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TWO FACES OF POLITICAL ISLAM: IRAN AND PAKISTAN COMPARED

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A GREAT DEAL of Western analysis—both academic and journalistic—regarding the increasing political role of Islam in the Muslim world, particularly in the strategic area in and around the Persian Gulf, suffers from confusion if not naivete. This confusion is evident at two levels. The first relates to the supposition that the symbolic use of seventh century Arabian punishments, such as cutting off arms of thieves and stoning of adulterers, forms the essence of Islam's political revival, or, even more absurdly, that it is the major objective of the recent manifestation of political Islam.

The second confusion is related to the efforts on the part of Western analysts, sometimes unwitting but more often deliberate, to paint all political manifestations of Islamic identity with the same black brush. No effort is made to understand and analyze the different, and indeed very divergent, social and political goals for which the vehicle of Islam has been chosen and is being used by various leaders, groups, and parties in the heterogeneous Muslim world. Thus Saudi attempts at enforced puritanism (except, of course, for the princely elite) with the help of the whip, the Pakistani attempt to legitimize military rule through the medium of Islam, and the Iranian effort to transform an unjust socioeconomic political order through the political weapon of Islam are all viewed as part of the same grand design. This, to put it mildly, is patently wrong.

Islam, like any other religion or dogma, is open to various and varied interpretations. These interpretations, which in terms of polit-

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ical action can be called the operationalization of the concept of Islamic polity, differ greatly depending upon the political and social contexts in and the historical juncture at which they are so operationalized. They also vary depending upon who—person or party—is the medium through which such operationalization takes place.

Islam, in its politically operationalized form, therefore, can be used as a retrogressive or progressive force depending upon the goals and objectives such overt politicization of Islam is expected to achieve. This distinction has nowhere been demonstrated more clearly than by recent developments in two neighboring countries of the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean littoral—Pakistan and Iran. While the Iranian developments have been much more dramatic for a number of reasons—including the recent fundamental transformation of the Iranian polity, its position as the second largest exporter of oil, its contiguity to the Soviet Union, its impressive arms build-up, and its role in the 1970s as the local gendarme in the Gulf on behalf of Western powers, particularly the U.S.—the recent Pakistani experience, in its own way, has not been less illuminating for those who are interested in analyzing the role of religion, and particularly of Islam, in political affairs. In fact, in the context of Iranian developments next door, it has provided an excellent comparison with its neighbor, which is all the more illuminating because of the contrasting ways in which Islam has been used in the political lives of the two countries and the vastly different outcomes of the intrusion of Islam into the processes of political development in the two countries.

To understand the two divergent and contrasting experiences one must start from the very beginning—the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947 on the one hand and the 1905–1906 constitutionalist revolution in Iran (and the events that preceded it) on the other. In the case of Pakistan, Islam, from the very inception of the "Muslim homeland" in the Indian subcontinent, has formed in theory and particularly at the level of slogans an integral part of the official dogma evolved to justify the creation of Pakistan and the division of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. While in the 1930s and the 1940s political Islam, particularly as defined by the far from religious leadership of the All-India Muslim League, was the ideology of the official opposition to the Indian national mainstream, as represented by the Indian National Congress, from 1947 onward it became the primary instrument used to provide legitimacy not only to the state of Pakistan, but, even more important, to the regime that came to power in Pakistan under the banner of the Muslim League.

Given the narrow social and political base of this regime and its successors through the 1950s and the 1960s,[1] Islam as a political instru-

[1] For details regarding the narrow base of Pakistan's civil and military ruling elites in the 1950s and 1960s as well as the general course of Pakistan's political development, see Mohammed Ayoob, "Pakistan's Political Development, 1947–1970: A Bird's Eye View," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6:3–5, Annual Number, January

ment came to be identified with these basically unpopular regimes presiding over an inequitable social, economic, and political order. While, on the one hand, the slogan "Islam in Danger" was used to whip up public hysteria against India, thereby giving Pakistan's military establishment much greater political clout, on the other hand, the same slogan was used to suppress domestic dissent—whether from the provincial autonomists of East Pakistan and the NWFP, or from those democratic politicians who dared to challenge the existing regimes and to demand general elections in the country. It was no mere coincidence, therefore, that no general elections were held in Pakistan from 1947 to 1970. By that time, however, political steam had been built up to such a level that elections, when they were finally held, set in motion the process that led to the break up of the country and the establishment of Bangladesh.

The Pakistani elections of November 1970 were important because they resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh, but they were even more important because, from the point of view of the truncated (West) Pakistan, for the first time they demonstrated convincingly that the political slogan of Islam could no longer be used to perpetuate an extremely unjust social and political order in Pakistan. The electoral victory of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which was the only major Pakistani party until that date that had a relatively well thought out program of economic and social reform, demonstrated in no uncertain terms the political bankruptcy of the old order and the irrelevance of political Islam as flaunted by the erstwhile rulers of Pakistan to the social and economic realities of that country in the 1970s. During the electoral campaign of 1970 Bhutto himself had emphasized relevant economic issues; in fact, he had gone to the extent of declaring the question of Islam irrelevant to Pakistani politics since both the exploiters and the exploited were Muslims—an act of some political courage in the context of Pakistan's historical attachment to Islam.

The five and a half years of Bhutto's rule (December 1971 to July 1977), however, provided only an interlude before the traditional character of Pakistani politics (encompassing both military rule and the use of Islam to legitimize a socially conservative, economically unjust, and politically unpopular order), reasserted itself in the person of General Zia-ul-Haq, who ousted Bhutto from office in a military coup d'état. Although Bhutto himself had contributed a great deal to his downfall, including his autocratic behavior, a style of governance sometimes bordering on political thuggery, and attempts to rig the 1977 elections (a grave miscalculation since he would probably have won these elections anyway),[2] the composition of the political and military opposition and

1971, pp. 199–204, and particularly for the consequent alienation of East Pakistan and its transformation into Bangladesh, see Mohammed Ayoob and K. Subrahmanyam, *The Liberation War* (New Delhi, 1972), Ch. I-VI.

[2] M. G. Weinbaum, "The March 1977 Elections in Pakistan: Where Everyone Lost," *Asian Survey*, 17:7, July 1977, pp. 599–618.

their subsequent collaboration in an effort to rule Pakistan under the banner of Islam is adequate testimony to the existence of a conspiracy on the part of the military high command and Bhutto's civilian opponents—a large number of whom were affiliated with religious parties—to bring down Bhutto and replace his "un-Islamic" government with an avowedly "Islamic" regime.

However, it was not merely "Islamic" government they were after. Despite his far from unilinear approach to Pakistan's political development and in spite of his opportunistic alliance with the feudal elements of Punjab and Sind, particularly during the latter years of his government, the long-term effect of the "Bhutto phenomenon" on the course of Pakistan's political development was far from beneficial for the traditional ruling classes of Pakistan or for their military and bureaucratic cohorts. This they had realized almost from the very beginning of the Bhutto era in Pakistani politics.

Bhutto's rhetoric and that of the PPP had primarily emphasized economic issues; and although the PPP, like a large number of other bourgeois democratic parties in the third world, had more often than not failed to follow up words with action, it had acted as a catalyst for change in Pakistan's political culture by pushing obscurantist religious issues to the background and by highlighting problems of economic redistribution and social justice. This not only alienated the large capitalists and the big landlords, it also severely hurt the interests of strong sections of the Pakistani political leadership—ranging from the Muslim League to the Jamaat-i-Islami—that had thrived upon obscurantist Islamic slogans that had been used largely to obscure the real social and economic problems faced by the Pakistani masses.

These *"Islam-pasand"*[3] parties, therefore, were not only not averse to seeing Bhutto replaced by a military junta but, in fact, enthusiastically welcomed this idea as their later collaboration with the GHQ demonstrated. Too weak themselves to bring down Bhutto by an exclusively political challenge, they, and particularly the Jamaat-i-Islami, looked to the military to provide the political alternative to Bhutto that they had failed to throw up. The rigging of the 1977 elections, therefore, came to them as a godsend that they utilized to the fullest in an attempt to whip up public hysteria against the Bhutto government. It also provided the military high command with a credible excuse to intervene and supplant Bhutto's government by military rule.

A throw-back to Islamic slogans appeared very attractive to the GHQ also, both because they appealed to the homespun officers who had suffered the humiliation of 1971 (when the Sandhurst-trained and Sandhurst-type whisky drinking generals were in command) and now found solace in religion, and because they provided the generals the main basis of legitimacy for the reimposition of military rule. The second consideration was as, if not more, important than the first, particu-

[3] Translated "lovers of Islam."

larly since a military take-over in 1977 was bound to remind sizeable sections of Pakistani opinion of the catastrophe that overtook the country in 1971 after more than thirteen years of overt military rule. To the traditional twin justifications of military rule in Pakistan, "political instability" and "threat to the country's survival," General Zia-ul-Haq had to add the slogan of "enforcement of Islamic *Sharia* law" in a mammoth effort to sell extended military rule to an increasingly skeptical public.[4]

This massive effort to use Islam to legitimize military rule suited both the secular and religious vested interests in Pakistan. Its major effect was and has been to confuse and, in fact, transform the nature of political debate in Pakistan. The generals, by harping increasingly on themes of symbolic religious value (for example, the institution of seventh century Arabian modes of punishment for criminals, etc.), have moved this debate away from the relevant issues of a socioeconomic character. It is no coincidence that Zia has become the darling of the religious revivalists and the fundamentalist *ulema*.

Such deliberate transformation of the political debate has also suited the interests of the vested landed, industrial, and commercial interests, particularly since the allegedly Islamic "fundamental right" to private property has been given more than its due share of publicity by government spokesmen and the government-owned and controlled media. Under Bhutto's rule, the vested interests had felt rather uncertain of their future as a result of the flamboyant leader's political postures (certainly more rhetoric than action, but some action as well). While no fundamental transformation of the socioeconomic order was attempted by Bhutto, some tinkering with the system was certainly visible. This tinkering at times had been on a large enough scale to be very disturbing for the vested interests, but was essential for Bhutto to retain the loyalty of his residual supporters as well as build a support structure both in the cities and in the countryside.[5]

Bhutto's contribution to Pakistan's political development, as pointed out earlier, had been more in the sphere of rhetoric than of actual deeds, but in some stages of political development even rhetoric counts a great deal. It shapes and transforms the images and expectations of the down-trodden and the have-nots and, thereby, in the long term makes a positive contribution towards changing the political culture and determining issues for political debate in the country. With Bhutto's removal and with the prospect of an extended period of military rule looming large over Pakistan, the process of political change seems to have been reversed (at least temporarily) and Pakistan appears to be securely (?) back in its traditional Islamic groove, which conveniently skirts around all relevant issues of a socioeconomic character.

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[4] For detailed discussion of the reasons and effects of this military take-over, see Mohammed Ayoob, "Pakistan Comes Full Circle," *India Quarterly*, 24:1, January–March 1978, pp. 17–25.

[5] For details of the politics of Bhutto's economic reforms, see Shahid Javed Burki, "Politics of Economic Decision-making During the Bhutto Period," *Asian Survey*, 14:12, December 1974, pp. 1126–1140.

This has been one, but a major, example of the political use of Islam to legitimize a patently unjust order and to bolster a regime demonstrably without a popular base. This, to use a shorthand expression, is a prime example of the fossilized version of Islam, particularly in its political manifestation.

Iran, however, is a completely different kettle of fish. Recent events in Iran leading to the flight of the Shah and the overthrow of the established monarchical order have demonstrated, as few other events have done, the revolutionary potential of political (or politicized) Islam. The role of the Shia clergy as catalysts for political change and as leaders of political dissent and, later, of the revolutionary movement, has had its earlier parallels in Iranian history, particularly during the last decades of decadant Qajar rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even the part played by Ayatollah Khomeini as the prime symbol of defiance against the Shah's autocratic rule has its counterpart in the role performed by the pan-Islamic revolutionary Jamal al-din Afghani during the period of Nasir al-din Shah's rule in the latter part of the last century. It is interesting to note how political conditions under Mohammed Reza Pahlevi closely matched those under the last of the important Qajar rulers, Nasir al-din, and how the *ulema* played similar roles in the two periods, the earlier of which led within a decade of Nasir al-din's death to the "constitutionalist revolution" of 1906. The following words written by Ann K. S. Lambton in *The Cambridge History of Islam* to describe the situation prevailing under the Qajar ruler could apply almost word for word to the conditions prevalent under the rule of the last Pahlevi monarch:

> The changes in the form of government and the increase in centralization during his reign were not accompanied by any change in the conception of power. All power was still wholly arbitrary. No potential centre of opposition could be tolerated, and so the religious classes were attacked; partly it is true because some of them were obscurantist and opposed to change, but mainly because they were by tradition a refuge for the oppressed.[6]

The similarity in the roles performed by Afghani in the 1890s and Khomeini in the 1970s (in spite of the difference in details) is borne out by the following observation regarding the former:

> The reformer and pan-Islamist Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, whose personal feud with Nasir al-Din Shah had moved him to support the demonstration against the Tobacco *regie* [1890–92], followed this up by circulating throughout Persia literature which demanded the deposition of the Shah, and called on the *'ulama'* to take the lead in freeing

[6] Ann K. S. Lambton, "Persia: The Breakdown of Society," in P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis, eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam,* Vol. I (Cambridge, 1970), p. 461.

> the country from the tyranny and corruption of the governing classes, and in preventing foreigners from extending their control of the economy. In the spring of 1896 one of his supporters assassinated Nasir al-Din Shah.[7]

The Khomeini-led defiance of the Shah in the 1970s derived its inspiration, just as its earlier Afghani-inspired version had done, from Islamic history and jurisprudence. For, as Bernard Lewis points out, while

> . . . the Western doctrine of the right to resist bad government is alien to Islamic thought . . . there is an Islamic doctrine of the duty to resist impious government, which in early times was of crucial historical significance.[8]

And as Lambton has successfully demonstrated in relation to the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1906 (which was a logical corollary of the process set in motion by Afghani and his contemporaries):

> If the movement for constitutional reform and its antecedents are closely examined, it will be seen that what lay behind the movement was essentially a protest against tyranny. . . . The constitutional revolution took place in the end because it was felt that the weight of tyranny had become intolerable. . . . In other words the underlying intention of the supporters of the constitutional movement was . . . a carrying out of the Islamic duty to enjoin what is good and to forbid what is evil in such a way that the ruler would be duly warned and restore "just" government.[9]

This extended comparison of the events of the 1970s with those of the 1890-1906 period and their close similarity validates our earlier statement that in the case of Iran, if one has to begin from the beginning then one must go back at least to the constitutional revolution of 1905–1906 and the events that preceded and led up to it. The political role of Islam in the events leading to the overthrow of the Pahlevi regime, as well as the emergence of the Khomeini phenomenon, has deep roots in the history of Iranian Islam and particularly in the political manifestation of the Shia clergy's opposition to monarchical tyranny.

This opposition of the mosque to the State (in the person of the monarch) is an interesting facet peculiar to Shia Islam dominant in Iran. For unlike Sunni Islam, where the legitimacy of the institution of the caliphate is subject primarily to the consensus of the community

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7 R. M. Savory, "Modern Persia," in *ibid.*, p. 619.

8 Bernard Lewis, "Islamic Concepts of Revolution," in P. J. Vatikiotis, ed., *Revolution in the Middle East* (London, 1972), p. 33.

9 A. K. S. Lambton, "The Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–6," in *ibid.*, p. 176.

(whether active in terms of demonstrated popular support, or, as was more often the case, passive in the form of acquiescence on the part of the subject population), in predominantly Shia Iran:

> There has always been potential opposition from the Shia *ulama* to the Shah. The latter is, theoretically, regarded as a usurper, legitimate succession having passed down through the house of Ali until the last or hidden Imam [the twelfth Imam of the Shias who is supposed to have disappeared] who will reappear to establish legitimate rule.[10]

This "potential opposition," in times of discontent and crisis, could be relatively easily translated into active defiance of the Shah's authority and thus be made to provide the theoretical underpinning of an Islamic revolt against temporal authority whose legitimacy is in any case, at least theoretically and potentially, always under challenge.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century this Islamic duty (especially in its particularly virile Shia form) to resist impious government (translated: tyrannical rule) joined with and gave greater legitimacy to the more secular reasons for the opposition to the Shah, both because of the acts of omission and commission performed by him at home, and because of his well-flaunted foreign connections. These latter connections were condemned and opposed not only because they strengthened his autocratic control over the country (through the medium of SAVAK, etc.), but also because they were perceived as detrimental to Iranian sovereignty and collective self-respect. Since Islam has traditionally formed an integral part of the Iranian definition of the country's sovereignty and self-respect, it was no wonder that these foreign connections with the West (and particularly with the U.S.), which, with considerable justification, were perceived as interference in Iran's domestic affairs, should be interpreted not merely as anti-Iranian but as anti-Islamic as well. Since apprehension of foreign domination and, its corollary, hatred of the dominating foreigner (and his agents, in this case the Shah himself) has formed a constant theme through the last 400 years in Iran's historical reaction to its geopolitically insecure position, it needed no major effort to fuse the two themes—opposition to tyrannical government and resistance to foreign domination—into one Islamic-Iranian whole. The main strength of the Khomeini-led anti-Shah upsurge lay in this fusion and this is why it became such an irresistible and invincible movement.

The emphasis that has been placed in this essay up till now on the role of political Islam in the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979 should not be interpreted as an effort deliberately to ignore other forces that combined with the "Khomeini phenomenon" to bring down the Shah and transform the old order. This author would be the first to admit the contribution of the Marxist-Leninist *Fedayeen* and the Islamic-

[10] Nikki Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 4, 1961–1962, p. 290.

Marxist *Mujahedin* to the process of revolutionary change in Iran.[11] It was the dedicated urban guerrillas of these two revolutionary organizations that in the last few days of street fighting in Tehran turned the tide against the royalist elements within the Iranian armed forces. It is also true that following the overthrow of the Shah's regime, Khomeini has passed the peak of his influence and may have passed the peak of his popularity as well. Once again, it would be naive to deny that it will take some time for the various political forces let loose by the revolution (Marxist and non-Marxist, Islamic and non-Islamic) to find an acceptable equilibrium that will provide the consensus for the new Iranian (Islamic?) Republic, and that the Islamic forces (including the Shia clergy) will provide only one, although a very important, pillar of this consensus-building process.

However, all this notwithstanding, what this essay has purported to do is to pinpoint that revolutionary strand in Islam, which, if properly operationalized in the political sphere, can provide both the legitimacy for relentless opposition to an established but tyrannical order, and the appropriate channel to mobilize the usually "silent majority" into active participation in a revolutionary process, thereby transforming the entire character of such a movement. For a revolutionary movement can succeed only if it is able to cross the thin, but extremely important line, dividing mass support from mass participation. It is only when the latter stage is reached that a revolutionary movement becomes truly invincible and not all the Shah's horses and not all the Shah's men can then provide the ruler any protection.

This was the role that Islam, particularly in the person of Khomeini and his clerical lieutenants, was able to perform in the Iranian upheaval of 1978–1979; and, irrespective of the final outcome of the Iranian revolution and the final beneficiaries of this radical transformation, this is an honor that cannot be denied to the political and revolutionary role of Islam.

Another facet of the Islamic character of the anti-Shah upsurge that can be touched in this article only briefly, and has already been alluded to above, is the role performed by Islam in providing the theoretical basis for the rejection of foreign domination. The experience of foreign domination—direct or indirect, economic, political, or military—is one that Iran has shared, and continues to share, with most countries of the third world—Muslim and non-Muslim. However, particularly in the context of the projected Iranian role as the local gendarme for the U.S. in the Gulf in conformity with the Nixon Doctrine,[12] and the fact that both economically and strategically Iran was securely plugged into the economy and strategy of the U.S. and its allies, the Iranian rejection in

[11] In fact he has already done so in an article entitled "Iran: The Old Structure Crumbles—and so Quickly!," *The Canberra Times*, February 22, 1979.

[12] For a discussion of this point, see Mohammed Ayoob, "Super Powers and Regional 'Stability': Parallel Response from the Gulf and the Horn." *The World Today*, May 1979.

its Islamic garb of foreign domination assumes great importance. In this context, therefore, Islam in its political manifestation has become the major instrument through which Iranian aspirations for political autonomy from the dominant powers in the international system—a part of similar aspirations in large parts of the third world—have been demonstrated. The Khomeini phenomenon, therefore, stands heir to a venerable line of Islamic-Nationalist movements—the leading ones include the Khilafat Movement in India and the Sarekat Islam in Indonesia—which have in the past acted as catalytic agents helping to raise the political consciousness of the Muslim masses and channelling their political energies towards anti-imperialist ends.

At the same time, the character of the Iranian revolution and the composition of its leadership can give little cause for celebration in Moscow. In fact, the revival of the revolutionary tradition in political Islam just across the Soviet frontier would, if anything, be cause for dismay in the Kremlin. Given the concentration of Muslim, and in places Shia Muslim (for example, in Soviet Azerbaijan where 4.5 million Shia Muslims are concentrated), populations across the border in the Central Asian Republics of the USSR and the rumblings of discontent sometimes heard in that quarter, Soviet misgivings could be well placed. For once, Moscow must have realized that ideas and ideologies can cross political boundaries in both directions and that in an already ideology-ridden society, a politically revived Islam can become a focus for allegiance on the part of disgruntled elements in the Muslim republics. In these circumstances, to the old men in the Kremlin, the Shah must have appeared a much more palatable adversary than Khomeini since the former, despite all the bases he had presented to the Americans, could only *monitor* what was going on in the Soviet Union and not *influence* Soviet events as the latter is, at least potentially, capable of doing. As an editorial in the *Washington Post* pointed out succinctly:

> If the turmoil in . . . Iran disturbs Western ministries anxious for peace and stability in the world it must equally disturb the Soviet foreign ministry. For all the conflicts which tear the Soviet Union's southern neighbors, including the conflicts with Islam, have their mirror image inside the Soviet frontier. As one of the most conservative states on earth the Soviet Union can have no wish to be torn internally by this type of semi-religious fanaticism which it observes next door.[13]

If you add to this the fact that vast territories of Soviet Central Asia acquired by Tsarist Russia only a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago had for centuries formed in one way or another part of the Persian polity and that names like Samarkand, Khiva, and Bokhara evoke for many Muslims even today the not so remote glorious past of Islam, it is bound to add to Soviet worries, if not apprehensions.

[13] "Islam and a Swathe of Instability," reproduced in the *Guardian Weekly*, January 7, 1979.

Moreover, the Kremlin cannot even take heart from the fact that a take-over of Iran by radical Marxists will help solve Moscow's problems. The pro-Moscow *Tudeh* Party, whose leadership has worked from exile in East Germany since 1953, is not much more than marginal to the future evolution of Iranian polity. The Marxist-Leninist *Fedayeen,* the Islamic-Marxist *Mujahedin,* as well as the Maoist splinter groups from the *Tudeh,* while they might have much to quarrel about among themselves both in doctrinal and practical terms, are united in their characterization of the Soviet Union as "revisionist" (in Marxist terms) and in their rejection of Moscow's organizational or political hegemony over the Marxist movement(s) in Iran.[14]

Thus the radicalization of Iranian politics, whether in Islamic or Marxist terms, does not seem likely to redound to Moscow's benefit; in fact, it may reopen questions—territorial, ethnic, and ideological—that Moscow had assumed were closed a century ago. Therefore, in terms of the expulsion of American power on the one hand and resistance to Soviet domination on the other, the Iranian revolution has played a very positive role in providing the third world with a degree of self-confidence and self-esteem. The greatest lesson of the recent Iranian experience for the third world, and particularly for its Muslim component, lies in the fact that it has demonstrated that a revolution—in both its internal and external dimensions, namely, restructuring of the domestic order and rejection of foreign domination—can take place in "native" terms and without the help of external agents of influence and legitimacy. This is where Islam has played an undeniably progressive role, both in the realm of mass-mobilization and in providing instant legitimacy to the new regime. Even though this regime might undergo change (and there is every likelihood that it will), the role played by Islam in the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979 cannot be considered to be anything less than historic, for no new order can emerge in post-revolutionary Iran without its building upon the "Islam revolution" of those years. When in the next few years the ephemeral issues of women's *chadors* and exemplary punishment are forgotten, this will remain the long-lasting and positive contribution of a politically regenerated Islam to Iranian history.

It is here that the contast with Zia's Pakistan (or, for that matter, Feisal's Saudi Arabia or Abdul Hamid's Ottoman Turkey) is so stark. For in all of these cases, and as demonstrated above in the case of Pakistan, Islam was used, and is being used, as an instrument to maintain the privilege of the privileged, to bolster a patently unjust socioeconomic order, and to denounce and proscribe any attempts at social and political change by branding it "un-Islamic." On the other hand, Khomeini, despite his occasional outpourings of Islamic fundamentalism, has, in the course of his struggle against the Shah, learned one les-

[14] For details see "Iran: Beyond the Islamic Republic," *Economic and Political Weekly,* January 13, 1979, pp. 64–65, and "Bubbling to the Surface," *The Economist,* February 3, 1979, pp. 36, 39.

son—that you cannot dominate a politicized populace by force, whether of arms or of dogma. It is no wonder, therefore, that

> into Khomeini's arguments, over the years, [has] crept a new emphasis on social justice, on radical change and on armed struggle . . . Khomeini is not the "Mad Mullah" of colonial demonology, nor is he the perfect leader or magnificent intellectual synthesiser which his supporters sometimes present. He can best be described as a traditional religious intellectual who made great efforts to adapt his thoughts to changing events.[15]

Khomeini has, moreover, let it be understood that "in Iran an Islamic regime would in no way be comparable to Saudi Arabia's." While stressing the continuity of Quranic law, he has noted that "it is through free discussion and open minds that we will arrive at a solution most attuned to Islamic principles."[16] To top it all, Khomeini is now 76, and his nominated Prime Minister, Mehdi Bazargan, is 73; and, as one perceptive journalist has pointed out, "the younger generations making up 80 per cent of the population identify only very imperfectly with the elderly men running the country. They are determined to take over." This, he goes on to say, has been demonstrated by the activities of the *Fedayeen* and the *Mujahedin* in post-revolutionary Iran.[17]

However, Khomeini and his colleagues have served a purpose and served it eminently; in the process they have also demonstrated the revolutionary potential of political Islam—a facet of Islam that is often forgotten because of the overwhelming presence in the recent history of Islam of the Zia-ul-Haq's, the Feisals, and the Abdul Hamids, who, by sheer weight of numbers, tend to crowd out the Afghanis and the Khomeinis from the text books of Islamic history. The former, of course, also often serve a useful purpose for those who write these text books, because they provide Western, and for that matter Soviet, authors with "illuminating" material by which to demonstrate the "reactionary" character of political Islam.

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15 Martin Woollacott, "Does Khomeini Really Understand?," *Guardian Weekly,* Janaury 28, 1979.

16 Paul Balta, "Khomeini's War Against the 'Unjust State'," *Le Monde,* January 19, 1979, reproduced in *Guardian Weekly,* February 4, 1979.

17 Paul Balta, "The Guerrillas Feel Left Out," *Le Monde,* February 21, 1979, reproduced in *Guardian Weekly,* March 4, 1979.

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