Lankan civil war that concluded in 2009.<sup>62</sup>

For the war cycle theories the states that matter most is the cycle of the great powers, which until the twentieth century have been western powers. Thus, even though each society develops according to its own cycle, together they approximate a single one. Long wave economic theorists have also treated the global economy as one long wave, which is sensible from the perspective of the innovation cycle school because technology does not remain within a local area. The phase difference between Eastern and Western Europe's generational cycles, then, may offer a solution to explain the major anomaly of WWII, which occurred about two decades earlier than predicted.<sup>63</sup>

### History versus Theory

If Strauss and Howe's theory can be shown to be relevant for the developing as well as the developed world, this would provide further support for generational turnover being a primary cause of long wave phenomena at the international level. To test the applicability of Strauss and Howe's theory for developing countries this study will examine the history of Iran going back to the eighteenth century, focusing primarily on the turn of the twentieth century to

the present. If the generational cycle has any validity for Iran, the historical period comprising each of the cycle's four turnings should be discernible by matching the characteristics of the latter with the actual historical events.

Upon identifying each of the turnings in its generational cycle, a comparison will be drawn between historical events and the expected characteristics of the corresponding turning. Examining where the developmental path diverged from the generational cyclic pattern, and as best can be determined, why it did so, may bring some insight into how the generational cycle operates within the context of societies still undergoing the process of modernization. The primary goal of this study, then, is not to use the theory to elucidate the particulars of Iran's political history, though this will indeed be done on a macro-scale, but rather to use the points of divergence to explore the limits of Strauss and Howe's model.

Each section begins with a brief exposition of the expectations of what should occur in the turning of the cycle in which the historical period covers, followed by a discussion of the actual historical events. Each chapter then concludes with a discussion of where the latter differs from the former. Chapter 2 covers the Iran's first four turnings—the full length of the first cycle. In chapter 3, the first two turnings of the second cycle will be discussed. Chapter 4 is devoted solely to the period in which Iran resides at present, which is an Awakening. Chapter 5 concludes with some observations about how well Iran's political history corresponded to Strauss and Howe's model, the nature of the deviations, and some speculation on their impact on the generational cycle.

## CHAPTER 2: IRAN'S FIRST CYCLE

### **Crisis: 1906-1926**

#### Projected Historical Path

All Crisis periods begin with a catalyzing event or series of events which changes the mood of society. The fundamental conflict issue of the first Crisis period should concern the nature of the state system as was the case in The Wars of the Roses in British history.<sup>64</sup> Since this is the first Crisis there will be some differences from those of succeeding cycles. Usually the value system to be embedded in a new social order is fashioned during the preceding Awakening, but since there was no preceding Awakening, the main source of inspiration should come from the drive for modernization. All the institutions that are a part of the traditional order should back the government in opposition to this movement. The issues driving the conflict in the Crisis should last throughout the entire period with some being resolved, while leaving other problems to be dealt with in the next cycle.

#### Iran's Encounter with Modernity

The turn of the twentieth century was a momentous period for Iran, as it was for the rest of the Middle East. Not only did it represent the waning years of the Qajar dynasty begun in the late eighteenth century, but also the beginning of the modern state of Iran.<sup>65</sup> The context of that transformation was its disastrous encounter with the Russian Empire in the early 19th century. Iran lost badly to the Russians in the Russo-Persian Wars (1804-1828), and was forced to surrender Georgia and other Caucasus territories, including cities the Persian Empire had held for centuries. Whatever technological disparity existed in Russia's favor, the decisive factor in its victory was its superior state system. During the Qajar dynasty, the Iranian state more resembled the pre-Westphalian state system of Europe, existing as autonomous tribes bound together in a loose alliance, with very weak central governance.<sup>66</sup> Since the time of Peter the Great, by

contrast, Russia determined to fashion its state after its European peers,<sup>67</sup> though as Napoleon Bonaparte discovered in 1812, its state evolution still lagged behind, and thus the basis of its legitimacy founded upon an earlier form of the state.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Russia's more centralized system of authority afforded greater economies of scale and productivity in the utilization of its resources, dramatically increasing the size of the military force it could bring to bear on Iran.<sup>69</sup>

A number of Iranian elites understood this, and in the wake of the first conflict with Russia, which ended in 1814, sought to reform the state apparatus to better defend Iran's interests. However, it would take roughly a century for these efforts to yield fruit as they were supported very inconsistently by the shahs over the succeeding decades. Abbas Mirzas, the crown prince, sent some students to Europe to learn about Western science, art, and military technology. One of them, Mirza Saleh, recounted in his memoirs how the British government functioned and about the freedom its citizens enjoyed. Upon his return he opened the first newspaper in Iran in 1819.<sup>70</sup>

Yet, no major reforms took place under Fath Ali Shah, even in the aftermath of the humiliating conclusion to the Russo-Persian War in 1828. His son, Mohammad Shah, who succeeded him, was no better, going so far as to have his reformist Prime Minister strangled in 1835. Only upon his death and the succession of Naser od-Din Shah did reform begin to take hold when he appointed Amir Kabir as Prime Minister in 1848. Kabir began implementing his plans for restructuring Iran's economy and political system in the hopes of replicating the success of the industrializing West.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, his tenure was cut short when od-Din had him assassinated less than five years later, convinced by his court advisers that Kabir meant to overthrow him. Kabir's reforms did not outlive him, save for the military and technical school he established, modeled after those of Europe, which would later serve as the foundation of



Iran's system of higher education.<sup>72</sup>

The shahs were hardly the only obstacle to the modernization of Iran. The landed classes and bazaari merchants benefited greatly the status quo, given that a more centralized government would mean relinquishing more of their assets in taxes as well as their autonomy. Twenty years passed after Kabir's death, before od-Din Shah made another attempt to modernize, but he compounded the impediment to reform by drawing foreign investment into Iran for infrastructure development in the form of a trade concession with Reuters, a British company. The Reuters concession brought unwanted competition to merchants and ceded a significant amount of sovereignty, spurring protests among the people. Reuters, initially only mildly interested in the project, became even more ambivalent, whose reaction in turn caused the shah to bow to the public's demand. Thus, real reform would have to wait another 35 years.<sup>73</sup>

Modernization proved all the more onerous because it also meant uprooting the position of the clerics,<sup>74</sup> who had grown their own base of power in Iranian society since the late seventeenth century. This clerical order in some ways worked after the fashion of a church hierarchy on a local scale with each grand ayatollah serving as a spiritual leader to interpret Islamic Law (*mujtahid*). As an informal system, each leading cleric could independently run their groups religious operations issuing diplomas, appointing officials, and providing teaching centers. Most importantly, they also had financial autonomy having the authority to raise revenue through collecting religious taxes, affording them a great deal of independence from the central government.<sup>75</sup>

Given that this painful struggle for the modernization of Iran also took place as the British and Russians meddled in its affairs, it is not difficult to imagine why it advanced at a crawl. Yet, their influence pushed too far into Iran's sovereignty, ironically providing the

opening the constitutionalists needed to push the reforms they desired. Naser's son, Mozaffar od-Din Shah, who succeeded him in 1896, had incurred a great deal of debt and to satisfy Iran's Russian creditors, he granted new monopolistic concessions, which were no more popular than the concessions his father offered. This spurred the reformers, ulema, and bazaari to join forces, in spite of their differences, against the shah to end the violations of Iran's sovereignty. The constitutional reformers would have lacked the organizational support necessary to place enough pressure on the shah to yield to their demands without access to the ulema's network of followers. To do so, ironically enough, they used an important piece of modernity to facilitate efficient communication—the telegraph.<sup>76</sup> Thus, began Iran's Constitutional Revolution.

#### The Constitutional Revolution

In August 1906, about a month after protesters had taken to the streets in opposition to the regime, the shah acceded to demands for constitutional governance, signing it just days before his death. This was a defining moment in the history of the region as well as for Iran, as the Constitution remained in effect until the 1979 Revolution, and its parliamentary body, the Majles, endured even through that tumultuous event to this very day. In contrast, the national assembly for crafted by the Young Ottomans failed after a few years. Indeed, the creation of the modern state of Iran can be said to have begun with the signing of the constitution.<sup>77</sup> The subsequent five years, though, would see much strife, and set the pattern of an Iran struggling with the internal battles of modernization against the backdrop of great power competition between the British and the Russians for the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>78</sup>

Mozzafar od-Din Shah's son, Mohammad Ali Shah, ascended in 1907. Though he pledged fealty to the constitution, being more autocratic in nature, he sought to overturn it.<sup>79</sup> He found allies among the ulema who realized that what the reformists, with whom they had

collaborated with earlier, had much more westernization in mind than they desired. The constitution was an idea whose time had come, as od-Din Shah could not be trusted to restore Iran's sovereignty, but the clerics failed to realize that latching on to the reformist bandwagon meant giving up the initiative for reform. They should have known better as the reformists were the intellectual descendants of Amir Kabir.<sup>80</sup>

This break in solidarity, along with Russian support, emboldened Mohammad Ali Shah to crush the revolutionaries by ordering the shelling of the Majles in June 1908.<sup>81</sup> Russia had come to an agreement with the UK to divide Iran into spheres of influence, with Britain maintaining influence over the south, itself overseeing the north, including Tehran, and a neutral buffer zone in the central part.<sup>82</sup> Thus, Russia felt obliged to intervene, looking unfavorably as it did upon any populist movement. However, the main outcome of the Shah's coup was to increase the violence of the revolution as the reformists regained control of the government the next summer. The arrest and execution of conservative cleric Sheik Fazlallah Nuri for allegedly participating in the coup initiated a series of assassinations. There were also riots against minorities such as Jews and Babis.<sup>83</sup> Disorder held sway over many provinces, with tribal leaders taking control, making tax collection impractical.<sup>84</sup>

Thus, the Majles was in a bind. Without sufficient revenue, the police force necessary to restore order could not be paid, but without sufficient order, revenue would have to be obtained by other means. To develop their own modern force independent from the Cossack Brigade led by Russian officers, the Majles approved the creation of a gendarmerie upon the recommendation of American financial adviser Morgan Shuster.<sup>85</sup> Though the constitutionalists had appointed him only in the capacity of a financial adviser, his expertise was also used to overhaul the entire governing apparatus from tax collection to its legal system. Because

Shuster's reforms threatened to place Iran on a sound financial footing rather than perennially having to turn to the Russians for loans, they wanted him removed. Yet his strong support among the public precluded a political maneuver.<sup>86</sup> So they sent troops and used the Bakhtiari tribe, which was at odds with the Qajars, as well as some liberals in the cabinet who wished to increase their political power, to overthrow the government in December 1911.<sup>87</sup> This has often been marked as the end of the revolution. On the contrary, the constitution lived on institutionally and the ideals of the revolution continued to influence events in the decade after. The revolution, moreover, had a centralizing effect, unifying the nationalist sentiments of the regional assemblies. There was no going back to the pre-1906 state of affairs.<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, conditions would grow worse for Iran before it turned the corner, with the onset of World War I. Along with the plummet in trade with Russia, Iran suffered a severe famine in 1917-1918 and then the influenza pandemic in the following year. The aftermath of these troubles helped shape the course of Iran's history for the next several decades.<sup>89</sup> With Russia embroiled in civil war and Iran in a near-anarchic state, the British were left virtually unchallenged in the aftermath of World War I. This position led to hubris, as Lord Curzon saw the potential to secure the entire Middle East, which was always a concern as a pathway into the imperial jewel of India. So he sought to turn Iran into a protectorate of the British Empire.<sup>90</sup> While he knew Persia well and the agreement he put before Mohammad Ali Shah's succeeding son, Ahmad Shah, in 1919 had the promise of developing Iran's infrastructure, he failed to realize the depth of support for constitutionalism among the Iranian people.<sup>91</sup> Thus, when the terms of the Anglo-Persian treaty, which the shah had signed, became known there were widespread protests.<sup>92</sup>

Curzon felt the treaty could still be pushed through, however. Indeed, the British tried to

pass it piecemeal, though the constitution demanded ratification by the Majles. The commanding British officer in Iran, General Edmund Ironside, thought differently and began working on an exit strategy for British forces.<sup>93</sup> That exit strategy lay in placing a charismatic and politically able soldier by the name of Reza Khan who could stabilize the country, as he had been commander of the Cossack Brigade. Less than 18 months after his appointment, Khan became both Minister of War and *Sardar Sepah* (commander in chief) during which he subdued the tribal areas, garnering him enough popularity to essentially name himself Prime Minister, with the shah exiling himself to Europe shortly after. By the end of 1925, Khan persuaded the Majles to depose the shah and ratify him, in Ahmad's stead.<sup>94</sup> This was the end of the beginning of Iran's thrust into the generational cycle, as Khan put into motion his plans for modernizing the state and its society.

### **Recovery (1926-1942)**

#### Projected Historical Path

Recovery periods being eras of rebuilding and growth, the push for modernization should intensify with the construction of modern infrastructure and the education of the public. The clerics should side with the new Pahlavi dynasty to help shape social mores towards greater conformity and cultural restraint. Hence, the social order should be relatively tranquil, though stultifying, such that towards the end of the period the youth will be impatient for greater freedom of expression.

#### Reza Shah

Reza Khan became Reza Shah upon crowning himself monarch in 1926. His model for modernizing Iran was Kemal Ataturk's Republic of Turkey which rose out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of its collapse after World War I.<sup>95</sup> When Reza Shah assumed the

throne Iran was still a country with few of the accoutrements of modernity such as streetlights, cars, and paved roads. There was little industry among the country's collection of tribes, peasant villages tribes, and small towns. As a military man, however, Reza Shah saw the development of the country through the needs of military modernization. Because of this and the cultural disposition of Iran, his efforts were not as far reaching as those of Ataturk.<sup>96</sup> Most importantly, he refused to be limited by the constitution, though his ascension was ratified by the Majles, determined as he was to run an autocratic regime from the outset.<sup>97</sup>

It must be noted, however, that he initially proposed a restoration of representative government, but the clerics fearing a loss of power and westernization were against it.<sup>98</sup> Yet the Shah managed to displease the clerics in other ways when he forced people into western style dress, banning the veil. In 1935 there was even a protest against these changes, which led to a massacre. Of even more consequence to the ulema were Reza Shah's efforts to remove their positions of civic authority, particularly their lucrative positions as judges and notaries.<sup>99</sup>

The ulema were not the only ones disappointed with the shah. Due to the monopolies he set up for certain products to raise revenue the bazaari merchants were at odds with him. True to autocratic form the writers and poets suffered under censorship, which had the effect of silencing the burst of literary output of the generation earlier. This isolation proved most unfortunate when the Allies determined that he was too cozy with Nazi Germany during the Second World War to be left in power. Iran's period of Recovery had ended. Yet, the shah's political shortcomings should not overshadow the real gains his modernizing reforms managed to achieve in education, infrastructure, and health.<sup>100</sup>

## **Awakening (1942-1963)**

### Projected Historical Path

The younger generation should rebel against Mohammad Reza Shah's continuation of his father's push towards the westernization and secularization of Iran. The supply of order, though, is right at its peak, even as the demand for it has been falling for some time. With the clash of the elder and younger generations, the supply of order will decline to fall as well with an increase in social unrest and protests. In the process, there should be a spiritual renewal of Iran's institutions, a refashioning of their values, according to the demands of the youth. The period should peak towards the end upon securing victory over their elders.

### The Rise of Mohammad Reza Shah and the Overthrow of Mossadeq

With the overthrow of Reza Shah, a brief period of political pluralism took hold. The number of newspapers in Tehran skyrocketed from 47 in 1943 to 700 by 1951, radio ownership expanded rapidly, which further helped integrate the country, even the isolated villages.<sup>101</sup> In 1941, the Tudeh Party was founded, an important milestone as it represented the first institutionalization of Iran's dissident movement with a platform for reforming Iran's political economy. The National Front was founded in the late 1940s. Though it did not have the political and intellectual coherency of the Tudeh, it represented the broadest based public support, united as it was by the single issue of the nationalization of Iran's oil industry.<sup>102</sup>

Alas, this period of political activism was not to last. Increased expectations of political openness went unmet as Mohammad Reza Shah, Reza Khan's son, who succeeded him, sought to reestablish autocratic rule. This became clear upon the assassination of Prime Minister Haj-Ali Razmara, and the succession of Mohammad Mossadeq. Given Mossadeq's overwhelming popularity, his ascension in 1951 was inevitable, due to the dominance of the Majles, particularly over the debate on nationalization. For the next two years, Iranian politics became embroiled in

a struggle between the shah and Mossadeq, as the former resisted the attempts of the latter to exercise his powers.<sup>103</sup>

This struggle occurred against the backdrop of US concern over Soviet influence in the region and the United Kingdom's unwillingness to relinquish control over Iran's oil resources. After the shah failed to persuade the Anglo Iranian Oil Company to accept a 50/50 split of the profits as had become standard practice, the Majles passed legislation to nationalize the industry on March 15, 1951.<sup>104</sup> Mossadeq was named Prime Minister the following month. The shah seeking to limit his power saw an opening by refusing to allow Mossadeq to select the Minister of War, leading to his resignation in 1952. Mossadeq was reinstated when a Tudeh-led protest erupted across the country, but the shah was determined and actually planned to oust him the next year.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately for him, it was discovered, probably by the Tudeh, and he was forced to flee the country. Yet Mossadeq's missteps following the subverted coup worked in the shah's favor.<sup>106</sup>

Iran's oil sector was hit hard due to the UK's response to the nationalization of its oil assets, which was to blockade and embargo Iran's exports.<sup>107</sup> Mossadeq was also unable to acquire loans when he visited the US to develop Iran's oil industry. This isolation from without was compounded by isolation of his supporters within Iran. Using the police to control the demonstrations against the coup, when the CIA and MI-6 agents stoked foment among those groups opposed to Mossadeq, his supporters did not come out in force. Mossadeq was considered too much of a risk. As the National Front was in disarray, much of his support lay with the Tudeh Party, which had ties to the Soviets. Thus, it was feared that he would allow Soviet influence to become entrenched in the region either through incompetence or outright collaboration.<sup>108</sup>



The shah also found support among a large segment of the ulema who were wary of westernization, just as his father did. As was the case with his father, they would later come to sorely regret their support. The US's role and relations with Iran in the aftermath of the coup it spawned would prove crucial, as the Iranian public no longer viewed it as its knight in shining armor among the Great Game players who saw Iran as a pawn rather than a partner. It instead became one of those players, effectively replacing the British.

#### Consolidating Power but Losing Legitimacy

Once his reign was secure, the shah set about implementing his great plans for the country. Yet he made the same mistake as his father, as those designs demanded he have absolute power. Beginning with the 1954 election he began to crack down on dissent with only candidates loyal to his regime being deemed eligible to run for office. In 1955 the National Front was disbanded and those siding with the Tudeh were hunted by SAVAK, the shah's secret police. To establish a veneer of legitimacy he created the *Melliyn* (National Party) and *Mardom* (People's Party), which were mocked by the people as the Yes Party and the Yes sir Party. He failed to see that his father's overthrow had unleashed the demand for greater freedom of expression and participation in governance. Had he worked his reforms in with those demands and not alienated one segment of the public after another he might have been a popular ruler, such as Ataturk, and held on to power longer. Instead he censored writers whose views of which he disapproved. He also sought to remove the ulema from public life as his father did, in emulation of Ataturk.<sup>109</sup>

Ironically enough, after the shah's coup, the oil dispute was resolved with the Iranian government receiving 50% of the profits.<sup>110</sup> It was this increased revenue that afforded a great expansion in government expenditure to realize his vision for the country. However, this

largesse went towards showy projects such as dams many of which had no link with Iran's irrigation infrastructure. Improvements in general living standards were still achieved with the expansion of the middle class, but rural areas lagged in development. Even in Tehran itself, there was a divergence between the westernized areas in the north versus the more traditional, poor south.

The Tehran that we saw on the tenth of Moharram [i.e. Ashura] is a different world, centuries and civilisations apart from the gawdy superficial botch of cadillacs, hotels, antique shops, villas, tourists and diplomats, where we run our daily round ... but it is not only poverty, ignorance and dirt that distinguish the old south from the parvenu north. The slums have a compact self-conscious unity and communal sense that is totally lacking in the smart districts of chlorinated water, macadamed roads and (fitful) street lighting. [What he describes here is the cohesiveness and constancy of traditional society.] The bourgeois does not know his neighbour: the slum-dweller is intensely conscious of his. And in the slums the spurious blessings of Pepsi Cola civilisation have not yet destroyed the old way of life, where every man's comfort and security depend on the spontaneous, un-policed observation of a traditional code.<sup>111</sup>

Noting this growing tension, the US leaned on him to implement economic reforms aimed at nipping social unrest in the bud. This is rather ironic because much of the policy changes the US suggested were lifted from the Tudeh's platform, the very party whose association had made Mossadeq suspect in its eyes less than a decade earlier.<sup>112</sup> In that regard, the youth did not lose completely, but the leader who represented the established social order still remained, and was empowered further for another decade and a half.

With added pressure from the slowing economy, in 1960 the Shah attempted to enact land

reform. This attempt came to naught because the senior clerics owned large plots of land and thus despised any moves towards its redistribution. They also felt it violated Islamic law concerning property rights. It was Ayatollah Borujerdi's fatwa against it that stalled the reforms. The backlash presaged the events that would lead to the revolution.<sup>113</sup> Even as the ulema drew closer to the shah, at first having allied with him against Mossadeq and the Tudeh, they would find themselves increasingly at odds with his own secularizing agenda.

Indeed just three years later, in 1963, upon further pressure from the US, the shah issued a set of economic and political reforms which he called the White Revolution.<sup>114</sup> It consisted of a renewal of the land reform program, privatization of factories, the introduction of female suffrage, and the creation of a literacy corps to address rural illiteracy. None of this had sat well with the ulema, but the reforms, which really just worked to augment and broaden existing social development, passed overwhelmingly in a referendum. Yet, as long as Ayatollah Borujerdi was the *marja-e taqlid* (leading cleric), they could not speak too openly against the shah, as he was of the quietist school of Shi'a Islam, which taught that clerics should abstain from involvement in politics. With his death in 1961, there was a struggle over who should succeed him as the leading Shi'a authority, and the one who emerged was one Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.<sup>115</sup>

### **Unraveling (1963-1978)**

#### Projected Historical Path

One may notice that the decline of the new social order began in the previous turning, the Awakening, at its peak coherency, and ask how different the Unraveling really is. Determining the starting point of the Third Turning is probably the most difficult of the four as the drawdown of the Second is marked by less commemorative events than the other turnings. Nevertheless, the key point of separation between these successive periods is that while the Awakening is

about challenging the established order with a new set of values in social revolution, the Unraveling is about the expression of those values at ever increasing levels of individualism.<sup>116</sup> Once the younger generation overcome their elders this societal embrace of the new value system includes those who once opposed them, though they interpret and implement them in different ways. The price of this consensus, ironically, is that the social order becomes locked in a metastable state, with no group able to completely overcome the others, leaving many political and social challenges unresolved.<sup>117</sup>

### The White Revolution

Khomeini came to be the most prominent of the Ayatollahs by becoming the leading opponent of the shah. He very cleverly downplayed any issues which could potentially divide his following. For instance, he kept his dislike of constitutionalism private while praising it publicly. He also focused on subjects that would appeal to nationalists such as the law the shah passed granting immunity to US military personnel from prosecution. Ironically enough it was the shah's attacks on him that drove his popularity, first in 1963 with his arrest upon delivering a speech on Ashura (June 3), leading to demonstrations in which hundreds of protesters were killed by the police, and then his being forced into exile in 1964. Tellingly, the latter resulted from a speech he gave in which he vociferously denounced the intrusion of the immunity agreement upon Iran's sovereignty.<sup>118</sup>

The protests were not a harbinger of the 1978-1979 Revolution as the Islamic Republic depicts. Its social base was more limited and it lacked revolutionary demands. At the time, Khomeini merely asked that the current constitution be followed, only seeking its downfall upon his exile.<sup>119</sup> This was the point at which the shah placed Iran on the path to revolution. By excising all explicit criticism and opposition to his plans, he made it clear who was responsible

for everything that resulted from his White Revolution policies, the central one being land reform. That redistribution produced mixed results. Roughly two million peasants became first time landowners, but many of the plots were not large enough for sustainable living. Moreover, many agricultural laborers were left out of the program because as sharecroppers they had no cultivation rights. Loopholes in the land reform law compounded these deficiencies. Exemptions were made available for bequeathing land to relatives and establishing mechanized farms. The latter had the effect of pushing the sharecroppers into the cities, accelerating the rural to urban migration, so that by 1976 Tehran's population had swelled to 4.5 million. Most of these migrants ended up at the southern portions of the city in what were little more than shanty towns. This was the portion of the city referred to in the quote of the British diplomat above.<sup>120</sup>

None of the above should completely overshadow the real economic gains that were made in this period. By 1970, Iran's GDP per capita soared from \$200 to \$2000, and industrial output increased dramatically in its new coal, textile, and automobile industries, creating many new jobs to absorb the increasing urban population. Much of these were low wage jobs, however. Government expenditure rose commensurately with the economy, increasing services in education and health, building on the achievements made by Reza Shah. Primary enrollment surged from 1.6 million to 4.6 million from 1953 to 1977. University enrollment more than sextupled, surpassing 150,000, and hospital beds doubled to 48,000 in the same period. These improvements in living standards greatly lowered the infant mortality rate, whose effects are still being felt today, as it caused a spike in population growth which continued until the 1990s. By the mid-1970s half the population was under the age of sixteen and two-thirds under 30; this comprised the revolutionary generation.<sup>121</sup>

Iran's economy would make even greater gains from the increased revenue resulting from

the spike in the price of oil. Even having doubled with the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the shah's pursuit of higher prices convinced OPEC to cut production. He was of the view that as long as economic development continued his rule was secure. The problem, though, was that the Iranian economy could not handle such a sharp increase in the money supply.<sup>122</sup> Even with the large amount of weapons the shah purchased from the West the economy overheated, unable to produce nearly enough goods to match the money inflow. There was a sense that the economy was spinning out control, but the shah did nothing to assuage such fears. Indeed, by blaming rampant inflation on price gougers, issuing fines, arresting shopkeepers, and enacting deflationary policies, he undermined public confidence in its health. The latter did not work as intended, resulting instead in stagflation, as unemployment increased without slowing inflation.<sup>123</sup>

#### The Backlash against Westernization

Everyone, including professional labor, was affected but it was especially hard on the poor whose divergence from the rich was unimaginable to Westerners. Their arrival only heightened the people's awareness of the chasm between their expectations and their actual circumstances. This frustration was made manifest in what Roy Mottahedeh called *montazh*, referring to the often shoddy assembly of imported items. However, the concept could also apply more widely to inadequate civic institutions failing to protest against corrupt property deals, poorly constructed buildings, chaotic traffic, and the ubiquitous presence of the shah in the form of statues and plaques. This may have been what Kasravi referred to with his term *gharbzadegi* (westoxification), by which he meant that an Iranian imitation of western culture would only produce a poor copy at the expense of losing sight of its own.<sup>124</sup>

There was also a widening cultural divide, as the lower classes tended to reside in the

more traditional areas out in the country and on the outskirts of large cities. As more Westerners arrived there was more contact with Iranians and products such as Coca Cola becoming ubiquitous, causing greater resentment. The shah's attempts at reviving ancient Persia's past when most Iranians considered Islam to be their nation's heritage did not help matters. Thus, he unnecessarily alienated them by substituting the Islamic calendar with a Persian one starting year one at the reign of King Cyrus,<sup>125</sup> and when he threw an extravagant party to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy. As the regime grew ever more remote, it became ever more repressive, targeting new groups whose vision for Iranian society was diametrically opposed to that of the shah's. The Feda'i and Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization were radical movements infusing Islam and Marxism that used violence against the regime. The shah became brazen enough to attempt to eliminate even the pretense of an opposition when he merged the two puppet parties in the Majles into a single party called *Rastakhiz* (Resurgence). Politics became a competition of public sycophancy before the shah.<sup>126</sup>

While the economic frustrations worked to alienate the shah from the public, his real failure was political. By not making an attempt to restore representative government and responding to dissent only with repression he missed many opportunities to make the monarchy more popular. Ironically, it was only the fact that the shah sensed that President Jimmy Carter had less tolerance for repressive allies that forced him to change.<sup>127</sup> Sensing this opening, lawyers and then National Front activists sent a letter criticizing autocratic rule, calling for the restoration of constitutional government. Instead, the shah grew yet more isolated, leaving a vacuum of legitimacy and local authority which was gladly filled by Khomeini and the ulema. The shah made matters worse by ignoring the network of clerics, serving as leading *marjas* for each local region. Thus, when Khomeini began preaching his new doctrine of the *velayat-e*

*faqih*, he found a favorable audience, even if at first they were wary of his message that the clerics should rule, given its departure from traditional Shi'a Islam.<sup>128</sup>

Though the dominant view in Shi'a Islam on the role of religion in politics has been quietism which preaches non-interference by the clergy, its more hierarchical nature, particularly in Iran, already established the practical basis by which it could should it choose to do so. That, in fact, is the teaching of the Usuli, or Twelver Shi'ism, as they should be the ones to interpret Islamic law. If taken to its logical extreme, one could interpret that to mean that the ulema should be in control of the state.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, that is the theory of governance Khomeini advocated in his book *Hokumat-e Eslami: Velayat-e Faqih* (Islamic Government: Regency of the Jurist), based on lectures he delivered in Najaf in 1970. Velayat meant regency guardianship, Faqih signifies jurist, expert in Islamic law. The logic was that if Sharia law reigned supreme and the ulema were the only ones suited to interpret it, then the ulema should rule, acting as regents in the absence of the Hidden Imam. From this point on he demanded the removal of the shah and the establishment of an Islamic republic.<sup>130</sup>

This concept of the ruling of the jurist was not accepted by all of the ulema, but a great deal of resentment had built up ever since WWI, and especially after they were no longer needed upon the overthrow of Mossadeq. The shah, wanting absolute control, even tried to replace the traditional ulema with a state-run clergy in the 1960s and 1970s. By targeting the Tudeh, National Front, and violent radicals he cut off himself off from his natural base of support among the middle class and professionals.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, revolution was not inevitable at this point. The actions the shah took over the next year, however, would work to unseal that future.



## **Comparison to Strauss and Howe's Model**

### Crisis Period

The major practical issues of this period were the unification of the nation into a single polity and securing its sovereignty against foreign intervention, namely from Russia and Britain. The transition from a traditional to a modern society lay at the heart of both of them, which consequently led to a philosophical debate over how Iran should relate to itself and the rest of the world, most especially the encroaching western powers, whose very advance had spawned the dilemma in the first place. For Iran's non-clerical elites understood that they would have to adopt the technology and at least some of the institutions of the West to acquire the strength to protect its interests against Western powers, while the more conservative elements of society, which included more nationalist scholars in addition to the clerics, were wary of the dangers of attempting to mimic the features of an alien culture. They feared that Iran would lose its own culture while failing to replicate the western features the reformers recognized as desirable.<sup>132</sup>

The most significant departure arises from the condition that there was no real coherent set of ideas and values, no common banner, under which those opposed to the Shah could unite, other than their opposition to the status quo. While there was some spiritual rekindling in the mid-19th century with the beginning of the Babi movement which developed into the Ba'hai religion, it was not part of a larger spiritual renewal of the society, as Iran's generational cycle had yet to come into being. It might be said that it represented a prototypical Awakening.<sup>133</sup> Excepting the latter portion of Karim Khan's reign (1765-1779) throughout the 1700s the Iranian army was constantly at war with the country's tribal elements,<sup>134</sup> a situation punctuated with a humiliating rout by Russia in the early 1800s. While a Recovery can be discerned in the wake of that stinging defeat and something of an Awakening with the rise of the Babi movement, there was not really an Unraveling period, given that the institutions of the state revolved around the

personality of the shah.

The period just before Iran's first Crisis period began is interesting because a similar pattern occurred in medieval Britain. Hence, I must disagree with the starting point Strauss and Howe identified for the Anglo saecula, which they place in an Unraveling in the mid-15th century.<sup>135</sup> Though I certainly have not studied that period anywhere near the depth that Strauss and Howe did in formulating their theory, it seems pretty clear that much of the tumult of the period leading up to the Wars of the Roses resulted not from structural factors but the mental instability of Henry VI.<sup>136</sup> However, that decay in order did lead to the Crisis period as the Lancaster and York ruling houses fought for the crown.<sup>137</sup>

In Iran, the dissatisfaction with the Qajar dynasty was the acquiescence to foreign powers, which fed into the constitutional reform movement.<sup>138</sup> A political upheaval such as this forms what Karl Mannheim called a "crystallizing moment" in history.<sup>139</sup> Without the previous elements of the cycle to help establish and provide direction to the leadership, though, the Iranian reformers seeking to overturn the established order lacked cohesion.

It is remarkable that the reformers were able to achieve as much as they did and with such long-lasting results, without an overarching ideology to hold them together. Though many take the Constitutional Revolution to have ended in December 1911, the same set of issues concerning the constitution and the power of the shah returned again and again throughout Iran's inaugural Crisis period. Who should rule, what should be the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and what should be the proper role and authority for religion and its leadership? They did so until Reza Shah solidified his grip over the state at the end of 1925, setting it on the path to industrialization.<sup>140</sup> This aspect is exactly what would be expected in a Fourth Turning as the issues that drive the Crisis are fought until a decisive transformation of the social order has been

realized, resolving the key issue, while leaving others for the next cycle. The period afterward then begins the Recovery, as can be seen in the generation that followed.

### Recovery Period

As mentioned previously, Iran had just begun its developmental path into modernity, which showed most visibly in its lack of infrastructure in transportation, health, and education. Reasoning from Strauss and Howe's connection of the generational cycle and the linear mentality spawned by modernity we should expect a weaker signal in the patterns of Iran's turnings than Iran's development were more mature. This is an important point of departure from Xenakis. Because he does not differentiate the strength of the cycle between societies at different levels of development this part cannot fit in with his depiction of the cycle. A major consequence of this departure is that at earlier points in the appearance of the cycle, individuals can have a greater effect on the historical path, particularly in societies with non-democratic regimes.

In so far as the direction of a society's developmental path remains unsettled, as Iran's was in this period, the behavior of groups, namely generation cohorts, can depart from the theory's predictions as well. This was the case for the ulema. They felt that the westernizing reforms of both the constitutional reformers and the shah meant a path to secularization and a reduction of the influence of Islam and thus their own influence. While the clerics would be expected to side with the government in a more democratic system since the electorate would certainly not have tolerated Reza's westernizing edicts, but this was not the case. They withdrew their support once Reza Shah's plans for Iran became clear. Of course, the Shah could have maintained the clerics' support without making such alienating reforms, but that is just the point. His individual choice was not overcome by the generational dynamics in this instance.

Thus, the excesses in the reformist drive towards modernization of the Crisis period preceding Shah's ascension, represented by the push for westernization and secularization to a greater extent than the Iranian public of the time desired, went uncorrected. In a Recovery period, people want their lives to return to normal within the context of the new social order that was forged to resolve the most pressing issue, which at the time was dissatisfaction with the Qajar's rule, and decidedly not a desire to immediately westernize Iran. Reza Shah's defiance of the public's desire temporarily upset the social order in a brutal massacre. His son, who succeeded him, unfortunately did not learn that lesson, and the subsequent Awakening occurred against that continued excess.

#### Awakening Period

Of all the turnings since the first Crisis, the overall pattern of events of this Awakening follows generational theory the least. There were no widespread protests cropping up again and again. Only three major protests took place, just one of which was really against the shah, occurring in the wake of Mossadeq's resignation as Prime Minister; the other two actually occurring in opposition to Mossadeq. Also, as with the preceding turning, a clear demarcation dividing the contending parties—the shah's regime, the ulema, and the youth—into two competing sides was lacking for most of the period.

However, the period follows the theory closely enough, on the whole, to be considered valid if in a more deviant manner. Particularly, we can see a more institutionalized resistance to the dominant elder generation than was the case before that period with the formation of the Tudeh Party. There was also a maturing of the ideas conceived by the constitutionalists in the early 1900s as to the shape the reforms should take. In this first Awakening, the drive was towards greater religious values, though it was laced with Marxist political and economic,

though not philosophical, ideas.<sup>141</sup> As the set of modernizing reforms under Reza Shah and his son had been towards more secularization, the youth rebelling against their parents went in the opposite direction, as expected. This rebellion reached fruition in the Crisis spurred on by the Revolution, though, not in the form that large segments of them envisioned, which will be discussed later.

It is important to note, however, that the youth movement initially lost due to external intervention and Mossadeq's poor choices at crucial points. Again, individual action proves to be more important in the early stages of a society's cycle formation. As the youth were not victorious, the climax of the Awakening did not end with the humiliation of the shah and his acquiescence of the oppositions demands. Instead it climaxed with the overthrow of the democratic government and the dissolution of civil liberties and rights. This is right in line with what Xenakis assertion that Awakenings which do not end in victory for the young adult generation lead to more virulent Crisis periods.<sup>142</sup> When there is no pressure release of the generational conflict between the old and the young, with the establishment of a new value system, the existential struggle becomes even more desperate, as it is not solely over the survival of the society, but, in addition, becomes imbued with conflict over the identity of the society that emerges out of the Crisis.

The Shah did not take into account the youthful demographics of the country, nor was he mindful that their parents had grown up under the secularizing influence of his father. He should not have found it surprising that their children would chart an opposing course, given that the one they had seen under the parents was unsuccessful in freeing Iran from foreign interference. Unintentionally, he gave them the means to present a united front to oppose his rule through the effects of his own modernization programs with the rise in urbanization and its concomitant rise

in literacy. With his ignorance and repression of the generational forces pushing back against his vision for Iran, and their strength magnified by the transition to modernity he himself accelerated, he exacerbated the excesses built up by his father's own modernizing efforts during the Recovery period. Rather than work to correct and smooth these disruptions by listening to the public's wishes concerning his modernization policies and allowing greater participation in the political process, he took after his father, suppressing those who spoke out against him, which would eventually lead to the unraveling of his regime.

### Unraveling Period

The kind of cascading disintegration of order in the Shah's last decade is in the vein of the dynamic of an Unraveling period, but the source of the decay is not completely the same. In fact, that descent into chaos was intensified by the lack of representative government since the people were not politically invested in the social order, and, indeed, had an incentive to overturn it. This is representative of the kinds of excesses that lead to increasing instability to which my modification of Strauss and Howe's generational theory refers. On the contrary, for societies that are more politically open, it is more the case that the demand for order declines with the peaking of individualism, which leads to a decrease in coherency in the institutions of society, both public and private. This then forms a positive feedback loop, where a decline in the supply of social order causes the public to value it ever less, thus lowering the demand, which then lowers the supply, and so on.<sup>143</sup>

In less open societies, there is no competitive selection process for the different segments of society to implant their representatives directly in the government or to lobby to get officials to support their agenda. On the contrary, in democratic societies, fragmentation involves a devolution of power to the individual, away from institutions and a concomitant dealignment in

political allegiance. No such outward flow of responsibility occurs among non-democratic governments, where power tends to be far more concentrated. Thus, as the cascade begins and the regime, aggrandizing power unto, and placing all the responsibility for the well-being of the state upon itself, the public begins to find unity in one agenda as conditions continue to deteriorate—removal of the regime.

This is compounded when the youth are not able to secure victory against the established order in the preceding Awakening period. Thus, the issues they raised become layered on top of the new ones created by a decline in the social order. Iran's youth did achieve a partial victory with the regime's almost wholesale adoption of the Tudeh party's economic platform at the prodding of American policymakers who were starting to get nervous about the possibility of a revolution. That partial victory was limited to economic matters and did nothing to involve the public in constructing government policies or securing greater civil liberties. Moreover, the economic reforms were implemented in such a way as to increase secularism in opposition to their vision to transform Iran's political economy into some kind of amalgamation of Marxism and Islam.

Yet, even in the case where the youth actually win, the debate over the interpretation and specific policy initiatives embodying the new values set still remains. In the US, this clash was called the Culture Wars, which pitted "multiculturalists versus traditionalists..., media secularists versus evangelicals..., and public planners versus libertarians..."<sup>144</sup> However, in modernizing societies that have not yet reached a sufficient level of political and economic development, when they lose and the new value system finds no place in the political order of the state, the divide simply becomes the regime and those affiliated with it versus everyone else. Thus, in the case that the youth are unsuccessful as they were in Iran during its first Awakening period, then the

Unraveling is about increasing opposition to the regime itself, and not simply the characteristics of the order it has fashioned, setting the stage for political as well as social revolution.



## CHAPTER 3: PROGRESSING REGRESSIVELY TOWARDS MODERNITY

### Crisis (1978-1989)

#### Projected Historical Path

Unlike the first Fourth turning, the modern state had already been established. Thus, the social order should begin to regenerate roughly one to five years after the event triggers the Crisis period, as society recognizes the need to unify and rebuild its institutions to give itself the best chance for survival, which is by no means guaranteed. At some point following this renewal the Crisis reaches its climax, the crucial moment that confirms the death of the old social order and the birth of a new one. It is at this point that Iran's civic power will reach its maximum ability to wield its institutions in order to resolve threats against its survival with finality.<sup>145</sup>

#### The Collapse of the Pahlavi Dynasty

At the outset of 1978, the shah felt sufficiently threatened by the following Khomeini had garnered that he sought to discredit him in the eyes of the public. The newspaper, *Ettela'at*, published an article in January defaming Khomeini with fabricated stories, claiming he was a British spy, a foreigner from India, and poet (which some ulema believe is condemned in the Quran). It backfired spectacularly. Demonstrations broke out across the country which led to several deaths as the police cracked down on them to maintain order. Forty days of mourning followed, with bazaars and universities closing along with further demonstrations, which led to yet more deaths.<sup>146</sup> This triggered a cycle of protest, death, and mourning, growing in intensity in violence and number with slogans such as "death to the shah."<sup>147</sup>

The seminal event which caused the revolutionary spirit to spread beyond the middle classes to the lower classes was the burning of the Rex Cinema on August 19, 1978. It did not matter that there was no definitive proof that the regime was responsible; it was so discredited by this point most made that assumption. Not heeding the public's grievances, the shah unwisely

imposed martial law and banned demonstrations in response to the protests and strikes that followed, which only intensified the violence, and thus opposition to his regime. By September, he had worn out the public's forbearance to the point where they would accept nothing short of his stepping down from office. As importantly, the main opposition groups pulled together behind Khomeini and his agenda. This left the shah vacillating between repression and concession, not knowing what tack he should take. When he addressed the nation on television he declared that he had heeded the public's opposition and would hold elections and atone for his mistakes, but it was too little too late. Violence intensified further, as gangs roamed the capital at will with the army no longer a reliable fighting force. On January 16, 1979, the shah left the country for good, and two weeks later, Khomeini returned to Tehran to a hero's welcome.<sup>148</sup>

### Founding of the Islamic Republic

With the shah out of the way, Khomeini began establishing his revolutionary government. Mehdi Bazargan of the Freedom Movement was appointed prime minister in February, probably to secure the support of the Islamic liberals while Khomeini and his faction worked to consolidate their power. They established institutions parallel to those of the shah, which formed the Islamic half of the Islamic Republic, and the existing ones the Republic half. Hence, Bazargan, was made to step down several months later, as nationalists, secular leftists, and leftist Islamists opposed to clerical rule, several months later.<sup>149</sup>

One of the most important such institutions was the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Though Khomeini established it in early May of 1979, it actually had its origins in the revolutionary committees, called *komitehs*, which cropped up across the country. They took it upon themselves to enforce the value system of the revolutionary government.<sup>150</sup> It was these forces which pressured Khomeini to execute the senior figures of the shah's regime that they had

been able to capture, though initially he planned on being more lenient.<sup>151</sup> In this period, he had even less control over events in northwestern Iran, as Kurdistan plunged into open rebellion and separatism, though it was eventually crushed a few months after the IRGC's creation.<sup>152</sup>

However, Khomeini was brilliant at exploiting these shock troops for his own agenda even as it shook moderates. He understood the price of failing to consolidate his rule, especially with the assassination of a number of his close supporters, including his right-hand man, Mohammad Behesti. Thus, even as he was already the focal point of the revolution, overshadowing even prominent Ayatollah Shari'atmadari, he was very aggressive in taking the initiative against his foes. "You hit first and let others complain. Don't be the victim and don't complain." Shari'atmadari, a moderate, was quickly silenced, and in an unprecedented move Khomeini stripped him of his position of *marja-e taqlid*. Some of his supporters were even executed. Khomeini's defeat of the established clerical leadership is all the more remarkable considering that on Khomeini's core conception of government, the *velayat-e faqih*, most of the ulema sided with Shari'atmadari, but were too intimidated to speak publicly.<sup>153</sup>

In this environment of opposition, Khomeini and his supporters were able to consolidate their rule, restoring their traditional roles in society and more. The first constitution crafted by Bazargan was similar to the 1906 predecessor sans the monarchy, but it was radically revised by an assembly of clerics tasked with writing the constitution, called the Assembly of Experts. The end result was a political system set up such that the everyday workings of government were handled by the remnants of the shah-era institutions with the real power placed in the hands of religious bodies. Thus, freedom of the press was curtailed with vigilante groups shutting down newspapers in violent attacks. Universities were also closed to eject leftist professors and impose Islamic principles. These kinds of activities had the secondary effect of keeping a feeling

of crisis, which is why Khomeini declared his support for the students who took over the US embassy in November 1979. In this regard, Carter's rescue attempt fed right into that narrative, even though it failed.<sup>154</sup>

### The Iran-Iraq War

While the revolutionary government was still being consolidated against the remnants of Pahlavi regime and the separatist and leftist groups, Iran was invaded by Iraqi forces led by Saddam Hussein. It is hard to exaggerate the magnitude of the war with Iraq for Iran and the region. Iran suffered roughly 300,000 casualties. By comparison if the US suffered likewise in proportion to its population today it would have incurred over 6 million deaths.<sup>155</sup> The outset of the war did not go well for Iran, as the most trained fighting force, the *Artesh*, had been severely disrupted due to desertions and the purging of its officer corps. Things did not begin to turn around until the battles shifted to urban warfare which played to the strengths of the newly established IRGC, which was and remains a light infantry force.<sup>156</sup>

Upon pushing Iraq's forces out of the country, Khomeini then resolved to go on the offensive and continue the fight until Saddam had been overthrown and an Iraqi Islamic republic established. Iran's forces were unable to break through Iraq's defenses for four years as strategy was left to the IRGC, which was content to use human wave tactics as a demonstration of Shi'a belief and resolve against the superior firepower of the Iraqi army. The war, thus, descended into an exchange of missile barrages on each other's cities, and attacks on each other's oil tankers and those of other Persian Gulf states in 1984.<sup>157</sup> The most crucial turning point, though, came two years later as the clerics sensed the growing weariness with the increasing losses for no meaningful gain, that they let the *Artesh* commanders have the reins. Using more conventional

tactics, Iran was able to capture the Fao peninsula in 1986, virtually cutting Iraq off from the Persian Gulf.<sup>158</sup>

Aside from this key victory and the initial invasion, however, the war was basically a stalemate. Iran was not able to capitalize on the momentum of its victory at Fao and reap further gains as its revolutionary government's rejection of the interstate system evoked fear, prompting the US and its neighbors to assist Iraq. The West had placed an embargo on exports of advanced heavy weaponry on Iran and the US allowed oil tankers of the Gulf states to sail under its flag. With no means of pushing further into Iraq and without the means to deny access to the Gulf, Iran had no path to victory.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, the war was beginning to endanger the survival of the Islamic Republic itself with its attrition depleting its foreign currency reserves and the patience and morale of the Iranian people. Khomeini was eventually forced to agree to the UN cease fire, concluding the war. Doing so was necessary for saving the Republic, which was the reason for the war in the first place. Nevertheless, it was an extremely bitter pill to swallow, all the more so because the decision had to be rationalized to a public that had been promised victory by declaring he did so the Islamic Republic would have a future.<sup>160</sup>

That was indeed the truth, but it was also true that the survival of the Islamic Republic was a victory in and of itself. The hardliners, however, needed more than rationalizations. Hence, Khomeini seized the opportunity with Sam Rushdie's publication of the *Satanic Verses* to reclaim legitimacy by issuing a fatwa for his death. Khomeini himself, though, died only a few months later, an event of sufficient magnitude to close Iran's Crisis period, as it would begin the long and painful process of rebuilding its institutions and infrastructure—the inauguration of its Recovery period.<sup>161</sup>

## **Recovery (1989-2005)**

### Projected Historical Path

Iran's leaders should work to open up Iran to the international community, and find a way to resolve its differences with its regional neighbors and the West. Being at peace with the former and having access to the necessary financial resources and expertise from the latter it should then work quickly rebuild its infrastructure and economy. The legitimacy of the regime will thus increase with the populace grateful for their long period of sacrifice and hardship is over, that they can at last begin to reclaim their lives. Yet by the end of its reconstruction, roughly two decades after the end of the war, its concern over material matters will leave it feeling without purpose, and that greater openness must lead to greater political and personal freedom, at which point the time should be ripe for an Awakening.

### Akbar Rafsanjani

#### *Pragmatists vs Radicals*

The aftermath of the war with Iraq and subsequent death of Khomeini was a very delicate, momentous period in the history of Iran and the Islamic Republic, as the Islamic Republic had to confront the problem of succession. None of the grand ayatollahs were considered acceptable to replace him as Supreme Leader, which posed a dilemma since the constitution of the Islamic Republic required that he must be both a *marja*, or leading cleric, and someone with political leadership skills, whose basis was Khomeini's doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih*, or rule of the jurist. Thus, the constitution had to be modified to allow someone of lesser religious standing to become Supreme Leader, namely Ali Khamenei, one of Khomeini's students.<sup>162</sup>

The constitution of the Islamic Republic caused further problems in that it is rooted in both divine and popular sovereignty, as its name suggests. The secular part of the executive, the

Presidency, was also amended, as it was recognized that Khamenei would not wield the power and charisma of Khomeini. Such was his stature that it could even be said that he formed a fourth branch of government over the state, which was not really allowed to function independently of him. Hence, these alterations effectively broke the dual sovereignty, which he had once united, into its two constituent parts, leaving open the possibility of a struggle between the two executives, and thus laying bare the contradiction forged at the very heart of the Islamic Republic.<sup>163</sup>

Yet, conflicts between the various factions represented not only a struggle for power but real disagreements in how the government should be constituted and more practically how the government should go about reconstructing the country. These conflicts would prove enormously influential in directing the path Iran would take and continues to affect its current trajectory.<sup>164</sup> The most immediate and practical effect, however, was that the hardliners lost power for the first time. In their place rose the more pragmatic faction led by Akbar Rafsanjani, another one of Khomeini's students, who was overwhelmingly elected President in the fall of 1989.<sup>165</sup>

It has been speculated that Rafsanjani came into power expecting Khamenei to serve as mere figurehead while he wielded the real levers of power.<sup>166</sup> On the contrary, Khamenei took on the powers of his predecessor as much as he was able, going so far as to usurp Rafsanjani's role as commander-in-chief of Iran's military forces.<sup>167</sup> Lacking the power base and legitimacy to sustain such brazen moves over the long term without building his own network of support, he began establishing close ties to Iran's paramilitary organization, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).<sup>168</sup> Khomeini had always avoided such an arrangement in order to prevent them from gaining enough power to challenge the regime.<sup>169</sup> Khamenei's decision greatly impacted

the evolution of the IRGC and the reconstruction of Iran, but in the early period of his rule he still had to contend with the more influential Rafsanjani, especially during the eight-year tenure of his presidency. Indeed, as unexpectedly active as Khamenei was, in the early years of his rule, Rafsanjani essentially ran the economy.<sup>170</sup>

In his opening address, Rafsanjani made a substantial departure from the early revolution, espousing moderation at home and abroad. He had a major problem, though, because even with his landslide electoral victory, the conservatives still held control of the Majles, Iran's parliament. The first few years of his tenure as president the economic path that he and his fellow pragmatists wished to follow were, thus, obstructed by their main rivals, the radical conservatives.<sup>171</sup> Each had very different ideas on how to go about reconstructing the country, which made implementing economic plans much more difficult, even as Iranians, exhausted as they were with a decade of revolution and war, were eager to begin rebuilding their lives and a return to more normal times.<sup>172</sup>

#### *The Effect of the Political Divide on Iran's Economic Recovery*

Iran was in bad shape in the aftermath of the war with Iraq. Its oil production was 50% of its pre-revolution levels, leaving it with little to rebuild a country ravaged by a war which absorbed most of the country's resources. With much of Iran lying in ruins this was a major problem. The damage was particularly extensive in the five provinces that experienced the brunt of the invasion with 52 cities damaged, six of which were completely leveled and fifteen more 30-80% destroyed. Khorramshahr, once populated by 300,000 before the war became a ghost town, 80% having been reduced to rubble. Even the major cities such as Tehran and Esfahan suffered damage from Iraqi aerial bombardment. Iran suffered tremendous losses estimated at roughly \$1.15 trillion, adjusted for inflation, not including loss of life, military expenditures, and



the cost of reconstruction.<sup>173</sup>

Grasping this situation, the pragmatists favored an economic reconstruction plan that emphasized speed over autarky. Their opponents, the radicals, ever the purist defenders of the values of the Islamic Republic, by contrast, felt that independence from foreign, particularly Western, powers must be maintained. As for the forbearance of the public, they argued that the Iranian people, having suffered greatly through the war just demonstrated their endurance and could thus summon the patience necessary to rebuild while maintaining the integrity of the regime.<sup>174</sup> The conflict over these two diametrically opposed views profoundly affected Iran's development for the next 15 years because of the steps Rafsanjani took to curtail the radical's influence. Given the scale of the damage, it is easy to understand why the pragmatists were anxious to rebuild Iran as quickly as possible, and why the ponderous pace of the radicals might prove problematic.

There were nevertheless some points of agreement concerning the broad objective of maintaining as much autonomy as possible, and Rafsanjani even decided to implement a mix of the two factions' strategies using a mixed market/planning framework that engaged the public, private, and cooperative (quasi-state-run charities or *bonyads*) sector. He favored the latter, however, perhaps because of the obstructionism of the radicals to his pursuit of foreign investment from the West, and also as part of his plans to give the IRGC a material stake in protecting the regime by offering them the chance to run *bonyads*. Hence, the relationship between Rafsanjani and Khamenei was more of a marriage of convenience than a true partnership.<sup>175</sup>

However, part of Rafsanjani's economic plan, included privatization, which was probably the aspect that most upset the radicals. This was because it involved selling back the assets to

companies owned by those who had supported the Shah during the Revolution. Already motivated to oppose Rafsanjani ideologically, his move to marginalize them only intensified their opposition out of self-interest to maintain power and retaliation against his hostile actions. Hence, he was denied the importation of experts, reformation of ministries, and pursuit of foreign capital he felt was essential for the reconstruction and further development of Iran.<sup>176</sup>

Desperate as he was to raise the financial resources to begin the costly task of restoring the nation's infrastructure, Rafsanjani essentially had to make a deal with the merchant class to fund the state in exchange for minimal regulation. While this solved the state's immediate financial problems, it sowed the seeds of economic dysfunction which continue to hobble Iran's development to the present day. This was compounded by the necessity to placate the commanders of the IRGC who were a potential threat to the clerical regime, as armies returning from a military expeditions without victory often are. That need along with Khamenei's close knit relations with them, due to his insecurity with respect to Rafsanjani, led Iran's economy down a path that has stymied the development of its private sector for over two decades.<sup>177</sup>

The source of this problem, though, turned out to be Rafsanjani's alienation of the radicals when he partnered with Khamenei to limit their power by amending the constitution and the electoral laws regarding the qualification of candidates for office. Previously all that was required were three references from recognized theologians confirming the candidate's religious understanding. After 1989, the Council of Guardians, was given the power to make such determinations. This new change would not come into effect, however, until the next parliamentary elections three years later, and unfortunately for the Rafsanjani's agenda the radicals, whose enmity he had just provoked, gained control of all the committees in the Majles save for foreign affairs. Such was their success he attempted to out-radicalize them supporting

the assassination of dissidents both within and outside Iran. To make matters worse, he had completely underestimated the depth of the recession, and thus over-promised what he could deliver on economic and job growth.<sup>178</sup>

Ironically, it was the radicals' ill-considered response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, deciding to side with Hussein in his invasion of Kuwait against the US-led coalition, which saved Rafsanjani's first term. An even greater irony was that Rafsanjani's rigging of the requirements for candidacy, while allowing the pragmatists to crush the radicals in the 1992 Majles elections, may have been unnecessary. The radicals had alienated the electorate in their refusal to recognize the end of the war, indicative of their expectation for life to begin to return to some degree of normalcy. Thus, Rafsanjani could have increased his influence simply by allowing them to run for election unhindered, but by meddling with that process he short-circuited one of the important functions of the Majles—conflict management. Without the legitimacy afforded by that process, and moves Khamenei took to cement his position as Supreme Leader against him, Rafsanjani felt compelled to take on some of the attributes of those whom he opposed.<sup>179</sup>

By the time Rafsanjani's second four-year term was over, the Iranian public was tired of broken promises, assassinations of dissidents, and the continued repression of their political freedom.<sup>180</sup> Khamenei, feeling secure enough, with the end of Rafsanjani's presidency and the position of the regime, allowed for fairly free elections. He even listened to Rafsanjani's advice to allow Mohammad Khatami, a reformist, run in the 1997 presidential election.<sup>181</sup> Rafsanjani may have sought this split (though probably not its resulting damage to the Islamic Republic) since his power was about to be diminished, having to relinquish the presidency after his maximum two terms in office. No matter Rafsanjani's reasoning, that decision proved to be of

enormous consequence, even though Khatami would unfortunately disappoint his supporters in the end.

### Mohammad Khatami

#### *The Bifurcation of the Islamic Republic*

When Khatami beat Ali Nouri in the 1997 presidential election by 15 million votes it shocked everyone, but especially the clerical regime.<sup>182</sup> Without someone allied with the regime or at least someone whose support base was not comprised of people who disfavored it, there was now a split in the executive of the Islamic Republic. It is hard to overestimate the consequence of this development for what the public felt was possible in terms of securing greater political and personal freedom and most fundamentally how it exposed the contradictory notion of a theocratic republic itself, and thus the *velayat-e faqih*.<sup>183</sup> Counterintuitively, this damage to a large degree, represented a return to a more normal brand of politics.<sup>184</sup> Khomeini's charismatic presence loomed so large over the state such that he could be considered a fourth branch of government.<sup>185</sup> Yet, there still lingered elements of revolutionary fervor with assassinations of reformist dissidents, executed by the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) which essentially operated as a state within a state.<sup>186</sup>

This should not be terribly surprising given that that is indeed the manner in which Khomeini began establishing the Islamic Republic, by overlaying religious governing bodies atop the existing Pahlavi regime institutions, as mentioned previously. The election of Khatami signaled the return to normalcy, but the loss of the presidency pressed the regime and the radicals against the wall, such that Khamenei began aligning strongly with them against the pragmatists.<sup>187</sup> Even more importantly, his ties with the IRGC would wax stronger, enabling it to increase its power dramatically over the next several years. The IRGC's leadership

recognized that if the reformists were able to continue gain influence unimpeded the regime itself eventually would be challenged and in all probability overthrown because the youth were largely unsupportive of the Islamic Republic, having no recollection of the Shah's regime and the Revolution.<sup>188</sup>

Beyond this generational difference, the twin developments of increasing literacy and urbanization which worked against the Shah's continued reign have been sustained. For ages 6-24, the literacy rate increased from 50.5% to 93% between 1976 and 1993. The regime still supported education for females, traditional as it is, though in the case of urbanization it increased in spite of its best efforts to hold the rising tide of migrants into the cities. In the aftermath of the war, funds were allocated to develop the rural areas, building schools and adding indoor plumbing and electricity, in the hopes that it would disincentivize people from moving into urban areas. This was done to avoid greater pressure on employment, which was already high especially among the youth, and even more importantly to keep them from being "corrupted" by reformist sentiments where their influence continues to be at its strongest. It did not work as people still sought the greater opportunities represented by urban life, especially employment, and among those who stayed behind, the increased development began to work the same effect that operated in the cities away from traditionalist and towards more western norms.<sup>189</sup>

Similarly, the clerical regime decided to merge its religious seminaries into the university system, hoping that the Islamic character of the former would work to tamp down any such tendencies in the latter. Instead, when the students came into contact with western philosophers they sought to integrate their ideas with Islamic theology, even beginning to question not whether religious rule was just, but rather if it was even in the interest of the clerics, which only

further reinforced the trend towards democratic norms. The larger development of which the above circumstances are a part is the strengthening of Iran's civil society.<sup>190</sup> In fact, with the election of Khatami represented the first time in history of modern Iran that public opinion emerged as a significant political force. His support, moreover, being broadly based, including women, intellectuals, youth, peasants, and even from among the institutions associated with the regime such as the IRGC, also demonstrated dramatically that for the first time this force could be translated into political power.<sup>191</sup>

Thus, on paper, while Khamenei, has more power than Khomeini or the Shah ever did,<sup>192</sup> in actuality, power in Iran has become more diffuse with the strengthening of civil society. The thousands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been created even without the government's approval exemplifies and is perpetuating this trend.<sup>193</sup> These organizations have been formed with an eye to address the social problems the government has ignored, due to neglect or simple incompetence. For instance, even fifteen years into the Islamic Republic's existence the clerics had not yet mastered the art of governance sufficiently to execute a task as basic as determining Iran's population or its growth rate accurately. This prompted journalists to take up the responsibility themselves, against the wishes of government officials.<sup>194</sup> Social movement organizations tend to flourish during periods when state repression is lighter, allowing them to gain a following, though changing policy is still rather difficult as women's rights activists would discover in their struggle to win greater equality with men.

#### *The Gradual Path towards Reforming Gender Norms*

Hence, the most telling dynamic in discerning the state of a society's place on the path from traditionalism to modernity, perhaps, is that of gender relations. While the Pahlavi dynasty may have been repressive against political freedom in general, women made advances towards

achieving a status equal to that of men, especially in education.<sup>195</sup> The rise of the Islamic Republic, with its fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, marked a setback of at least a century from that goal in terms of legal status, even as it rather paradoxically represented an advance for Iran's overall progression from traditionalism to modernity.<sup>196</sup> For the Shah's secular path of westernization was not supported by the masses who had little recourse to see their preferences taken into account in his plans, the *sine qua non* of political development.<sup>197</sup> Indeed, Khomeini found much support from women, though he did not mobilize them on the basis of gender issues. The irony of this participation is that it brought women into the political process more directly than before, but then shortly after, the regime codified religious norms that greatly circumscribed their rights.<sup>198</sup>

Gender norms towards greater equality have nevertheless begun to be accepted, with increasing urbanization, literacy rates, and participation in the political process, constrained as it was. Significantly, birth rates also dropped dramatically during this period, which is unusual, mirroring the anomaly of its sharp rise during the previous Crisis period.<sup>199</sup> These developments enabled more traditional and reformist women to find common ground over women's rights. Indeed, even in the rural areas, marriage was no longer seen as a reason to cease a women's education, though opinions concerning married women working outside the home still lagged the urban areas.<sup>200</sup>

Nevertheless, as the reformists recognized that the clerical regime would not countenance dramatic reforms, and also to maintain unity with more traditional women, they aimed to make small gains such as increasing the youngest age of marriage, delegitimization of the institution of *sigheh* (temporary marriage), and to grant women greater custody rights.<sup>201</sup> Khatami, as a moderate, was able to appeal to them on their issues directly. Much of their agenda was

considered still too western and radical by the regime, modest as their goals were, and even those modest gains which they thought they had secured were scrolled back when the conservatives took back the Majles in the 2004 election. The traditional, religious feminists' support for the regime left them with no further avenues to pursue greater gender equality. When secular feminists realized they would have to challenge the system itself in order to exact their demands their alliance with the reformists became defunct.<sup>202</sup>

That the reformists, including women's rights activists, initially chose to effect gradual change, working within the system, is emblematic of this period. For despite the tumultuous rivalry between the radicals and the pragmatists, the revolutionary fervor of the Islamic Republic's first decade had begun to taper down. Indeed, university students, were less active politically and actually had to be encouraged to become more engaged. This was the case at least until the 1997 presidential election where the youth surprisingly drew inspiration from Khatami, a cleric, who promised greater openness within Iran and towards the region and the West.<sup>203</sup> Yet, by the end of his first term, it became clear that they had exhausted every avenue for challenging the regime short of confronting the system itself, as evidenced by the ease of the reversal of the gains women's rights activists had made so painstakingly over the course of a decade.<sup>204</sup>

For no matter how gradual the nature of the reforms activists sought, the regime understood that the changes that it desired could eventually lead to its end. This was made plain by the fact that much of the reformist movement looked to the West as the ideal model, unlike the activists and intellectuals among the two generations prior to the Iranian revolution. Even the religious nationalists have grown to reject clerical rule.<sup>205</sup> Hence, the clerics decided to close ranks with the IRGC, which had been rising due to the economic decisions made by Rafsanjani



for the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure.<sup>206</sup> The regime's reaction to the 1999 student protests viscerally illustrated how far it was willing to go in using the Basij, the militia arm of the IRGC, to enforce its rule. They also used their control of the religious governing bodies, the Council of Guardians and Expediency Council, and the judiciary to obstruct the reformist agenda, just as they had done with legislation concerning women's rights.<sup>207</sup> So even with Khatami's 2001 reelection his promise of greater political openness, particularly a freer press, could not be fulfilled, causing frustration among his supporters, while the regime consolidated its control, though at the expense of empowering the IRGC.

Turnout was low for both the 2004 Majles and 2005 presidential elections, due to the boycott by reformist supporters. This was in reaction to the Council of Guardians, which had disqualified all of their desired candidates, leaving the field completely open for former IRGC to win a third of the seats in parliament and former Basiji, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to become president against an unpopular Rafsanjani.<sup>208</sup> With these victories came even more economic and political power for the IRGC, leading to more state assets being "privatized." These assets in truth were really being transferred from the state to the IRGC controlled *bonyads*.<sup>209</sup> Given the continued lack of economic and political reforms, what recourse did the reformists have but to begin confronting the regime directly?

## **Comparison to Strauss and Howe's Model**

### Crisis Period

The Iranian Revolution was not solely or perhaps even primarily religious despite being led by a religious figure. Rather, it was motivated by economic and nationalistic concerns. It did draw strength, however, from Shi'ism, which was really the only alternative authority system to the shah's regime. Middle Eastern scholar Ervand Abrahamian described it as the last third

world, anti-imperialist revolution carried out under an Islamic cloak.<sup>210</sup> It provided the ideology with which to challenge it intellectually as well, something that was lacking in the early 1900s during its first Crisis period when Iran's cycle began.<sup>211</sup> This Crisis was Iran's second iteration of the Fourth Turning, 72 years after the first one, spanning four generations, with each one averaging 18 years in length. Its importance for Iran's present historical path can hardly be exaggerated.

Both the anti-imperialist and Islamic aspects of the revolution are of interest here for the analysis of the Fourth Turning of Iran's whose beginning marks the completion of its first cycle. According to Strauss and Howe, it is the linear mentality spawned by modernization, as a society breaks free of nature's cycles, which induces the generational cycle. In the first Crisis period with the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, Iran's modernization was in its infancy, and there was no real coherent ideology to bring all the groups together other than opposition to the Qajar dynasty. Even though most Iranians were not completely aware of Khomeini's design for post-Shah Iranian governance, there was a strong sense among them that Islamic principles should be incorporated, since they had largely been spurned by the Shah, following in the footsteps of Turkey's Kemal Ataturk path of modernization.

The expectation then would be for the second Crisis period to follow more closely the characteristics described by Strauss and Howe, with the passage of four generations of social, political, and economic development. Indeed, that was the case. That Iran had reached a critical point in its political, economic, and social development is evidenced by its broadly based anti-imperialist revolution, a movement whose leadership had matured from its earlier challenge of the Shah's regime in the 1940s-1960s. At the core of that leadership was a religious figure who opposed the secular monarchical government as unIslamic and had his own ideas about what

should replace it, providing the glue that bound the revolutionaries together. This religious dimension of the revolution disguised its secular nature, the purpose of which was to challenge the state power of the regime rather than the more spiritual concern during the Awakening, at the beginning of Reza Shah's reign, over the nature of Iranian society to decide whether it should be more western, Islamic, socialist, Persian, etc.

The Fourth Turning and thus the saeculum are bookended in a resolution that determines whether the society emerges in the First Turning of a new cycle triumphantly or tragically.<sup>212</sup> A major determining factor in a successful resolution of a Crisis period is the degree of social cohesion. While group cohesion is maximized, Fourth Turnings are dangerous periods for a state's integrity because the ethnic groups comprising it do not always share a strong enough common identity to forge a new social order to meet the challenges wrought by the collapse of the existing one. This occurs even as they gain greater internal cohesiveness. Thus, ethnic conflicts and civil wars are far more likely to occur during these periods than in any other. Even in the United States, the northern and southern states proved unable to reconcile their differences peacefully, resulting in the bloodiest war in its history.<sup>213</sup>

On the contrary, for societies whose ethnic groups share a common heritage or face sufficient external threat for them to put aside their differences, the Fourth Turning crystallizes them into a solid unit in which division and deviation from the social norm are much less tolerated. In particular, there is a renewed social division of labor between young and old as well as male and female. Those unable to conform to the more stringent, uniform standards are met with social stigma and even punishment. The resulting changes are so great it is as if a society has been beset by a massive hurricane and every social structure unable to withstand the stresses put on it by the gale-force winds wrought by the Crisis are swept away, leaving only the most

robust remaining in its wake.<sup>214</sup> Survival being the highest priority, social structures felt to be more conducive towards that end are therefore chosen over considerations of fairness. Strauss and Howe point out that this is a major reason why the cyclic pattern of social development was overlooked for so long.<sup>215</sup> The activist-minded idealist is not partial to the idea that their work can be scrolled back by forces beyond what they can surmount, that they would have to roll with the wave almost all the time even when it carries them through the trough. Setbacks of such magnitude are anathema to the idealist.<sup>216</sup>

As the society fights, or at least feels it is fighting, for its survival, all of its resources, human and material, are wielded to enable the best chance for victory. The problems left to fester during the Unraveling in which attempts at solutions were half-hearted or still-born are at last confronted leaving the vacillation and quarrelsomeness behind. One vision for the country wins out and is implemented with zeal. This does not mean the ideal one wins or that it will ultimately be successful, but rather that one path is at last chosen. With such uniformity and clarity of direction, mistakes and mismanagement are inevitable as there is much less dissent and deliberation. Tolerance for missteps thus necessarily increases.<sup>217</sup>

As stated above, finding diplomatic solutions to international disputes when at least one party's society has been dramatically refashioned as described above is nigh impossible, and all the more so when that is the case for more than one of them. Wars are not only all but inevitable under such conditions, they have a tendency to develop into the largest conflicts. Mirroring the moral crusades from their younger days, the Prophet generation, as elders now at the height of their power in society, begin to see their adversaries in moral terms. This mentality encourages wars to be fought totally, imposing heavy sacrifices on the battlefield and at home, to achieve enduring victories.<sup>218</sup>

Compare the end of World War I, which occurred during an Unraveling era war for Western Europe, to that of World War II, the quintessential Crisis era war.<sup>219</sup> Though the Germans were defeated, Berlin was not occupied, the fighting hardly even reaching into its territory, lending credibility to the argument and feeling among much of the people that they were betrayed by their leaders rather than truly beaten, though they had been brought to the brink of starvation.<sup>220</sup> General John Pershing, anticipating this dynamic, actually advocated continuing the war until the Germans had been completely subdued, but with everyone weary of war, that was not to be.<sup>221</sup> At the end of the Second World War, by contrast, what remained of Germany's smoldering ruins was carved up among the Allied powers, and the Pacific theater's end was punctuated by the dropping of the two atomic bombs.

So how does Iran's second Crisis period compare with this template versus the first iteration in the early 1900s? As discussed previously, there was a unifying ideology this time around for the masses to rally around, even if they did not understand precisely how its governing principles would be enacted in practice. This belies the lack of an Awakening era in which a new values system arises to challenge the basis for the current social order, indicating that Iran's cycle really can only be said to have begun with the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, though there were stirrings towards its formation throughout the previous century beginning with the introduction of technology and political institutions of the West.

Women's rights were also severely curtailed, urged to confine themselves to traditional gender roles of caretakers of the family. Indeed, under Khomeini the Islamic Republic encouraged them to bare more children to serve as soldiers. Iran's birth rate, rather surprisingly did rise sharply in response,<sup>222</sup> which goes against the usual dynamics of the Fourth Turning, since the period's conditions are not ideal for raising a family. This demonstrates the greater

importance of individuals to the overall dynamics of a traditional society's developmental path than is the case for more modern society's whose cyclic patterns are stronger.

As with the first one, the Islamic Revolution began with a catalyzing event, this time in the form of the fabricated article defaming Khomeini, which led to the demonstrations leading to the chain of events that ended in the overthrow of the Shah. The difference was that the clerics, having been alienated, were aligned with the opposition consistently, in part because of the Shah's land reforms and attempts to usurp their civic authority, but also because of the attractiveness of Khomeini's philosophy of governance that the clerics should rule.<sup>223</sup> Interestingly, however, none of the grand ayatollahs, comprised of the eldest cohort among the elderly, supported him. Whether their support for the revolution would have been as robust had the shah not moved against them is difficult to say, but that just illustrates the continuing importance of individual action in a social system whose cycle is not as mature as those of the developed countries, particularly that of the United States.

### Recovery Period

This period is by far the most difficult to account for using generational theory, and was in fact the conduit by which I completed my extension of it. While the first half develops roughly along how the theory outlines it should, there is a major departure in the second half, after the election of Khatami. Right from the beginning there was a split in the ruling elite, where there should have been unity. The overall dynamic of increased pragmatism, yet continued, devotion to more traditional norms, especially those pertaining to gender relations, however, remained. The radical segment, however, sought to maintain the closed, barracked mentality necessitated by the ravages of war, as they felt doing otherwise would leave the door open for westernization and the eventual end of clerical rule.

This is where the first half of the Recovery departs from the theory. The two main factions engaged in a power struggle for the future of Iran, rather than establishing a binocular focus, producing one vision from two different perspectives. Concerning how best to rebuild the country, should they prioritize efficiency or independence? Throughout the Crisis period this factional rivalry was on-going, but it was suppressed by Khomeini and the conditions of war. So this resulted, in part, from the power vacuum in the wake of his death, again demonstrating the greater importance of individuals for the evolution of developing countries, whose generational cycles are weaker. Nevertheless, revolutionary passions had begun to wane, with some elements, such as the assassinations of dissidents overseas and within Iran, representing leftovers from the Crisis period.

The main cause of these remnants, these excesses, was the revolutionary zeal of the radicals. Their fervor blinded them to the shift in the public's mood in the aftermath of the war. Contrary to their belief that the public's forbearance proved their ability to endure the increased long-suffering a slower reconstruction pace would demand, the public felt the regime owed them something in return for their loyalty and tremendous sacrifice. For 300,000 soldiers, some of whom were no more than ten years of age, were lost fighting Iraq, and 500,000 more injured, not to mention the billions of dollars in damage to their infrastructure.<sup>224</sup> Rafsanjani and his fellow pragmatists understood this instinctively, and aimed to bring back a sense of normalcy for the public to suture its wounds. If nothing else, whether the turning following a Crisis comes in the form of a glorious High or a brooding Recovery, normalcy is the watchword. The radicals denied the need for this natural response, generally being against the rhythms of the saeculum during the periods they found to be dangerous to their interests, a dynamic Strauss and Howe pointed out would not be surprising for more traditional societies.<sup>225</sup>

As mentioned previously, this is the destructive vice of regressive elements of societies in transition. It is an understandable one, though. Their intuitions are correct that the rhythm of the saeculum, the patterns of generational turnover, are part of the modernizing process, and that if they allowed them to occur unhindered, the traditional society they desire would likely unravel over time. What they failed to grasp is that by resisting the shifts in the supply and demand for social order, excesses tend to compound as issues lie unresolved or ones that have been left to linger, the methods of their resolution, having been conducive for maintaining their agenda and power, then becoming solutions in search of societal problems. In both cases, they work to increase societal instability, since they fail to satisfy the expectations of the public. So for this Recovery period, the clerical regime lost legitimacy, no longer having any non-religiously based justification for its harsh measures of control; indeed, they were not even in power in terms of the elected governing bodies for the first time, fifteen years after the war. This resistance of the radicals is the source of what amounts to the largest deviation, from Strauss and Howe's theory. In many respects, it is akin to the retrograde inversion of an Awakening.

Hence, what happened after Khatami's election looks like the youth won, given that his largest bloc of support was comprised of young voters. Yet, over the course of his eight-year tenure was he and his supporters were grinded down by establishment challengers who finally claimed victory in the 2004 and 2005 respective Majles and presidential elections, effectively crushing the reformists. In this way, both the roles of the actors and the sequence of events were reversed. So how to account for this seemingly unbridgeable chasm between the actual events and what is predicted by Strauss and Howe? Look at the goals and methods of the reformists versus those of the radicals.

Throughout the Recovery, in both the first and second halves, the pragmatists and the



reformists sought a return to normalcy. Even the latter worked within the system seeking incremental change, both operating as would be expected of a political system in a Recovery. A key difference between modern and modernizing societies, though, is that in the latter, the greater political constraints imposed during a Crisis are temporary even if a mentality of stricter cultural conformity remains during the subsequent Recovery or High. For the latter, by contrast, repression is what the regime wishes to be the norm in perpetuity. So merely pushing for normalcy, a reprieve from repression, can create the look and feel of an Awakening, which in a modern society are typically more concerned with personal expression and expanding freedom for segments of society rather than the whole of it. Further, these challenges to the accepted order are usually done in rather disruptive and decidedly non-supplicative ways.

Because the ruling elite was not unified, and they had failed to strengthen the economy enough to lower unemployment dramatically, they left an opening for a youth-based coalition to take over the elected branches of government. When that happened, it was the regime that rebelled against and challenged the reformist “establishment,” to the point where eventually they attempted to create a sense of heightened security throughout most of 2001 by inducing a political crisis on average every nine days.<sup>226</sup> So in a reversal of roles, the clerics and the radicals aborted the Recovery of Iran’s second generational cycle, in much the same way that the Shah aborted its Awakening in its first cycle, again leaving all the unresolved issues and problems to rollover into the next turning—Iran’s second Awakening.

## CHAPTER 4: THE END OF THE BEGINNING?

### **Awakening (2005-present)**

#### Projected Historical Path

With the children of the Revolution maturing into middle adulthood, and the children of the Recovery coming of age into young adulthood, the youth should challenge the established order. What is different this time around is that the order consists of the Islamic Republic, meaning their rebellion should be in support of secular values. Awakenings begin with the ambitious Hero generation who fought in the Revolution and against Iraq starting to take over the elder position from the slow-moving, “back-to-basics” Nomads such as Khatami and Rafsanjani. The Hero generation, by contrast, is impatient to impose its vision on society. Though the younger generation lost their battle against the Shah in the first iteration, the expectation this time is still that they should ultimately be victorious over the elders, who are embodied by the Supreme Leader, Khamenei.

#### The Children of the Revolution Come of Age

Even before the regime was able to consolidate its position against the reformists in the Islamic Republic’s elected bodies a telling dynamic was sweeping Iran’s most urban areas. A values gap had begun to develop by the mid-2000s between Iran’s young and old.<sup>227</sup> There certainly had been discord between generations, the youth having long since desired more political and personal freedom. Yet, throughout the 1990s this had not been manifested in a direct challenge to the regime’s interpretation of Islamic morals.<sup>228</sup> Such restraint is emblematic of a Recovery period, and thus was not to last. In the 2004 and 2005 elections the youth denied the regime the legitimacy of an electoral victory with a large turnout under free and fair conditions that it so desperately craved. Moreover, given the regime’s claim over the moral

space, the reformists now posed a rather virulent threat to the legitimacy of the idea of clerical rule itself.<sup>229</sup>

For Iran has been in the throes of what may be called its sexual revolution in both rural and urban areas. Unsurprisingly, the upheaval in gender relations has been of a much more radical nature in Iran's urban centers. As one student in Tehran put it,

“In Iran, all things related to sex had doors, closed ones. Now we, this generation, are opening them one by one. Pregnancy outside of marriage? Open it. Teenage sexual feelings? Open that door. Masturbation? Open it. Now the young people are trying to figure out what to do with all these opening doors.”<sup>230</sup>

What changed between then and now? Partly, there was the frustration with the regime's obstruction of Khatami's reformist agenda, but that cannot account for the shift to the specific manner in which they chose to defy the regime, neither can it explain their level of resolve.

The answer lies in the change in the nature of those in the younger cohorts. In the immediate aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War, those who ranged from young adulthood to the beginning of middle adulthood had grown up during the Crisis of Revolution and war, had been indoctrinated with the creed of the Islamic Republic in the virtues of faithful devotion and martyrdom. The latter consist of those born within a few years of the Revolution. This cohort began to question those ideals even earlier during the Recovery to the point where even some revolutionary student groups converted over to the reformist side, during the 1990s to advocate for democracy. One such group was actually the first revolutionary group to be formed, the *Daftar-i Tahkim-i Vahdat* (Office of the Consolidation of Unity), which helped stage the takeover of the American embassy and the ensuing hostage crisis.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, these events lie completely beyond the memory of those born and raised after the end of the war. Most voters

under the age of 35, thus, saw a regime irredeemably hostile to their interests. Why give legitimacy to such a system by trying to work within it? As will be discussed, that stance applied particularly to the secular-minded among the women's rights movement.

Yet, after the youth vote repudiated the regime by staying home in droves it still aimed to reverse what it considered undesirable changes to Iranian society. This was reinforced with the new crop of members of parliament, about a third of them former IRGC who had fought in the war with Iraq, and are thus of the Hero archetype.<sup>232</sup> There is a constituency among the Iranian public for this sentiment as well, with much of Ahmadinejad's support coming from the regions that were most fervently devoted to the Islamic Revolution, being among the first to provide soldiers for the IRGC and offering a large number of martyrs to the Iran-Iraq war. Unlike the other candidates, including his strongest opponent, former president Rafsanjani, he maintained ties to the network of veterans organizations such as *Bonyad-e Shahid* (The Foundation of Martyrs) and the *Basiji* (Volunteers).<sup>233</sup> In fact, it is the ascent of this generation into elderhood and thus positions of leadership that demarcates the shift from Recovery to Awakening.

### Women's Rights and the Generation Gap

#### *Ahmadinejad Turns the Clock Back*

As mentioned in the previous section, the new leadership miscalculated that the changes in the Iranian family and the advancement of women that had begun in the 1970s under the shah could be reversed through legislation. They could suppress that trend in the Crisis period, and to a lesser extent the Recovery,<sup>234</sup> but towards the latter's end these policies became increasingly grating for women's rights activists, even the more traditional ones. Yet, when the IRGC gained power within the regime, and the regime consolidated its power over the reformers, their first task was to push back against the rising tide of secularism, given its challenge to the regime's

legitimacy. This was most especially the case with the women's rights movement, whose small victories they quickly snuffed out,<sup>235</sup> because stable, sharply divided gender roles largely define and sustain a traditional society's way of life.

Ahmadinejad shocked women across Iran with his call in 2006 for them to return to the home to perform their traditional roles as caretakers of the family. He matched this rhetoric with institutional changes, converting Khatami's Center for Women's Participation into the Center for Women and Family and the reintroduction of polygamy (with the wife's consent) and temporary marriage. He also established quotas against women for admission to university, arguing that it would discourage them from forming families. Rather egregiously, the regime even condoned rape by government officials including secular professors and a university president.<sup>236</sup>

However, his desire for a return to traditionalism was not only at odds with most Iranian women, including the religious ones, but also out of step with the reality of circumstances in contemporary Iran. Even though women comprise a majority of those with college degrees, only a third of Iran's professional workforce are women and they earn a dismal 38% of what their male counterparts make.<sup>237</sup> Hence, the regime's policies with respect to gender roles, lie at the heart of the problem the reformists have with the manner in which the Islamic Republic is constituted, namely that it claims sole right to interpret Islamic mores and beliefs for the people.

The regime thought it could use this power to scroll back the changes that were already developing in the latter years of the Shah's reign using repressive rhetoric and legislation. Yet, the expected reversion to traditional mores, encouraged for a time by the circumstances of the war with Iraq, did not materialize. There are four reasons why their efforts backfired. First, from the beginning of the Islamic Republic women had already made significant gains under the Shah, such that there was already a higher social status to which women could look back.

Feminists were content, at first, merely to begin to reclaim that status even if within the context of the governing, theocratic regime, but that could not satisfy them forever. Second, exposure to life outside of Iran through the internet and global media only intensified their dreams of gender equality. Third, ironically enough was due to the regime's own efforts to decrease Iran's fertility rate, worried as it was about the population explosion. They knew that encouraging female employment as well as education would reduce the birth rate, but were not willing to accept the subsequent empowerment of women such encouragement wrought.<sup>238</sup> Fourth, and most crucially, the generation gap that opened between the young adult and the elderhood generations, provided the basis for these developments to serve as foils for the clerics' moral schemes.<sup>239</sup>

#### *Iran's Feminist Movement Turns on the Islamic Republic*

In response to their renewed pressure, Iranian women began to engage in acts of civil disobedience in ever greater numbers, using the tactics that propelled the Civil Rights movement in the United States during the 1950s-1960s from its last Awakening. Practicing what is known as bad-hejab, or the deliberate wearing of the veil improperly as to show hair on the front and side of the face, is one such action. Small and even trivial as that may seem, it is a revolutionary act in the Islamic Republic. On June 12, 2005 they staged a sit-in at Tehran University to protest the Guardian Council's purging of reformist candidates for the presidential election, from which the religious women activists were conspicuously absent. This was to be expected, as the secular women not only demanded the reinstatement of the disqualified presidential candidates but also called for a referendum to amend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, condemning it as a fundamental obstacle blocking the path for women's rights.<sup>240</sup>

The secular activists argued that the clerical regime's patriarchal character is a political disposition not an Islamic one. Thus, in their view, there is some room for interpretation in

Islam, particularly concerning the relation between mosque and state. They emphasize that the use of religious texts to justify gender inequality highlights the conflict of interest in clerical rule; from their perspective, given the absence of female clerics, trusting a theocratic state to protect the rights of women is like asking the fox to guard the hen house. Having reached this watershed moment, they made a conscious choice to avoid religiously-based arguments and to identify themselves as secular. When they met a year later at Tehran University to commemorate their sit-in with a repeat performance, they deliberately chose not to invite the religious activists. Sadly, before they could even really begin their protest, state security forces, including the Basij, swiftly and brutally beat them down, just as the regime had done with the 1999 student protests. While this repression has now almost entirely precluded pushing the women's rights agenda directly and explicitly, this only confirmed in the minds of the reformists that they will never be able to achieve their goals within the confines of the current system. In other words, the constitution of the Islamic Republic and the regime it undergirds themselves became the targets for transformative change.<sup>241</sup>

#### *The Generational Divide on Gender*

With this shift in focus the women's movement fractured due to the religious feminists' unwillingness to challenge the regime directly instead of merely seeking change within it. The source of this split is largely generational,<sup>242</sup> with the secular feminists being predominately young adult and the religious ones being middle-aged. The experience of those who came of age during the revolution and the war is such that there is a sentiment of bewilderment at the changes in the disposition of the young, unable to understand the latter's perspective. This has led them to feel increasingly cut off from society, the younger generations neither understanding nor

appreciating the hardships and sacrifices they made to ensure the survival of Iran during the war with Iraq.<sup>243</sup>

Research surveys of Iranian women reveal this gap in generational perspectives. A survey study by Akbar Aghajanian et al. which interviewed female high school students from 1996-1997 to research their views on the importance of continuing their education. Regardless of their prospective marital status the study found few differences across all socioeconomic classes and communities. This was the first cohort for which rural attitudes had converged with that of urban Iran. Where rural Iran still differs is whether married women should seek employment outside the home.<sup>244</sup> Charles Kurzman's 2000-2003 survey of young women of various classes and community origins provides support for that finding.<sup>245</sup>

On a whole host of issues related to women's role in the family, leadership roles, and employment, as well as education, highly-educated young married women from both rural and urban communities held roughly the same views. In issues dealing with political decision-making, courtship, and raising of children, however, the disparity between the educated young married women from rural communities expressed preferences for gender equality 10-15% points lower than that of their urban counterparts.<sup>246</sup> That survey unfortunately did not compare the views of less educated rural married women to their urban counterparts, leaving the role of education in the convergence between rural and urban views in doubt. However, a comparison of the differences between highly-educated young married women and other married women for rural and urban areas implies that education was the equalizer. For most issues of gender equality, the rural differences were roughly 10% points higher, the greatest disparities being over 20% on leadership and political activity.<sup>247</sup>



So while there is a growing generational divide in Iran, which is greater in urban areas, the gap between urban and rural views on gender equality appears to be closing. This generation gap is also not as pronounced among men as it is for women. After all, being in the position of power, men would have to relinquish some of it for women to achieve greater equality. Most husbands, for instance, are against their wife working outside the home, because her increased economic independence would make it difficult for him to maintain control over her.<sup>248</sup> Yet, as more people migrate from rural communities to Iran's urban centers, the broader this generation gap will become, to the regime's detriment. It is therefore caught up in a trap of its own making.<sup>249</sup>

#### *Urbanization and the Growth of Iran's Civil Society*

To stay in power, it must repress those challenging its authority, but it must do so without the legitimizing cover of the war with Iraq, as mentioned previously, a dilemma without a solution. The clerical regime, thus, began delegitimizing itself in urban areas right from the outset of the war's aftermath, attempting to rule as if Iran were still totally mobilized in a life and death struggle for survival. However, the regime also knew that without further development of the rural areas migration to the cities would cause a further erosion of their support base. Hence, they began projects for building roads, schools, electricity, and drinking water.<sup>250</sup> These development projects, though, not only failed to stem the tide of urban migration, but the values of the rural younger cohorts have also begun to converge towards those of their urban peers, in large part, it appears, because of the development itself.

A 2007 study of a Gourani tribe village in the Kermanshah province revealing generation gaps over decision-making in the family, sex preference of children, and education of girls offers support for this conclusion. With improving education levels, especially in female literacy, and

infrastructure development in water, electricity and transportation, the younger generations may then be following a similar path as their urban peers if at a slower pace. This generation gap is more pronounced among females than males just as it is in urban areas, but is narrower than in urban areas for both males and females.<sup>251</sup> If this pattern of infrastructure development and education producing these generation gaps is characteristic of rural Iran overall, it nevertheless would be significant, for what it represents in terms of the strengthening of Iran's civil society, and thus the strength of its generational cycle.

Previously, this pattern had only been established for the modernization of the areas, such as Tehran, that were already more urban. Akbar Aghajanian et al.'s study of attitudes towards women's education and employment mentioned above provides some support for the conclusion that that pattern holds for rural areas as well. Its sampling of the capital cities of four Iranian provinces includes a large amount of migration from rural areas to urban centers decades prior to the study.<sup>252</sup> If living in an urban environment caused their views on gender to converge with those of the urban population, it is reasonable to assume that the convergence between rural and urban communities, noted in Kurzman's survey, is due to the rural development programs.

This poses a direct challenge to the cleric's ability to shape social and religious mores, and thus the regime itself. For any move away from a society in which religion is fused with the civic authority threatens the concept of the *velayat-e faqih*.<sup>253</sup> As recounted in the previous section, the regime was adamant about maintaining the same sort of control over society that they exercised during the war with Iraq. They exhibited this defiance after consolidating their power in the secular governing bodies which they completed with the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad as president. Once the secular feminists recognized this reality, they began to change gears, along with the wider reformist movement, to a more confrontational posture,

against a regime that failed to acknowledge the disparity between their desired role for women and the actual roles women continue to garner for themselves.<sup>254</sup>

The forces resisting modernization again, thus, find themselves at odds with an essential component for establishing democracy—Iran’s emerging civil society. Yet, at its very inception, the regime ironically created the seeds of its own potential demise by compromising its theocracy with a republican component, which unsurprisingly some radicals such as Mohammad Mesbah-Yazdi advocate should be excised in favor of a pure Islamic state.<sup>255</sup> This is not really a viable option, however, with the rising secularism of Iran’s youth, comprising as it does two thirds of the country’s population. That demographic reality poses a threat to the life of the current regime, which was the core fear that motivated the clerical regime to resist the changing mood from Crisis to Recovery. Therefore, even as it has consolidated its power, its declining legitimacy has compelled it to lash out even more vociferously against the dynamics of the Awakening, in which Iran has been experiencing a sexual revolution in intimacy between the sexes as well as towards gender equality. Yet both forms are wrapped in a development whose secular outer appearance masks a transformation that is perhaps even more profound, as it strikes even more directly at the heart of the regime—the personalization of Islam.

#### Personalization of Islam

Though there is overlap between them, personalization may be even more threatening to the regime than mere secularization. For the latter can more easily be denounced as the “other,” the enemy of Islam, while such condemnation of the former is a rebuke to self-proclaimed believers who can demonstrate the sincerity of their devotion simply by going through their daily lives. Pressuring them in that vein will only increase their separation from the regime. More perniciously, from the regime’s perspective, their “perversion” of Islam defies the union of

religion and state—the essence of the *velayat-e faqih*—leaving the regime with no basis for legitimacy. Recall that such separation is precisely what the secular feminists seek in their efforts to reform the constitution.

Ironically, this union of religion and state has actually contributed to the secularization of Islam. This has happened both directly as a reaction to the clerical regime's efforts to impose their religious views on every aspect of society and indirectly as a result of its wielding the power of the state to do so. Secularism has crept in simply due to the needs of performing the functions of a modern state, which require the traditional faith of Shi'ism with no experience with its institutions to be reinterpreted.<sup>256</sup> The modification of the constitution upon the death of Khomeini most dramatically illustrates such reinterpretations with his successor, Khamanei, not qualified as a *marja-e taqlid*, prioritizing political acumen and leadership over religious authority.<sup>257</sup>

Indeed, it was this opening that has spawned the institutional evolution of the Islamic Republic over the past 25 years. Only Khomeini could effectively fuse the divine and popular sovereignty at the core of the *velayat-e faqih*. As discussed previously, his death fractured that dual basis of legitimacy into its constituent parts, allowing the reformists to take charge of the popular basis to challenge that of the divine. Yet there are different views on the role religion should play in society. Some simply wish to maintain a traditional Islamic lifestyle, adjusting to some aspects of modern life, often unconsciously. Accepting clerical rule, they are non-political. At the other end of the spectrum lies secularism, comprising those who reject the legitimacy of religion itself, some doing so from an either affirmative atheistic disposition or an antagonistic anti-religious. Varying degrees of secularism lie in between these views, with some merely questioning religious authority over certain segments of life such as music, and others refusing to

accept a religious basis for the state, while still maintaining their religious beliefs through a reinterpretation of Islam.<sup>258</sup>

These varying reactions to the modernization of Iran mean that the declining legitimacy of clerical rule will not inevitably lead to a secular Iran. Rather, the end result of the evolution of the *velayat-e faqih* may simply be the privatization of religion and, hence, the retreat of clerical authority from the political to the religious space. That process began in Europe with the Treaty of Westphalia. Just as the agreement to allow each state to determine its own religion threatened to diminish papal authority<sup>259</sup> so does a personalized faith threaten clerical rule in Iran because each person determines their own morals based on their understanding of Islam, leaving no direct role for them to order the secular world.

The Iranian youth's approach to dress and leisure especially exemplifies this trend. Women challenge the clerics' authority to regulate their appearance by wearing what is for the Islamic Republic provocative clothing such as form-fitting overcoats, open-toed shoes, and wearing headscarves as to show loose strands of hair, known as bad hejab. Men wear t-shirts with no collars, shorts, and keep their hair long. Such seemingly trivial displays become revolutionary acts in a regime that insists such affairs reside within its domain.<sup>260</sup> In that vein, Iran's urban youth are using their sexuality and even seemingly simple pleasures such as football and music to defy the regime's moral authority. The latter is particularly significant since traditional Islam deems music as impure save for the recitation of the Koran.<sup>261</sup>

The individualization of the urban youth represents but one aspect of Iran's growing civil society, which has largely defined itself in opposition to a clerical regime wary of any challenge to its authority over societal mores. Just as the youth of Iran's first Awakening rebelled against the secularization that the Shah was pushing upon society in favor of a more Islamic form of

modernity, today's youth are reacting against the imposition of religion into every aspect of their lives. In that vein, the youth taking to the idea that being religious does not necessarily mean following the fatwas of an ayatollah, that they can read the Koran and determine its meaning for themselves, is far more dangerous.

To the traditionally minded, this is a disaster not just for their power, but also from the viewpoint that the moral order somehow works to order the natural world, as Dr. Abdul-Karim Soroush highlighted.<sup>262</sup> (This idea in its contemporary sense, though, really refers more to the moral order's interaction with society. However, for some such as Hojatoleslam Kazem Sedighi, who claimed that immodestly dressed women caused earthquakes, the literal view still holds.<sup>263</sup>) The great irony of this, however, is that the clerics brought this situation on themselves by having religion not only determine societal mores but also taking control of the state apparatus with which it could wield the power to enforce them. Its legitimacy is hence doubly compromised by taking on the secular functions of modern life as well as spawning a backlash by a generation it can neither understand nor compel to its religious vision.

### The Green Movement

To counter the threat, the regime picked the right target—Iran's civil society. Comprised of a state's non-governmental networks and organizations, civil society acts to facilitate trust, cooperation, and coordination between people beyond their familial relations. The Revolutionary Guard Corps has thus widened its focus from military to political and ideological threats, as it once did during the Revolution at its inception. Consider the groups it has targeted for repression and infiltration—"feminists, mystics, dervishes, devil worshippers, journalists, bloggers, secular students and intellectuals, and reformists."<sup>264</sup> The problem is that by targeting the actors associated with the social forces generated by urban migration and the development of

rural Iran the regime increasingly delegitimizes itself.

Once the fraudulent nature of the populism Ahmadinejad and his coalition espoused became apparent he lost support rapidly. From 2005-2009 IRGC-affiliated firms acquired 68.5% of the state assets and companies in auctions that were generally closed to genuinely private sector companies.<sup>265</sup> Even with youth unemployment at 60%, moreover, Ahmad Tavakoli, the head of the Majles research center and one of the most hardline of Ahmadinejad's coalition, admitted that 46% of his quick job turnaround programs simply did not exist.<sup>266</sup> It is no surprise then that there were daily demonstrations in major cities in the run-up to the 2009 presidential election in which Ahmadinejad was running for a second term. The IRGC weekly, *Sobhesadegh*, threatened “to destroy anyone who attempts to bring a velvet revolution.”<sup>267</sup>

It was in this environment of diminishing authority and increasing dissatisfaction with the economy that the regime made a number of mistakes in its groping for a path that would not end with the death of the Islamic Republic. Before the June 2009 presidential election, the regime held a debate between the four main candidates, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Akbar Rafsanjani, and Mehdi Karroubi, where each was allowed to express their vision for Iran.<sup>268</sup> This offered the most open political process since the 1979 Revolution,<sup>269</sup> which worked to reinforce the assurances Khatami and Mousavi had given the reformists, as they campaigned, that the election would be a clean one. That promise encouraged the youth, leading to a huge turnout.<sup>270</sup>

This was always a false hope, however. Given the fall in Ahmadinejad's popularity, which was never as high as it seemed in any case because the turnout was so low in the 2005 election, it was clear he might not receive a majority of the popular vote. As with the French presidential elections, when a candidate fails to achieve a majority, the top two candidates square

in a runoff election to determine the winner. The regime feared a second round of elections could lead to an escalation of demonstrations and further loss of support for Ahmadinejad. To head off this potentiality, it decided to make sure Ahmadinejad won by a landslide with roughly two thirds of the vote, winning majorities even in areas that were strong holds for his strongest opponent, Mousavi.<sup>271</sup>

When the electoral results came in and Ahmadinejad was pronounced to have won in a landslide of the vote the public immediately suspected the regime rigged the election. Private polling indicated Mousavi would win the election.<sup>272</sup> That Interior Ministry announced the result in the wee hours of the morning, while most Iranians still slept,<sup>273</sup> and some stations reported the outcome just hours after the polls had closed further impugned the credibility the integrity of the election. Ahmadinejad received more votes than there were voters in two provinces, and he had actually managed to win a majority in every single province of Iran, a first in the history of the Islamic Republic.<sup>274</sup> Having been promised a free and fair election, when it became obvious that the outcome was rigged, the dissatisfaction was all the greater, which the regime exacerbated by underestimating its intensity.<sup>275</sup> These errors in judgment proceeded from their desire for legitimacy, which required a high level of voter participation, the problem being of course that much of the electorate was and is against them.

However, the scale and the intensity of the protests against the apparently rigged election still managed to surprise both the regime and the international community.<sup>276</sup> While the protests eventually subsided after about a year, the issues of political and economic freedom, particularly for women, have not gone away. For it to challenge the regime requires new leaders, ones willing to call explicitly for the end of clerical rule and build support from a wide cross-section of Iranian society, including the working class. As Khamenei ages and Iran plunges deeper into



the Awakening such leaders are likely to appear. The struggle for power and leadership taking place within the regime mirrors what will have to happen among the reformists in order to challenge the regime.<sup>277</sup>

The irony, though, is that the so-called leader of the reformist movement, Mousavi is in favor of the regime, along with his moderate colleagues, Khatami and Rafsanjani. That should not be so surprising given that they benefit from it, and also that they are of the Nomad archetype, holdovers really from the leadership of the post-War Recovery period, which tend to be more pragmatic, and less ideological. They just want the regime to be more accountable to the Islamic Republic's constitution and to itself. As one may imagine, the reformists were dismayed that all of the candidates, even the more moderate ones such as Mousavi and Rafsanjani held to such positions. They nevertheless broke heavily for Mousavi, as the best of less than ideal choices.<sup>278</sup>

### Generational Leadership Struggle

#### *Iran's Faction System*

To understand the divisions within the ruling elite and between the ruling elite and the masses requires a bit of exposition on the history of Iran's factional divides. Complicating matters further, the factional divides have changed over the relatively short life of the Islamic Republic, and moreover, the factions at the elite level do not wholly correspond to those on the level of the public, as was mentioned above with the reformist leaders and the student movement. At the outset of the revolution several groups came together to overthrow the Shah including Marxists, democrats, Islamists, and nationalists, but unsurprisingly, given that Khomeini was its embodiment, two factions of Islamists prevailed to shape the regime that succeeded the Shah—the Islamic Right and the Islamic Left.<sup>279</sup>

Later referring to themselves as the reformists, the Islamic Left was more modern in orientation with socialist leanings, and its right-wing counterpart, strongly favoring Islamic traditions, including protection of property rights, have also been called radical conservatives, hardliners, and principlists. In the aftermath of Iran-Iraq War, there was a split in the Islamic Right, to which the discussion on the disagreement over the manner the reconstruction should proceed alluded. The pragmatists were those such as Rafsanjani who saw accommodation with the West as necessary and beneficial, and were opposed by the hardliners. Though these political views existed from the inception of the Islamic Republic, with this institutional and political split within the Islamic Right, there have been three major factions—hardliners (Islamic Right), pragmatists (Islamic moderate Right), and reformists (Islamic Left).<sup>280</sup>

Hence, the various classifications have these three main categories in common. There is rough agreement on the characterization of the reformists and the pragmatists, but the hardliners are more difficult to pin down, perhaps because together they form by far the dominant faction within the religious governing bodies, where the real state power in the Islamic Republic resides. Masoud Kazemzadeh divides them into three subcategories which he terms the traditional hardliners, moderate hardliners, and ultra-hardliners, the latter of which he subdivides further into those following after Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, and Mesbah-Yazdi.<sup>281</sup>

The Iranian public, at least of 15 years ago, classified the factions more simply into traditional right (*riast-e sonnat*), modern right (*riast-e modern*), traditional left (*chap-e sonnati*), and the modern left (*chap-e modern*). This classification basically groups all the conservative factions under one umbrella, with the modern left and right comprising the reformists and pragmatists, respectively. The traditional left then is mostly comprised members of the Basij.<sup>282</sup> In contrast, Farhang Rajae's 1999 study and a 2008 RAND report by David E. Thaler et al. do

not differentiate between the Basij and other traditionalists. Instead, they subdivide the traditional right into the traditional hardliners (or traditional conservatives) and the principlists, or what Rajaei calls the radical right, of which Ahmadinejad is apart.<sup>283</sup> The Islamic Right rebranded themselves as principlists, after losing power during Rafsanjani's tenure as president, in fact, as a reaction to the Islamic Left's rebirth as the reformist movement. The name is in reference to their commitment to traditional Islamic principles.<sup>284</sup>

#### *The Generational Component of the Factions*

Studies by Kazemzadeh and Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet highlight the emergence of a new faction, which further distinguishes the followers of the Ahmadinejad and Mesbah-Yazdi from the principlists. While Kazemzadeh simply categorizes them as a type of ultra-hardliner, Safshekan and Sabet refer to this group as the neo-principlists. They emerged quietly in the 2003 council elections, breaking out nationally over the next two years in the Majles and presidential elections. Comprised largely of IRGC veterans, they represent a significant development in the evolution of the Islamic Republic. They are the first on the Islamic Right to challenge clerical rule, though not religious governance. Indeed, Mesbah-Yazdi's views on Islamic governance taken to their logical extreme could lead to situations in which even the laypersons would be able to exercise religious authority in opposition to dissident clergy.<sup>285</sup>

Most importantly, from a generational perspective, nearly all of the neo-principlists are of the Hero archetype, having fought in the war with Iraq, Iran's last Crisis war. They are targeting all three main factions, most of whose leadership are either of the Nomad archetype, such as Khatami and Rafsanjani, or the Prophet archetype from Iran's first cycle, who led the Hero archetype during the Revolution and the war with Iraq. Now in their 70s and 80s, the latter are

comprised of what are known as the Combatant Clergy.<sup>286</sup> First, the Hero neo-principlists allied themselves with Prophet leaders of the principlists to oust the Nomad reformist leaders, just as they joined forces to oust the Shah 25 years before during the Crisis period. Since the 2009 election, they have been targeting their former allies in a bid to implement their own agenda and vision for the Islamic Republic.

Yet, even as the neo-principlist veterans of the IRGC have been ascendant in the regime, Hassan Rouhani, of the moderate hardliners won the 2013 presidential election to succeed Ahmadinejad. His election may have been a consolation prize, albeit a poor one, for the restless masses, given the continued unpopularity of the ultra-hardline faction, due to the brutal crackdown on the Green Movement and the debilitating effects of EU and US sanctions on Iran's economy.<sup>287</sup> The shah sought to do something similar after the overthrow of Mossadeq and crushing his opposition in the 1950s by implementing the White Revolution during Iran's first Awakening. This may not be enough, though, as the principlists face the choice of whether to side with the reformists against the neo-principlists or being rolled up into the latter's coalition. For the reformist's part they must decide whether to continue to work within the system with their current leadership which supports the regime, and with the principlists, or to find new, more radical leadership within their own ranks to challenge all opponents of democracy.<sup>288</sup>

## **Comparison to Strauss and Howe's Model**

### Awakening Period

The present Awakening has thus far conformed much more closely to the expectations of generational theory than the preceding Recovery and the Awakening from the first cycle. However, its dynamics may have been accelerated and amplified due to the distortions wrought by the regime in the preceding Recovery. The inability of the regime's conservative faction to

recognize the shift in the public's mood from Crisis to Recovery mode already caused more problems than it solved even towards the continued existence of the regime. They compounded the error by scrolling back the meager gains made in that direction by the reformists even as the shift from Recovery to Awakening meant that they would no longer be satiated by minor changes or unwilling to work outside the system to exact them.

To be sure, the reformists would have acquired a taste for more radical action eventually, and probably have even been spurred on by the regime's acquiescence if it had chosen to scale back its repression, as indeed it feared would be the result. The clerics ignored the possibility, though, that had they responded positively to the part of the reformists' grievances against maintaining Iran on a war-like footing of repression early on, and with little resistance, they would have garnered some legitimacy among at least a portion of them. This might have been able to buy them valuable time to improve the economy, and shore up their support. Instead, the radicals cracked down on dissidents and prevented Rafsanjani from reestablishing ties with the West, thus placing them on the same ruinous path of the Islamic Republic's predecessor—the Pahlavi regime. By subverting the return to normalcy, when Iran entered the Awakening the regime already suffered a deficit in legitimacy, meaning that when the challenge by the youth came it was more intense and likely happened earlier than what would otherwise have been the case.

In the case of Iran's second cycle, instead of beginning to turn against the regime in their mid to late thirties, the children of the revolution did so more than a decade earlier, during their college years. Hence, the student organizations originally created during the Revolution in support of the Islamic Republic were transformed into reformist groups, as mentioned previously.<sup>289</sup> They were nonetheless mostly content to work within the system to try to achieve

their goals gradually, that is until it became clear that that route was impossible and that they would have to target the legitimacy of the regime itself. This realization came about with the large generational shift in the Majles, as much of the newly elected parliamentarians came from the ranks of the IRGC veterans of the Iran-Iraq War—Iran's Hero archetype.

These parallel generational shifts in the leadership and in the public, led to strongly repressive reactions against the women and student activist movements, culminating in the brutal suppression of the Green Movement protests of 2009. Yet, as highlighted above, the clerical regime must recognize that the outcomes from which they have to choose are not completely of their making. Though the regime is still powerful, the direction of its youth is moving away from a politically and collectively defined religion to a personalized and individually expressed faith, if they express any faith at all. Given that the legitimacy of clerical rule is rooted in the *velayat-e faqih*, eventually its support will be too thinly based to maintain control. They can either devolve power down to the people on terms of their choosing or perhaps be overthrown in revolution when the Fourth Turning winter arrives. If Iran's future unfolds along the lines of Strauss and Howe's model, at that time, a new Hero archetypal generation of foot soldiers will emerge, and they will be led by the then elder generation of Prophets, whose agenda the clerical regime crushed when they were young adults.

What has been taking place over the better part of a decade in fits and starts in the Islamic Republic tends to happen more smoothly and over a shorter period in democracies. This results from the dynamic that each generational archetype's share of the government's leadership roughly corresponds to that of most societal hierarchies in business, non-profits, religious organizations, and government bureaucracies, along with their affiliated institutions such as schools and the military. Without this matching of shifts in political leadership with the

generational shadowing that occurs throughout the rest of society it becomes out of kilter with the public. This unbalanced state leaves them unable and/or unwilling to correct the excess order or disorder of previous turnings.

In the United States, for instance, one of the arguments against lifetime appointments to its judiciary is that the values of those who sit in judgment of society's laws and its people become outdated as they grow ever older. Indeed, before President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "court packing" scheme to overcome the Supreme Court's refusal to accept his "New Deal" legislation as constitutional, four of the eldest judges on that court interpreted the US Constitution from the perspective of an earlier era than that of the populace who had just overwhelmingly voted for Roosevelt. Even though his scheme failed to achieve the approval of the United States Senate, the move may have motivated members of the court to act to salvage its legitimacy, and thus the Constitution's. One of the four eldest justices declared his intent to retire from the court, and the swing vote, who was actually the youngest justice, reversed his opposition to Roosevelt's New Deal legislation. With his legislation secure, support for his scheme in the Senate evaporated, and along with it the threat to the court's legitimacy. Hence, people referred to the affair as, "A switch in time that saved the nine."<sup>290</sup>

Now imagine these kinds of generational mismatches in the executive branch which in most states actually sets the agenda, rather than merely ratifying it. A competitive process for selecting a state's leadership avoids this divergence between the generational hierarchy of the political leadership and that of the public. The Iranian regime has unfortunately chosen to forgo competitive selection, even for its representative governing bodies. Khatami's relatively free and fair election was the exception that proves the rule; the regime refused to allow him to implement policies commensurate with the dynamics of a Recovery period. Hence, the leadership has

lagged in the policy shifts demanded by the Iranian people, even as they become frustrated with the lack of progress. Those feelings of impotence and alienation were probably responsible for the acceleration of Iran's cycle in some areas such as the early adoption of more liberal views by the Artist archetypal generation during their college years, instead of middle adulthood.

Khamenei may indeed have been prompted by the 2009 protests to put some distance between himself and the neo-principlists, with the election of the more moderate hardliner, Rouhani, to the presidency in the 2013 election, who has recently even begun to challenge the regime with a call for a national referendum. As he pointed out, the constitution of the Islamic Republic allows for one, but it has never been exercised in its history.<sup>291</sup> Whether this outcome resulted from the factional conflicts between the Principlists and neo-Principlists or was simply at Khamenei's direction remains to be seen. In either case, it appears the strengthening of Iran's civil society and its generational cycle have already effected a path towards further political development. This means that the chance the youth will be victorious is greater than it was in the middle of the twentieth century when their defeat, with the overthrow of Mossadeq, inexorably led to revolution 25 years later.



## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Iran offers an interesting, if difficult, case study for Strauss and Howe's theory of generational cycles. Though they developed it by analyzing Anglo-American history and also see it as applicable for the developed world, they did not attempt to extend it to more traditional, developing societies. Xenakis believes all societies throughout history have evolved according to the generational cycle. However, that assessment does not follow from the explanation Strauss and Howe gave for the cycle's existence, namely the institutions and linear mentality spawned by modernization. Traditional societies, on the contrary, being vulnerable to nature's cycles, quite reasonably interpret events in cyclic terms, even as they rather paradoxically remain approximately in stasis. Iran served as an informative case study, being in between the two extremes. While there were certainly deviations, even major ones, the overall history of its political development conformed to the expectations of the theory (Figure 7), particularly the relationship between the young and the old during the Awakening and Crisis periods.

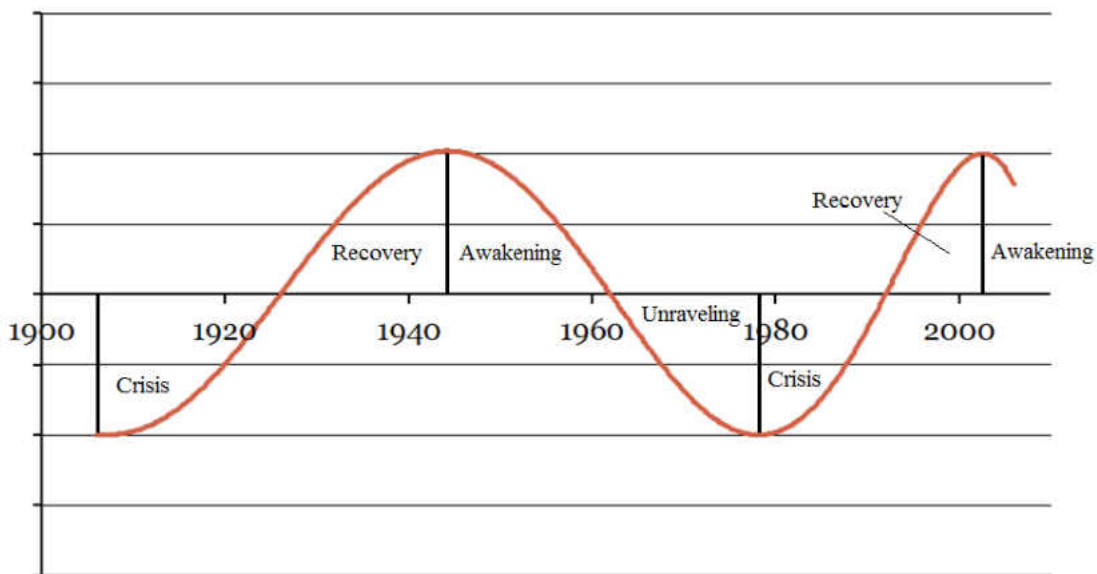


Figure 7- An idealized representation of the supply of Iran's social order.

### **Examining the Sources of Deviations from the Generational Cycle**

The source of the deviations that occurred in the first Crisis can be attributed to the conflict over the creation of the modern state of Iran. Hence, there was no regeneration of civic unity until it ended with Reza Khan established himself as Shah. In the turnings that followed, the departures flowed mainly from two sources—clerical traditionalism and autocratic governance. The former tended to thwart the expected relations between the elder generations and the government and the latter, the expected relations between the wider society and the government as well the projected outcome in the clashes between the younger and older generations.

For the entirety of Iran's first cycle, the clerics never really accepted the idea of the modern state. During the first Recovery, for example, they opposed the shah instead of supporting him, as he was usurping what their societal roles as educators and judges. Something similar happened under his son, Mohammad Shah, during the Unraveling when he tried to implement his White Revolution, which entailed land reform aimed in part at redistributing property held by the clerics. Their opinion of the modern state only changed when they took the reins in the Revolution, which led to the paradoxical situation Mohsen Milani noted, that clerical rule itself is secularizing Islam and thus the clerics themselves. The clerics, then, have accepted the modern state in a way that would have surprised their predecessors, even if they did so on terms of their choosing.

The effects of autocratic government in Iran, whether in the form of the Pahlavi dynasty or the Islamic Republic, appear to have had an even greater disruptive influence. The governments of Iran have rarely adhered to the wishes of the public. Instead, the actions of the shah or Supreme Leader ended up mirroring them. When the public desired less secularism the

government pushed for more, and vice versa. The lack of responsiveness to their demands has left the younger generations without the opportunity to see their values form the basis of a new order in each of Iran's two Awakenings, though the present one has yet to reach fruition. Yet, the effect of trying to hold back the waves of generational change on its legitimacy has not been unlike having to build ever higher levees to keep the rising river waters at bay, as the shore continues to erode because of that very effort. As Iran's level of development has advanced, this dynamic appears to be intensifying with the increasing proportion of the public wishing to participate in the construction of Iran's narrative.

Recall from the introductory chapter that two elements were used in distinguishing traditional from modern societies—control of the environment and state-level shared identity. In terms of the connection to modernity, level of development corresponds closely to the former, and clerical traditionalism concerns the acquisition of the latter. What effect does control over the environment and a shared identity have on a society's evolution? According to Straus and Howe the most fundamental effect is the creation of self-sustaining, continuous social change. Hence, these two elements could be referred to as self-sustenance and self-awareness. That a major factor in the deviations of Iran's political development from the predicted path has also been the lack of accountable government suggests a third element of modernity—self-rule.

### **Towards Extending Strauss and Howe's Theory**

#### The Three Elements of Modernity

These three elements of self-sustenance, self-awareness, and self-rule are similar to Francis Fukuyama's three elements of a modern state in *The Origins of Political Order*, which are territorial control, the rule of law, and accountability.<sup>292</sup> However, his focus was on the establishment of political order, these elements concern the attributes which contribute to

cyclical disruptions of order. These disruptions result from the ability of modern societies to reconfigure their physical and social environments, to various degrees, in ways that traditional societies simply cannot.<sup>293</sup>

Societies that have not mastered their surrounding environment sufficiently are at the mercy of nature, their technological advancement being fairly low. Hence, they are too dependent on nature's good fortune for meaningful social changes to occur regularly, and thus are not very self-sustaining. A society that is self-aware knows itself, meaning that its communities are connected through law and trading of goods, services, and ideas, rather than existing as isolated villages or small cities whose meager dealings with one another produce a weak sense of shared identity. Such a level of social organization produces greater economies of scale and resilience, creating more opportunities to overturn the established order from within.

The third element, self-rule, refers to the degree to which those outside the ruling class participate in the social, economic, and political development of society. Of the three elements, the latter is probably needed in the least amount for the maintenance of internally generated social change, and thus the generational cycle, to emerge. This is the case because the cyclic pattern is likely to be limited to the elite, initially, but self-rule is crucial for how a society evolves over time within the context of the modernization process itself. The latency of its influence made it easy to overlook its significance, especially when thinking in the vein of Xenakis that the agency of even a developing country's leadership cannot overcome the dynamics of the generational cycle. Any deviations would, thus, not be systematic, obscuring any connection between the two phenomena.

So what does the future hold for Iran's clerical regime? That depends on the nature of whoever succeeds Khamenei. The IRGC will likely have strong influence over that selection

process, given their enormous economic clout.<sup>294</sup> If it is someone who is from one of the more fundamentalist factions, such as Mesbah-Yazdi, brutal suppression of any moves towards greater political and personal freedom would be expected, possibly setting the stage for another revolution at most 25 years after their current Awakening has run its course, probably around the early 2020s. That would place the start of Iran's next Crisis period sometime around the mid- to late-2040s, though it could occur as late as the mid-2050s if the Awakening lasts until 2030. On the other hand, if the successor is from one of the more pragmatic factions, more interested in economic development than political or religious dogma, Iran's development may resemble something more akin to Chile, which gradually transformed into a full-fledged democratic state, with Augusto Pinochet eventually stepping down as leader of the military junta.<sup>295</sup>

#### Future Work

This study provides support for the hypothesis that the developmental history of modern Iran does generally follow the cyclic path outlined by Strauss and Howe, excepting the deviations wrought by the modernization process itself. However, it would profit from a more finely focused review of its generations. To do that would require a better understanding of Iran's generational breakdowns from the late 19th century onward at each socioeconomic level. This would provide a more rigorous test of the applicability of Strauss and Howe's theory to Iran as well as the conjectured link between the generational cycle and Iran's political development. No matter if the conjecture holds or not, it may shed some light on how the process of development broadens from the elites to the masses. A further way to test the conjecture would be to perform an in depth study of the developmental history of other developing societies, such as those in Africa and Latin America, which would also address the broader issue concerning the universality of the generational cycle.

The major challenge of performing this study was that Strauss and Howe's model, having its origins in Anglo-American history, did not have to concern itself with the modernization process itself. So while the theory was designed to identify similar periods throughout history it provides no method to look at their differences. How did the first Awakening after the Wars of the Roses, for instance, compare to the third one? Over that length of time, what affect did the social and technological advances have on the characteristics of the Awakening and the generational archetypes? In other words, has the generational cycle strengthened, to whatever degree, with the level of development for the US as appears to be the case for Iran? The rest of the West, perhaps, offers even better cases in this regard, given that the saeculum initially applied only at the elite level. Therefore, they may be ideal for exploring its universality. Conversely, it would be interesting to study how each society's cycle, particularly those of the great powers, might interact to produce the long wave cycle at the interstate level of analysis, where most research examines long wave cycles. Establishing such a link in this manner would provide strong support for its universality, such that it may yield insight into how societies, in general, chart the path from traditionalism to modernity.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 14.
- <sup>7</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, 58-60.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 33, 58.
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- <sup>10</sup> Chalmers Johnson, "American Militarism and Blowback: The Costs of Letting the Pentagon Dominate Foreign Policy," *New Political Science* 24, Issue 1 (2002): 21.
- <sup>11</sup> William Strauss and Neil Howe, 33.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 88.
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- <sup>288</sup> Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, 557.
- <sup>289</sup> Azadeh Kian-Thiebaut, 15-16; Mehrdad Mashayekhi, 299.
- <sup>290</sup> “General Article: Presidential Politics,” Public Broadcasting System accessed April 9, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/fdr-presidential/>; William

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