SHAYKH MURTAḌA MUṬAHHARĪ

Reformation and Renewal of Islamic Thought

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PREFACE

We are pleased to provide our valued readers with this latest tour de force as part of the series on leading figures in intellectual thought and reformation in the Islamic world. The philosophy of this series focuses on shedding light on the ideas of various authors and thinkers who have played a part in exercising a lasting impact on our awareness as individuals in the modern era, and continue to do so. We shall not reiterate the objectives envisaged by this project, but it will instead suffice to state that we are not addressing any one particular thinker within the scope of this series. Rather, the aim is to shed more light on the biography and intellectual development of selected scholars in order to unveil the most significant issues that preoccupied them, and which in all probability continue to be relevant to us.

Every individual we have documented has a story and underlying motivation which inspired us to research more about him and his intellectual journey. As for Shaykh Martyr Murtaḍa Muṭahharī, our primary aim in addressing this personality is the range of unique factors that distinguish him and which invite us to take interest in his thought, the most prominent features of which are as follows:

Firstly, the originality and contemporary relevance of his approach, both of which encourage us to take a greater interest in him and his thought. When one surveys the issues covered by Muṭahharī, it is as if one is reviewing today's contemporary problems rather than those of the past century. He wrote on topics such as divine justice, social justice, Islamic

social movements and the *ḥijāb* (Islamic veil) amongst others, all of which continue to be pertinent issues that engage the minds of both the young and old.

And secondly, the most notable features of Muṭahharī are his openness to contemporary issues and his willingness to plunge into the depths of the serious challenges confronting religious thought during his time. This may cause some wonder, but what really distinguishes Muṭahharī from other advocates in this area is that he is simultaneously a reformer, for his defensive role neither drove him towards a closed and introverted outlook, nor did his goal of reform lead him to lapse into forsaking core principles.

We hopes that this series will be a valuable contribution to Islamic thought that is of value to the general reader and the researcher alike. We similarly hope that this series forms a link showing the way for those who seek advancement.

Centre of Civilisation for the Development of Islamic Thought &
Al Mustafa International Research Institute (M.I.R.I.)

TRANSLITERATION

Arabic characters	Roman Equivalent	Arabic characters	Roman Equivalent
ء	'	ى	y
ب	b		
ت	t		(construct state)
ث	th		
ج	j		
ح	ḥ		**Long Vowels**
خ	kh	آ ; ىٰ	ā
د	d	ـُو	ū
ذ	dh	ـِي	ī
ر	r		
ز	z		**Short Vowels**
س	s	ـَ	a
ش	sh	ـُ	u
ص	s	ـِ	i
ض	ḍ		
ط	ṭ		**Diphthongs**
ظ	ẓ	ـَو	aw
ع	'	ـَي	ai ; ay
غ	gh		
ف	f		
ق	q		**Persian letters added to the Arabic alphabet**
ك	k		
ل	l	پ	p
م	m	چ	ch
ن	n	ژ	j
ه	h	گ	g
و	w		

INTRODUCTION

Presented here is a general and concise review of the main intellectual, philosophical and religious elements in the reformation project of Martyr Murṭaḍa Muṭahharī, as well as the foundations upon which he based his call for the revival of Islamic religious thought.

Since the writings of Muṭahharī are broadly comprehensive and universal on the one hand, whilst replete with digressions and a lack of clear order, obtaining an understanding of his works through study and research thus entails a great deal of difficulty. This is because the material primarily consists of extracts of lectures, seminars and discussions. This being so, we have tried to confine our efforts to certain aspects of his overall thought that we will review in terms of a general application and comprehensiveness incorporating the ruling ideas and fundamental principles, in addition to the application of his methodology. We have attempted to shed light on these areas in order to bring to light the particular logic expressed within such a huge literary output spanning a wide range of issues.

Although this approach may deprive readers from discerning Muṭahharī's viewpoints on some particular issues he addressed, our main aim is to help them clarify the analytical approach and general methodology of his research. Furthermore, it will also introduce readers to the fundamentals upon which his intellectual outlook was based.

In his quest to address quickly the pertinent issues of education, culture and sociology, Muṭahharī gave little attention to fully describing the foundations of his methodological approach or identifying particular instances that illustrate his conclusions and the inferences drawn therefrom. Therefore, we are left on our own to come to a conclusion about all these facets. We have to gather various scattered pieces to discern

the elements in the depths of his literary output. This is a necessary task to undertake in spite of the obvious difficulties. Moreover, the interpretations provided by some of our predecessors may interfere with the task either in the shape of omissions which may serve to suggest a particular understanding, or conversely, as a result of widening the boundaries of the definition of his thought, lead to liberal musings which infer meanings and connotations that do not actually exist in Muṭahharī's writings. There are many factors which illustrate this.

For example, Muṭahharī's theoretical and epistemological dimensions are understandable once they are placed in a standardised context, something with which some earlier thinkers were not concerned. He was preoccupied with epistemology within the context of the historical experiment in which he found himself, amidst certain necessary facts and events. As a man struggling for ideals, Muṭahharī was not interested in formulating theories in isolation from the practical context of the circumstances of his time.

Furthermore, Muṭahharī developed his ideas over a period of more than twenty-five years, during which they evolved in light of different events and experiences. Such an extended span of time makes it necessary for us to trace the elements of his thought with a view to their development, growth and final maturity in terms of their general characteristics. What is therefore required from us is first of all to analyse and piece together his thought before interpreting and expounding upon his outlook in light of the prevailing historical circumstances and the intellectual and political milieus. On this basis, this present study is an interpretative overview of Muṭahharī's work. His writings are examined in order to form a general yet comprehensive view of his methodology and discover a logical common foundation governing his thought that connects the extremes of his epistemology. In essence, this remains to be one particular interpretation for which no claim is made for complete accuracy, nor to its being exhaustive. Neither do we claim that its intellectual point of departure is flawless. In short, we do not consider this study beyond further strict critical evaluation.

The present study is divided into six chapters. The first focuses on Muṭahharī's era since it seems impossible to comprehend the dimensions of his thought except in light of two factors. Firstly, the epistemological challenges faced by Muṭahharī at the turn of the last century, which defined a headlong lunge of the Islamic world into direct contact with the

intellectual heritage of Western thought, the socio-political challenges that overshadowed the second half of the last century. These two factors were deeply interrelated and outlined the context within which Muṭahharī found himself as a man of thought and endeavour.

In Chapter 2, I have sought to briefly identify general elements of Muṭahharī's personal characteristics and biography. Chapter 3 constitutes our main theme, and concentrates on addressing the issue of a revival in Muṭahharī's thought in terms of its inception, elemental content, methodology and meaning, as well as obstacles to its path, and is a summary of various elements of Muṭahharī's intellectual feats in general. The aspiration of revival was the principal motivation upon which the stages of Muṭahharī's intellectual journey and activities were based.

In Chapter 4, I have tried to trace the perspective taken by Muṭahharī towards those Western intellectual schools which generally affected the core of awareness of the intelligentsia of his time, whether in Iran or elsewhere in the Islamic world. It attracted a younger generation with the temptation of its logical, coherent approach and the attractiveness of its content. In this respect, Muṭahharī examined three approaches: one relating to society and the movement of history; the second concerns the challenges of materialism, atheism and nihilism; and the third involves values and ethics. These are all issues which have deeply influenced Western civilisation, which has in turn inescapably resonated upon and influenced Islamic societies.

Chapter 5 is an attempt to concisely sketch Muṭahharī's work and philosophical contribution, and to assess the undertakings for which he strove. In other words, to determine his legacy in the present context, having taken into account the nature of the contentions that generated it, the challenges of his time in terms of their magnitude, complexity and diversity. We do not aim to evaluate the efficacy that this thought still possesses at the present time, for intellectual thought can only be evaluated in light of the realities that generate it. From my own perspective, it would be incorrect to isolate and decontextualise his thought in order to demonstrate its feasibility or worth outside the limits of its original framework, but in light of the lessons, methodology and values that it can establish.

Chapter 6 is devoted to a brief glossary of Muṭahharī's writings in Persian and works translated into Arabic which in any event must remain incomplete, particularly since it is known that most of Muṭahharī's legacy

is contained in the form of seminars and lectures that have not been fully transcribed from original recorded tapes up until the present time. In addition, there is still a large amount that is unpublished or unedited. In this regard, I have relied on authoritative resources dedicated to documenting, re-evaluating and systematising his legacy.

Finally, I do not claim that the content presented herein is either faultless or comprehensive. In essence, it is a humble endeavour to unveil the intellectual and epistemological dimensions of this exceptional personality, especially those concerning reformation and renewal. It is my sincere hope that I have been successful in presenting something useful and beneficial, otherwise I apologise for this modest effort; and only Almighty Allah guides to success.

Khanjar Hamiyyah

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PREVAILING TIMES: POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL CONDITIONS IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN

PREFACE

One cannot obtain a clear picture of Muṭahharī's era and its political, intellectual and ideological currents of thought without comprehensively returning to the first half of the 20th century. More specifically, to the phase that immediately followed Muḥammad Rezā Shāh Pahlavī's accession to the throne and Iran's subsequent rush to embrace Western values in various fields. This tendency transparently appeared in various aspects of political, administrative, social and intellectual life. It was evident in legislation as well as encouraged in the values and norms of social interaction. Its mark was apparent in financial and economic institutions, in educational curricula, as well as well-established in military and security dealings, to name but a few. In addition, this strong sense of alignment with the West was also evident in the attempt to completely sever the nation from various aspects of its Islamic heritage. Amongst its manifest expressions was the deliberate distortion of established concepts, laws and norms that were deeply rooted in society and consolidated by Iran's Islamic history.

This predominantly Western predisposition, accompanied by a reign of despotic authoritarianism and bigoted repression, generated an opposition of political movements and resistance groups whose efforts were crowned by the overthrow of the regime and the formation of a national government presided over by Musaddiq. The new national government instigated a set of political reforms with a discernible liberal tendency. Within no time, however, the project ended because of disputes between its various members. These internal conflicts facilitated the return of the Shāh under the aegis of direct American influence. The return of the Shāh signalled the end of a project for change and progress. The

dreams of liberty, justice and democracy inspired by the National Front, for which the public campaigned, were all crushed in one blow.

Nevertheless, despite disappointments and failures, this period bore the hallmarks of political, intellectual and cultural dynamism. This background was further supplemented by the existence of various ideologies that swept through the world at the time, and different ideas and directions took shape. Amongst these was an extreme form of Marxism as well as a moderate socialism, each confirming its validity by expressing slogans with a clear reference to Islam. There was also a liberal-nationalist movement, and a democratic movement adopting a Western political pattern and citizenship rights as its ideals. Islamic reform movements, with various backgrounds and aims, were another sign of the cultural dynamism of this period. Despite their diversity, these groups united in a common cause which transcended their differences and affiliations, a cause revolving around the necessity of bringing about a change in Iranian political life that would carry the nation towards new horizons.

The aspiration was to establish Iran as a landmark on the global stage, and rid its people of the painful experience of long years of failure and degeneration which had drained the talents and energy of the people. The diverse factions unanimously agreed on the need for a definitive transition from an era that had generated nothing but a sense of impotence and unparalleled submission to a despotic and repressive authority – an authority characterised by plunder and exploitation, and demanded the absolute subordination of its own citizens, whom it despised and deprived of the most basic rights. It had fettered them with abject poverty and underdevelopment, deprived them of education, and took away the will to express themselves.

All these factors shaped the background for the emerging ideologies of reform in the latter half of the 20th century. They gained experience from both their successes and failures in direct political action, and profited from the general climate of discussion within academia, books, newspapers and other mass media. This swing also affected the republican parties – or quasi-parties – which promoted the same objectives, attracted supporters, and established their own maxims. By this time the social experiment had matured, and could declare its presence. It was defined by a firm structure and a clear vision of the kind of ideological reform that had sparked its inception.

At the outset, these movements were characterised by a motivation of the collective aspiration of the community towards reform and progress. Firmly refusing to succumb to the status quo, they yearned for freedom, justice and human rights. The movements then transformed into parties with integrated programmes of thought and action, well-defined ideological and epistemological foundations and an organised structure. They offered a distinct vision of the individual person, society, the world and existence in general. They were also aware of the particular requirements of the time, through a clear historical understanding and the mechanisms and conditions for progress. Furthermore, their perspective included the fundamental nature of civilisation, and the conditions which brought about growth and decline, and factors which would overcome the latter.

None of these factions were isolated from other contemporary problems that affected every Muslim society, and they were not immune from the challenges that stood in their path. Furthermore, there was a clear connection with other reformation experiments and developments taking place in various other parts of the Islamic world. Radical change had weakened the overall structure of the Islamic world and its people, leaving them in the shadow of events that threatened to impose upon many of their traditional values.

Some benefit and inspiration may be drawn from these experiences with a logic that surpasses the more superficial considerations, avoids a blind imitation, and instead seeks a constructive way forward. This is applied especially in the context of a very complicated environment such as that of Iranian society, which is distinguished by unique experiences and traditions. Moreover, the political and intellectual movements, whose signs became evident during that part of the century – based on earlier, more limited experiments, such as the 1920 Revolution, the Tobacco Movement, the Nationalisation of Oil and the Constitutional Revolution – would gradually increase in prominence in the light of complex and sensitive transitions. Their significance would grow, along with their basic characteristics, methods, structures and objectives. These in turn formed the groundwork for the 1979 Iranian Revolution as a comprehensive ideology for reformation and revival, which definitively changed the Iranian scene. It subsequently ushered in a new era in the life of contemporary Iran, whose repercussions have left an indelible mark on the world picture in more than one respect.

1

INDICATIONS AND PRECURSORS: POLITICS AND CULTURE IN IRAN DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The events that swept through Europe at the beginning of the century had an eradicable impact around the world. Traditions were shaken, ideas and perceptions transformed, regimes toppled and empires overthrown. This new wave unleashed calls for the rebuilding of states on new foundations. Moreover, it also gave rise to competing ideologies which sought to affirm their authority, and secure their respective interests regarding various trans-territorial conflicts spanning the globe. In order to mollify these conflicts, two wars centred in Europe were required, killing millions, and resulting in indescribable destruction that erased the identity of various nations and ethnic groups. Repercussions were felt throughout the world, and the momentum thereof contributed to an organised plunder of wealth and resources, and the operational exploitation of the physical and mental resources of people wearied by long years of submission, mistakes, increasing cultural deterioration and underdevelopment. The two World Wars provided the parties that emerged victorious with the basic materials to assert their prominence in an era of industry, technology and business. They were able to rebuild what was destroyed during the years of conflict, and reconstruct the weakened economic and financial infrastructure of civilisation.

The historical development of modern Europe is based on concepts that sprung from the Age of Enlightenment, which brought about a radical proscription of traditional perceptions concerning man, his place in existence, where he comes from, and his final end. These ideas altered the direction of society and humanity as a whole. They made man the focal point of an anthropocentric outlook, where he became the prime mover of his own destiny and the shaper of history. Henceforth the human being was seen as the architect of his own future, who could realise his own interests as dictated by his direct needs and what was of benefit to him. As a result, the argument that gave birth to the two World Wars had not come to an end.

In actuality, the conflict concealed beneath the tumult of death and destruction still continues, and today is manifested in the form of a struggle to secure dominion over boundaries and resources. This ongoing struggle over interests and fortunes follows a logic of power, hegemony and exclusivity. The state of affairs is maintained by a system of international relationships which generally guarantees a balance, and is furthermore complemented by a system of institutions that has a great interest in protecting its mechanisms. As a result, the subordination of those who have had no effective role in this historical process is further entrenched, and they pay a heavy price by submitting to its diktats and conditions by being forced to circulate in its orbit and surrender to its destructive effects, meanwhile failing to attain even a small share of its achievements and power.

This historical development in modern Europe had a twofold impact on the sidelined nations. On the one hand, it generated a desire for freedom and self-determination, giving rise to aspirations of a future outside the boundaries of a powerful framework of enslavement. In addition, it developed a longing for the reformation of identity, and the ability to invest vigour into their own resources in order to redefine their present situation. On the other hand, there was a sense of usefulness in all this, and an inclination to imitate, which generated an admiration of and a sense of pride in material progress and the kind of framework that made it possible. It prompted an interest in better living standards and a race for renewal, development and the exploration of ideas of freedom, justice and progress. It also revitalised an interest in the arts and human values, all of which were visions that delighted the minds of those who contemplated the consequences of long years of impotence and despair.

Despite a principle that dictates that the vanquished should submit to the ways of the victor in order to be reborn, the sidelined nations found themselves unavoidably acquiescing to two direct influences. The first had been generated by the historical development of modern Europe in terms of administration and urbanisation; and the second was the proliferation of ideas concerning human values, existence, religion, history and epistemology. All these issues had a profound influence and provoked many questions. As a result, people were overwhelmed. They were trapped between their own identity and sense of belonging, deeply rooted in history through language, tradition and beliefs, and the challenge of opening up to other philosophical, political and social standards which presented themselves as attractive and intellectually stimulating.

The Islamic nations were a true reflection of this situation. It began with a characteristic hesitation, but grew with a dynamism whose main features have yet to appear distinctly. This dynamism was initially generated during the period known as the Renaissance. Many scholars of that time were occupied with ideas concerning tradition, modernism, science and progress, and various conclusions were reached, with conflicting principles and aims. In general, there were no distinct features, and at the time the various energies did not produce a project with clear objectives. However, what is evident is that the subsequent development of the modern West has had a great impact in many domains, such as sociology, economics and politics, as well as influencing ideas about tradition, religion and life as a whole.

Iran was not isolated from the wider context. The contemporary world cast its shadow over Iran, which similarly experienced the hesitation symptomatic of the Islamic world as a whole, but it left an impression on values, tradition and thought. We can clearly discern movements such as nationalism, liberalism, socialism and Marxism, in addition to philosophical trends that include positivism, existentialism and secularism. Furthermore, the intellectual élite was deeply affected by ideas that were predominant in the Western intellectual milieu during the last century, and began to express views which were essentially of European origin in a compounded form, by amalgamating them with traditional perspectives. We can observe the general presence of this trend in the intellectual, political and social context of contemporary Iran.

The reign of Rezā Khān saw the most distinct attempt to configure modern Iran according to the ideas and experiences of the West. This

period witnessed an experiment with economic liberalism, and entrenched a secular character within the state, and various manifestations of Western civilisation in the educational curricula.

Rezā Khān was a staunch secularist with an opinionated disposition. He gave free rein to his nationalistic ambitions and proceeded to firmly suppress religious expression. During his reign his general ambition was to revive Persian nationalism on racial grounds, inspired by contemporaneous European nationalist experiments that saw the rise of Nazism and fascism.[1] He enacted a range of laws covering education that excluded the religious scholars,[2] and later limited the authority of the Religious Courts to the sphere of personal affairs.[3]

In 1934, he instigated a series of modern laws regarding religious endowments (*awqāf*). He was especially strict on the matter of holding commemoration gatherings to mourn the martyrdom of Imām Ḥossein (al-Majālis al-Ḥosseiniyah).He afterwards proceeded to ban the veil (*ḥijāb*) and replaced the Hijrī calendar with the solar calendar. The cultural élite, as well as some religious scholars, strongly supported his actions.

The move towards Westernisation in Qajarite Iran, upon which Rezā Khān relied to launch his reforms, was coming to an end. A group of the so-called Enlighteners, including Talebof, Malkom Khān, Yūsuf Khān (the State Advisor in 1895), and Khān al-Kirmānī amongst others, called for the application of modern Western techniques in the realms of science, technology and law. Generally, they tended to clothe such calls in an Islamic facade, which deceived many people, including notable clergymen. As a result, their ideas managed to find fertile ground and have a wide influence,[4] since they focused on themes such as freedom, justice, common law legislation and the fragmentation of authority. These models struck a chord with the deep desire for liberation amongst the masses, following a long and arduous period of submission to a fierce monarchical regime.

Rezā Khān acceded to the throne in kind of coup d'état. He managed to extend his authority throughout Iran with relative ease, and with it began a new era of political change and mobilisation. During this period, he exercised various forms of oppression against those who opposed his policies. Suppression was directed towards both the Islamic opposition, personified by Hasan Mudarris, as well as the newly formed socialist movements, whose demands focused on the themes of justice, equality and

social development, which at the outset, however, was strongly connected with the idea of global socialism.

Rezā Shāh helped weaken the force of these movements, which suffered from internal schisms and lack of organisation. Nonetheless, this period carried the early seeds of experiences whose positive impact will be examined later. The parliament led the first trial of developing legislation based on the *shari'ah* (Islamic law), and installed a parliament that was open to the political diversity of opposing political alliances. Parties who sought to establish their presence through organised media activities were also present.[5] Nonetheless, these parties were fostered by a direct Western presence in Iran, whose diverse activities included establishing modern schools, hospitals and media outlets. Furthermore, the process was aided by the virtual abstention of leading religious authorities from any involvement, as a result of differences between prominent figures in both Najaf and Qom in the aftermath of the failure of the 1920 Revolution and the removal of its founding group.[6]

During this stage of political upheaval, armed opposition groups, such as Mirzā Kochek Khān's Movement in northern Iran, made up of clergy, traders and intelligentsia, or Muḥammad Khaiabani's Democratic Radical Movement in Azerbaijan, were barely more successful.[7] They ended without having had much impact on the political life in Iran of the first half of the 20th century. The fall of Rezā Shāh, following the entry of the Allied Forces into Iran after the latter's victory in the Second World War, and the transfer of power to his son, Muḥammad Rezā, with direct foreign support, marked the beginning of a new era in contemporary Iran.

The most significant expression of this new phase was a conspicuous foreign intervention in Iran's domestic affairs. The effects were to bolster the dictatorship, suppress any public opposition that demanded change, and systemically plunder wealth and resources. In addition, it stimulated the transformation into a secular state akin to modern Turkey, by attempts to purge Iranian culture of its Islamic legacy and severing intellectual and cultural links with the Arab world. These stormy events were hard to remove from the collective memory of Iranian society, and their impact would ignite the already latent desire for change.

These transformations were all one way or another associated with the fall of the 1920 Revolution in Iraq, the upheaval (*nikba*) of the Palestinian nation and the establishment of the Zionist entity, the devastating consequences of the Second World War on the peoples of the region, and

repercussions of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. These changes marked the beginning of a political and intellectual dynamism that was not unconnected with the calls for reform made by the Constitutional Movement, with its central themes of freedom, independence, national security and a comprehensive economic development programme. This dynamism provided a glimmer of hope for the latent desire for change, especially within the circles of the emerging movement that had its roots in the political experiment of Sayyid Hasan Mudarris. This fervour was personified in the nationalist orientation under the leadership of Musaddiq, with whom Mudarris was partnered in opposition to the regime of Rezā Shāh. He gained considerable parliamentary experience, participating in Iranian political life after the fall of the Qajar Dynasty. He had witnessed its transformations and tensions, and experienced Navvāb Safavi's traditional revivalist Islamic movement, which sought to establish an Islamic government and to offer a comprehensive ideology for life based thereon.[8]

The various political movements appearing during this period desired real change across the board in politics and social values. They sought to rid themselves of political oppression. Seldom have dilemmas swept through the Arab world like those stemming from the Renaissance and resulting with modernism, and generated such strong feelings. The leaders of these movements were acutely aware of all this.

It will become clear that the reform movements that began to form during this period generally relied on the experiences of other revolutionary and reform movements across the world as the basis of their ideologies. Undoubtedly, one of the most significant of these was Marxism, whether in a universal context or particular regional circumstances, such as the nationalist liberation movements in Cuba, South-East Asia and Latin America, or Maoist China. What made Marxism attractive was the revolutionary character of its concepts of freedom, justice and equality. As far as it was seen as a factor that restored a belief in the effectiveness of human action, and gave hope to those who had experienced the devastating effects of tyranny and oppression, it was seen, at least in form, as consonant with the legacy of Islam.

Despite arbitrariness in some areas, if we wished to classify this dynamism into movements, we could outline four trends: the Marxist in various guises, the National Democratic, the radical Islamic, and the reformative, revivalist approach. These various forms will be described

later, but it was on the basis of these movements that the move towards reform was to crystallise during the second half of the 20th century.

1. The Marxist Approach

The Tudeh Party, as an ideological remnant of global communism, was the first Iranian Communist party to effectively appear on the political scene during the reign of Muḥammad Rezā Shāh Pahlavī. It cemented its position following the fall of the Shāh's regime and the formation of Musaddiq's government. The party opposed the new government, accusing it of being an American puppet, and tried to overthrow it. The Tudeh Party subsequently claimed that it was unable to bring about such a change, despite having played a part in getting the Musaddiq government to power.

As soon as Musaddiq's government was overthrown, the party's activities were significantly constrained, and its influence virtually came to an end. It had no presence on the political scene; its party structure was disassembled and it was unable to reorganise. As scholars have observed, the main reason for the party's deterioration was its opposition towards Musaddiq's government. Additionally, the party's overt confrontation with the rising Islamic reformist movements led to the loss of much of its popular support. After his return to power under the aegis of America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Shāh launched a brutal onslaught against the party, which culminated with the systematic execution of the party's military cadres, thus forcing those remaining to flee the country.[9]

Regarding the background of its ideological outlook and organisational structure, the Tudeh Party was, it seems, based on a manifest tendency of exclusion. As an illustration, it caused class tension, the inevitability of a revolutionary change, with economics taking priority over politics, and society at large over individuality, with other prominent Marxist views. This not only resulted in clashes with other political groups, but also generated conflict within the party and breakaway movements. This is what happened with the renowned leftist theorist, Jalāl Āl-e-Ahmad, who separated from the Tudeh Party and revised his outlook.

Jalāl Āl-e-Ahmad was one of the most prominent Iranian thinkers of the 1960s.[10] He joined the Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh) and left three years later, following the coup d'état against Musaddiq. After that he abstained from political activity, and during this period, he went through

a process of re-evaluation. He criticised the Iranian intelligentsia in general, and left notable works, the most important of which was his book Gharbzadegi, or "Westoxification," which was published in 1962 and upheld his critique of the intelligentsia.

His analysis principally addressed the phenomenon of Westernisation and the emphasis on the national economy at the expense of spirituality. He thought that Western influence was an aberration affecting the life and civilisation of Iran, for it had no relation to the history and traditions of the Iranian people. Nevertheless, he saw no harm in consciously utilising and benefitting from the West, as long as it did not turn into a blind imitation of Western cultural standards. He believed that Westernisation had become entrenched because of the transfer of modern technology to Iran. More specifically, the adoption of modern technology had led to its diffusion and popularity, and it was impossible to espouse the benefits of Western industrial progress in isolation from Western culture.[11]

In order to avoid the misconception that Westernisation is characterised by a self-ascendancy that allows it to inevitably proliferate, Jalāl Āl-e-Ahmad, on the contrary, regarded Westernisation not as a dominating phenomenon, but as a social ailment of external origin. According to him, the domestic educational system contributed to its dissemination. Therefore, it was a malady with two dimensional – internal and external – which threatened to undermine the basis of cultural, political and economic integrity.[12]

Āl-e-Ahmad was particularly aggressive towards the Iranian intelligentsia, and considered them the main cause of the weakness within Iranian society. He resorted to a pungent critique in order to stimulate an awareness of the risk of a devastating impact from Westernisation.

It is worth pointing out that Āl-e-Ahmad regarded the development of the modern West as defined primarily in terms of its technologies, which divided the world into "producers" and "consumers," and led to the spread of unemployment. Therefore, his criticism was concentrated on the negative effects of technology – its unmanaged utilisation, and the blind release and exploitation of its overwhelming capabilities.[13] This reminds us of the position of certain Marxists who flourished in the Frankfurt School, such as Markus, Max Horkheimer and Jürgen Habermas, or Heidegger's view of the devastating impact of technology on society. However, we cannot ascertain whether or not Āl-e-Ahmad was influenced by these.

2. The Nationalist Movement and the Inclination towards Democracy

Throughout the last century, Iran witnessed various nationalist movements, some of which called for the revival of the historical Persian heritage and disseminated a sense of the greatness of the legacy of the ancient civilisation. The state was the principal advocate for such movements. It spent large sums of money promoting propaganda campaigns and publishing books to this effect. Moreover, this aspiration became stamped within the educational curricula, and drew cultural and artistic support from many writers and thinkers.

This kind of revival had a tendency to draw inspiration from extreme racial, nationalistic trends, as happened in the West with Nazism, or with the changes implemented by Ataturk. The nationalistic trend was also accompanied by a rapid drift towards Westernisation in many spheres. Furthermore, the drive to adopt Western values dovetailed with a growing hostility towards religious expression. All this fitted in with the state's ambitions at the time, and was more of an instrument of the state than a force with an independent identity. Because of this, it has not been treated alongside other movements of this particular time, irrespective of its power and influence. At the same time, we find a moderate nationalistic tendency defined by citizenship, which was underpinned by a desire to secure the welfare of the nation amidst the turbulence of global interests.

Represented in this movement were those Muslims who perceived the problems within their society, the changes occurring around them, and the dangers posed by foreign supremacy. Most of them followed the example of Muhammad Musaddiq and Ayatullāh Kāshāni in their social and political views. Recognising justice and democracy as gateways to reform, this trend was made up of various nationalist movements with different objectives. However, the factor that brought them together was a common goal of finding a way to guarantee the peoples' interests and identity, as well as an awareness of the danger posed by the reckless adoption of Western ideals.

All these objectives were watchwords that needed to be translated into practical programmes, but no sooner had the experiment of Musaddiq begun, it collapsed. Many of those involved broke away at the first crossroads. For example, Tāleqāni criticised Musaddiq's government for going beyond the remit of institutions by exploiting the widespread

popularity it enjoyed, by continually catering to public interest at the expense of parliament, thus exhibiting an excessive nationalistic indulgence. Similarly, the People's Party, having had a considerable role in the formation of Musaddiq's government, later abandoned it, calling for its overthrow and acting to this effect.[14]

With the fall of Musaddiq's government, the National Front, which had flourished on his personality and principles, degenerated and collapsed, and could not thereafter make an effective comeback in Iranian political life. An observer will find but a weak presence of its perspective in subsequent political reform. In principle, the National Front began as a mixture of political and intellectual figures with differing fundamental viewpoints. However, patriotism and the opposition to imperialism were the factors that united them within a broad political framework. After the overthrow of Musaddiq's government, nothing remained of these sentiments other than a persistent desire in the national consciousness, but there was no clear programme for confronting the challenges they faced.

Later on, a considerable number of former followers of this movement went on to join other groups, whether revivalist, radical, Islamist or leftist. By guidance and evaluation, these figures effectively reinforced the experiment of reformation in the second half of the 20th century, as we shall see later.

3. The Radical Islamic Movement and its Trends

The failure of the reform movements in Iran and Iraq towards the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century had an adverse impact that reached the heart of the religious establishment, casting a gloomy shadow between it and society as a whole, particularly the various groups involved in the developments of the time. As a result, for a considerable time the religious infrastructure abstained from any involvement, and prohibited its main figures from taking any part in reform.[15]

However, an Islamic reform movement began to emerge clearly during the 1940s within the religious institutions, at certain points involving some of the leading figures. In general, the motivation was the dilemmas of internal reform as well as a desire to bring about change in the social and political status quo. Moreover, there was an urgent need to put an end

to the problems that had swept through the ummah (the Muslim community), and face its challenges. The Islamic movement came to the fore as a result of events that shook the Islamic community, uprooting its structure and exposing it to the consequences of the Second World War.

Initially, this movement was exemplified by the efforts of Ayatullāh Kāshāni. Having participated in the 1920 revolution in Iraq, he was subsequently sentenced to death, but he managed to escape and return to Iran where he began to take part in political life. Towards the end of the Qajarite reign and the transfer of power to Rezā Shāh, he became a member of parliament.

Ayatullāh Kāshāni was an exceptional politician who raised the call for change. He firmly believed in the necessity of engaging Islam in social and political reform, and in confronting foreign intervention in the Islamic world. To this end, he was involved in various internal battles, such as the fight for the nationalisation of oil, which in turn strengthened his presence as one of the most prominent personalities in the movement. He also defended fundamental questions pertaining to the future of the Islamic world, such as the Palestinian issue and Islamic unity. He shared the concerns of other Islamic states, and closely followed the activities of various reform movements.[16]

Despite deep-rooted nationalistic inclinations and an unswerving hostility towards dictatorship, Kāshāni nevertheless resisted the idea of establishing a republican regime in Iran. His belief was that republicanism would act as a bridge that would allow foreign forces to exert their influence over Iranian politics, and thereby buttress Western hegemony. For this reason he clashed with Musaddiq, who was accused of promoting favourable conditions for republicanism, despite his repeated denials.[17]

Kāshāni's movement falls within the context of another one, namely, the Fadā'iyān-e-Islam Movement, founded by the religious scholar Navvāb Safavi, who resided in Najaf for a brief period, before returning to Iran in 1949 and involving himself in politics. He engaged in militant action against the symbols of the state, as well as secular writers who defended it. He assassinated one of the secular writers, Kasravi, for his opinions on Islam, and fled to Mashhad, then later to Najaf. As a result, his reputation spread, and the popularity of his movement grew amongst young people and the wider public.[18]

Subsequent to these events, the Fadā'iyān-e-Islam Movement effectively became the executive wing of the Movement for the Nationalisation of

Oil, and some figures in the royal court who sought to silence the demands for nationalisation were killed. This series of killings forced the parliament to approve nationalisation out of fear for those of its members who opposed it, and thus avoid more bloodshed.

Navvāb Safavi participated in the National Front, which brought about Musaddiq's government. However, he later opposed him and split away – as happened with Kāshāni – because he realised that the government, which had assumed power on the promise of reform, was inclining towards violations of the *shari'ah* and instating a republican regime. Safavi fiercely rejected this proposition, and steadfastly adhered to his call for governance based on the *shari'ah*, and the establishment of an Islamic state. His perspective is apparent in the message he sent to Musaddiq after splitting from his ranks, in which Safavi warned Musaddiq of the consequences of the latter's path, and expressed his readiness to cooperate on condition that Musaddiq changed course and returned to the principles of the *shari'ah*.[19]

The religious establishment, which continued abstaining from political life after the fragmentation of the National Front and the withdrawal of Kāshāni, did not approve of such a move. The highest religious authority, Ayatullāh Borūjerdī, expressed his dissatisfaction with the methodology of the Fadā'iyān-e-Islam Movement vis-à-vis its political activity. However, it would seem that they felt they did not require a *fatwā* (legal ruling) from a religious authority in order to legitimise their revolutionary agenda. Moreover, they did not consider the religious authority capable of playing such a role after a lengthy period of isolation. Consequently, they generated for themselves a distinct perception of Islam, as well as a modus operandi that utilised Islamic concepts. In this regard, they were heavily influenced by revivalism in the Arab world, and the prominent personalities who were particularly engaged in establishing a new hermeneutic of concepts such as struggle, or *jihad*. The leaning towards a revised interpretation was motivated by the need for it to serve the present reality, and cope with the requirements of what they perceived as threats to cultural and religious identity. The personalities in question included, for example, Rashīd Riḍa,[20] Ḥasan al-Bannā and Sayyid Quṭb. There were also others, whose work Navvāb Safavi could access directly, or whom he could meet in person at different events, such as the Islamic Conference held in al-Quds (Jerusalem) in 1953.

It is evident from the ideology of the Fadā'iyān-e-Islam Movement that it was deeply influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood,[21] and the two groups closely liaised with each other across several Arab countries. They regarded themselves as the ones really capable of bringing about reformation within Islamic society, and delivering it from a vicious cycle of acquiescence and decline.[22] This movement would be a powerful inspiration later on, and as we shall see later, its strategy would be imitated by other groups with differing aims and systems.

Regardless of the ultimate achievements of the Fadā'iyān-e-Islam Movement, it disintegrated under continuous attack from the state, and its leaders were cruelly terminated. This was concurrent with the deteriorating success of the National Front, following the setbacks that afflicted the Musaddiq – Kāshāni Movement. This situation dramatically affected the rejectionist approach of radical Islam, forcing it to withdraw from the political arena and retreat to its traditional domain (namely, the religious seminary or ḥawzah), creating fissures in its organisation, and resulting in a considerable loss of fortune. As a result, there was a surge in the demand for the separation of religion and the state, and the exclusion of the clergy from party activities. Amongst the voices involved, the most significant was that of Ayatullāh Borūjerdī, a central figure of the religious establishment, who warned against the involvement of the clergy in politics. Ayatullāh Borūjerdī spoke out during the climax of the events surrounding the coup d'état led by Zahedī against Musaddiq, and the return of the Shāh to the seat of authority.[23]

However, the stance taken by Borūjerdī did not express his real convictions. Despite his reservations about the methods adopted by many of the reform movements, he believed in the union of religion and politics within Islam. He believed it was necessary to organise the affairs of society in accord with the *shari'ah*, and he considered the guarantee for the realisation thereof was the responsibility of the *faqih* (jurisprudent). His convictions are evidenced by his practical concern for the problems that affected the Islamic world and his diligent effort to unite Muslims, as shown by his grand project to bring the various schools of thought closer together.[24]

His attitude was probably underpinned by the necessity of excluding the ḥawzah from the political enterprises that undermined its structure and diminished its standing in the hearts of the people. It was therefore a provisional viewpoint that was dictated by existing realities, which were

on the whole neither reliable nor successful, and left a resounding impact on the structure and function of the religious establishment.

Nevertheless, the stance of political abstention generated a closed religious milieu that was encouraged by the political authorities, who exploited the situation in order to marginalise any influence from the clergy in the political arena, and the potential dangers posed by their authority. This background formed an incubator for Salafi ideas, based on concepts such as intercession (*shafā'ah*), dissimulation (*taqiyyah*) and awaiting (*intizār*).

These ideas were later incorporated within the outlook of regressive trends such as the Anjoman-e Hojjatiyeh, whose popularity grew with overt backing from the authorities. Their following increased in size due to its confrontational position towards Baha'ism, amongst its other initiatives. In addition, they expressly appealed for a restriction of the role of the clergy to the sphere of education, underlining the necessary separation of religion and politics based on a principle which claimed that religious scholars were not responsible for the establishment of an Islamic government before the appearance of al-Mahdī. Also appearing within this milieu was the rise of revivalist Salafī movements that began their activities during the 1940s, and which established their groundwork and gained some significance with concepts similar to those known to Arab world at the beginning of the Renaissance. However, what was generally noticeable in the structure of these movements, despite their call for a return to the Qur'an and the *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥ* (the Pious Predecessors), was their superficial interest in a renewal of the Islamic sciences. Such movements failed to develop as soon as they encountered others that opposed their position.[25]

4. The Approach of Renewal and the Appearance of Revivalist and Reform Ideology

Revival movements in Iran during the first half of the 20th century were not confined to extreme nationalist trends supported by the regime, those against which Muṭahharī's wrote in his book The Reciprocal Services between Islam and Iran, as we shall see later. Nor were they restricted to revolutionary Marxist movements that called for social justice through the elimination of class distinctions. The general trend, having a radical and practical appearance, became distinctly effective in its appeal to the social

category of workers and peasants. In addition, we find other movements that were deeply influenced by Western modernisation and technology. One was the secular belief that scientific knowledge presented the only solution for the problems besetting contemporary Iranian society, and was the golden key to progress and the fulfilment of all human needs.[26] Thus motivated, some rushed to brazenly confront the traditional concepts of religion and man, which were seen as a backward and ill-informed, the inevitable result of fear and superstition in the face of natural phenomena and the universe.[27]

Another example is that of nihilism, which, from the beginning of Rezā Shāh's reign up until the time of Musaddiq and the National Front, expressed the psychological deterioration of those familiar with Western intellectualism. According to this group, the project of reformation was expressed in the form of an irony mixed with sadness and contempt for the petit bourgeois and the bazaar merchants. Their efforts were dominated by a sense of despondency which underscored the meaninglessness of life. In general, it was a manifest example of Western nihilism, and was characterised by a radical literary and artistic output.[28]

During this era in particular, there were early indications of comprehensive Islamic reform movements, whose ambitions were focused on a complete ideological restructure in the light of contemporary challenges, a vision of Islam crystallised in a position that primarily addressed the social, political and economic dilemmas regarding the Western epistemological position.

At its outset, this trend focused on the relationship between religion and science, and prompted fierce debates that culminated twenty years later with a conference in Tehran. Various Islamic groups representing a cross-section of academia, including educators, doctors, engineers and students, participated in the conference. At its conclusion, some significant recommendations were revealed, some of which were as follows:

> Islam represents the most excellent path for the reformation of society, and contains the best laws and methodology for the nourishment and prosperity of humanity.

> Belief alone is not enough, and should be expressed in active and sincere service.

Society should correct the mistakes of the past, and also keep up with the latest ideas and scientific advances. In addition, society must be equipped with effective tools provided by modern civilisation in order to be rid of the enduring retrograde cycle that had affected the spheres of thought, ethics, politics and economics, and which, if left uncorrected, would lead to its downfall.[29]

Greater cooperation between Islamic states in the fight for liberation is necessary and strongly recommended.[30] As the religious establishment was abstaining from any such discussion or involvement, and instead concentrated on its traditional tasks, the advocates, including eminent clergy such as Muṭahharī and Ṭabāṭabā'ī, proclaimed the necessity of reform within the religious establishment, making changes that would gradually lead to a development of its structure so as to cope with the contemporary needs of society and the dilemmas presented by a rapidly changing world.[31]

This initiative gave rise to strategies that were jointly published in a book by influential reformers including Beheshti, Mahmūd Taleqāni, Musawi Zanjāni, and Mahdī Bāzargān, and which concentrated essentially on the necessity of developing the religious institutions so that they would thereby play an effective role in serving both Islam and society.[32] This was to be achieved through various means, such as ensuring the financial independence of the religious institutions; the formation of a supreme council for *iftā'* that would be comprised of prominent Shi'ite figures; the Islamisation of all aspects of social life; reducing the focus on *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in the religious seminaries, instead of developing the teaching of other sciences such as ethics, philosophy and theology; expanding the tools of *ijtihād* as a means to discover Islamic precepts pertaining to various contemporary aspects of life; reviving the principle of enjoining virtue and forbidding vice; and encouraging the Mujtāhidin to seek specialisation and develop a sound epistemology to overcome individual negative traits.[33] At the time, this book was considered the most significant publication on the subject of the *ḥawzah* in Iran during the second half of the 20th century, and echoes of it have reverberated within the circles of the reform-minded Iranian intelligentsia up to the present time.[34] In spite of disapproval of the ideas contained in it from parts of the religious establishment, the book nevertheless gained an unparalleled popularity. It was well-received by young people and the intelligentsia, and

formed a practical framework that later would be an indispensable inspiration, with ideas that would be expressed in different ways by an entire generation of reform-oriented intellectuals and clergy.

At the time there were also other groups that enjoyed a limited popularity, such as the leftist Islamists founded by Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī, a well-known clergyman renowned for his interest in philosophy and theology. The group was defined as socialist, and mainly concentrated on social justice and democracy as concepts consonant with and stemming from the principles of monotheism. There was also a militant revivalist group founded by Muḥammad-Taqi Sharī'atī (the father of 'Alī Sharī'atī), who challenged the theory of historical materialism and its influence. He sought to present an image of Islam that was, in his view, compatible with the contemporary era. In addition, there was a non-militant reform movement whose most prominent figures included Atā'-Allah Shehāb and Maḥmūd Shehābī, who founded the institution of Tablīgh-e Islamī. Their activities revolved around the publication of books, and they later launched a magazine as the official mouthpiece for their organisation. Their efforts were mainly centred on the exploration of the function (*maqasid*) of the *shari'ah*, and gained prominence amongst well-known revivalist thinkers in the Arab world, such as Tahir bin 'Āshūr, whose ideas were translated and spread throughout Iranian society.[35]

The relative freedom that prevailed in Iran between 1958 and 1959 allowed for the formation of a number of small parties within the Parliament. These later formed the basis for the so-called Second National Front. From this setting, a new group emerged that included personalities such as Mahdī Bāzargān, Maḥmūd Taleqāni and Dr. Sahābī, who formed what came to be known as the Liberation Movement of Iran during the second half of the 20th century.[36]

In the midst of these developments, the signposts to a new phase in an intellectual and political renaissance would be formed, within which can be found the foundations for the upheaval of 1979 and the Iranian Islamic Revolution. How then did the main elements of this phase appear, and who were its most significant figures? We will discover the answers to these questions later on.[37]