

Post-Election Iran: Crossroads of History and a Critique of Prevailing Political Perspectives

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*“You cannot depend on your eyes when
your imagination is out of focus.”*

Mark Twain

Introduction

In this essay, I intend to focus on the origin of the trigger-point that led to Iran’s post-election uprising in the summer of 2009, and lay bare the consequences on the diametrical, yet scrambled, expression of political standings that have so far been exhibited by the right and the left vis-à-vis the Ahmadinejad government in Iran. As shall be established below, this requires an epoch-driven theoretical context—fresh, critical, and concrete—distinct from both Leninist theories of imperialism and orthodox theories of the international relations. I shall attempt to show that the uprising’s proverbial mirror before the regime’s face, and the desperate reaction by the newly emerged para-militarized state against its own founding fathers, are in good measure a litmus test for the potential decomposition of this Islamic project. The nature of uprising and the polarized political forces behind it will be remembered as one of the enigmatic events of the twenty-first century in which the left turned ultra-right and the right leaned toward the middle. Yet, at the farthest opposite ends of the political and ideological spectrum, the neoconservative Iranians in the diaspora held their habitual ground for intervention by the United States, while a segment of the so-called radical left brazenly opted for embracing the most notorious functionaries of the radical right—namely, the paramilitary side of the Islamic Republic under the tutelage of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. And, regardless of customary political labels contrary to urgings of certain leftists, who insisted on kid-glove treatment by means of “ideological struggle”—I believe these reactionary pseudo-leftists are *ipso facto* functionaries of the regime and thus must be deemed as culpable as the Ahmadinejad government itself.¹

There is a great deal of confusion within the panorama of political public opinion on the nature of Iranian regime. This includes the dissention within the clergy, the potential for US-Iran relations², the assessment of the 2009 presidential election and, finally, the question of post-election uprisings that prompted the Ahmadinejad government to react so swiftly in a political coup d'état, which in turn has blemished, in a major way, the sanctity of the ballot box and the race that belonged to the handpicked candidates of the regime itself. Yet it would be a mistake to focus exclusively on the intra-regime contradictions at the expense of the more encompassing issues that have long overwhelmed the totality of the regime and quashed the very foundation of the Islamic Republic. Hence, we need to be cognizant of what can be described as the mutual

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reinforcement of the two intertwined concentric circles that linked the inter- and intra-regime's contradictions, and that brought into the open the irreconcilable differences of the coup-mongers and the rest of the regime. All this can be systematically explicable when put in the context of deliberate sociopolitical transmutation of the regime toward totalitarian para-militarization—a qualitative change that has surfaced with rapid pace with the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad.

The ground-shifting events of the post-election period are perceptibly in flux, as the scores of political opinions and positions are still being formed as time passes by.³ In the meantime, in this confusing arena, neither the left nor the right appears to have a monopoly on mischaracterization, bogus interpretation or plain misreading of these lively, concrete, and momentary happenings before us. For instance, the 'traditional radical left' has now become further divided into the supporters of Ahmadinejad and those who stand firm against the entire regime of the Islamic Republic and, by implication, against the widespread post-election crackdowns by the Ahmadinejad government. Yet, the latter is divided by many thorny issues surrounding the question: Who's the opposition in the post-election period and—from a socialist point of view—what is the proper response to the imminent crisis of the Islamic Republic? At the same time, there is an overlapping and convoluted spectrum of liberals, monarchists, Monarcho-Zionists, and the neoconservatives who demand nothing short of a regime change in Tehran and thus spare no opportunity to bolster Israel's position vis-à-vis the Obama administration in respect to the reversal of the Bush-Cheney policy of intervention in Iran.⁴ In what follows, the attempt shall be made to introduce and elucidate the epochal context to which Iran the United States genuinely belong. This is absolutely necessary for two reasons: (1) the identity of each epoch reveals the tendencies of social and material forces that are unique to that historical time period and (2) these forces tend to act as an arbiter of time that set the limit on the dynamics of economy, polity, and power relations in that epoch. In the section that follows, the hint of “disjointed time” will provide an analytical framework for historical comparison of the two separate phases of capitalism, namely, the age of imperialism (aided by the crutch of colonialism, and “raw” and *unmediated* geography) and the epoch of post-Pax Americana/post-hegemonic America, stepping into of the globalization era. Here, the Iranian Revolution—part anachronistic and part contemporary—is rather disjointedly sandwiched between these two epochs. This section also presents a critique of Lenin's imperialism (and, its corollary, anti-imperialism) in the light of its genuine epochal import as well as its deceptive overgeneralization that erroneously identifies the remaining shelf-life of capitalism by many self-proclaimed Marxists. Here, I intend to show that, from the standpoint of Marx's method, the majority of the radical left across the globe has made a caricature both of Marxism and of epoch-bound conception of Lenin's imperialism, and thus improperly confused the latter with the contemporary counter-epochal conducts of the US government. I engage in this discussion here not merely for the sake of theory and intellectual conversation, but for the purpose of immediate political commitments that are bound up with the struggles of tens of millions of masses in Iran and hundreds of millions of their counterpart elsewhere around the globe.

In subsequent section on Iran's paramilitary transmutation and the consequential question of coup d'état or “velvet revolution, the focus shall be placed on the concrete historical facts that had caused the revolutionary rupture and brought about the subsequent counter-revolutionary course of action that eventually come to pass as the “Islamic Revolution,” and the so-called Islamic Republic, in Iran. Here, by probing the origin of the *velāyat-e faghih* (“the governance of *faghih*”)—a newly-found polity in contemporary Iran—the attempt shall be made to lay bare the substance of Ali Khamenie's post-election speech made in the aftermath of the uprising. I

contend that this prepared speech, which categorically dismissed the uprising as the “act of Western powers,” was a preamble to a premeditated plan that is now transparently identified as an inside political coup d'état by the Ahmadinejad-Khamenie paramilitary faction within the regime itself.⁵ I contend that—with the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad—the road to paramilitarization of polity had already paved with severe unintended consequences for the clerical establishment itself, and that the post-election coup d'état was simply the mopping-up operation for its official inauguration. Finally, the pertinence of the previous section shall become clear where the epochal fortitude of the present does not turn out to be on the side of the radical left, in general, and self-proclaimed Marxists, in particular, for their antiquated adoption of “imperialism.” Yet, many of these revolutionary leftists rather instinctively made the right decision and supported the uprising, despite their conceptual endorsement of “imperialism.” This is a not-so-gentle reminder of objective reality and the negation by larger than life forces that, inter alia, fly in the face of modernists and post-modernists alike. The progressive left though thankfully listened to its living heart rather than its comatose and antiquated imperialist theory. This is the remarkable revenge of the concrete against ad hoc and idealist applications. In contrast, an unscrupulous group of pseudo-leftists (including a mix of knee-jerk Western liberals/radicals) bashed the uprising as the “stooge of the West” and went ahead to support the Ahmadinejad-Khamenie’s wholesale para-militarization of the economy, polity, and the social space in Iran. “The leopard cannot change his spots.” This is absolutely unpardonable and, alas, it was not their first time either.⁶

The US, Iran and the Disjointed Time

Preamble

Exactly 30 years ago, the “Iranian Revolution,” like an accident that had been waiting to happen, engulfed the Iranian masses. Yet, the occurrence of this sea change in the 1970s was remarkably coincided with a more widespread epochal reversal that closed the Pax Americana and inaugurated the commencement of a new epoch. In Iran, nearly two years of gradual disorder, civil disobedience, and decisive street demonstrations had ultimately led to the February 1979 insurrection. The insurrection that led to a regime change was the cumulative result of a decade-long armed struggle, economic polarization due to the sudden oil windfall, and the naked political authoritarianism of the Shah’s regime.⁷ The regime itself was less than kind to itself; its self-mutilation turned to suicide when the Shah opted for an all-encompassing police state under one-party, namely, the ubiquitous political/ideological party of SAVAK—the Shah’s notorious secret police. The Rastākhiz, a single acquiescing political party, under Prime Minister Hoveida, was merely a deceitful façade.

In the same year, the Nicaraguan Revolution reinforced the idea that something profound must be under way—something beyond the political geography and specific history of one region alone. Yet, neither the fate of the Nicaraguan Revolution nor its tragic consequence in the hands of Reagan contras is directly pertinent to the subject here. Likewise, it would be beside the point here to revisit Ayatollah Khomeini’s triumphant free ride on the insurrectionary waves of Iranian masses that led to the Machiavellian inauguration of his own vision of “revolution”—a counter-revolution that surgically implanted the seventh-century Islam onto the twentieth-century authoritarian (and ideological) state with advanced technology, capitalist institutions, and steady flow of oil rent from the globalized oil market. At this intriguing crossroads, the pertinent question is this: while something is happening to the parts, what is taking place to the whole in an epochal reversal of fortunes? And if the whole is the political order of the Pax Americana,

what should have been expected after the collapse of its infrastructure, namely, its economy and polity, and all the rest. And if this international system had been all the while at the mercy of epochal forces (i.e., of globalization), then what would remain of the institutions of US hegemony in the subsequent epoch of the post-Pax Americana. One may remember in the wake of Iran's 1979 insurrection that US officials in the Carter administration were busy debating whether they lost Iran. Well—such a myopic concern is an indication of the fact that none of these policy makers had a faintest idea as to what happened to America, let alone realizing what happened to the entire world under the Pax Americana, during the compressed span of the 1970s.⁸ This, of course, has a significant implication for the relevance of both liberal (nation-centered) and radical (the Leninist variety) theories of the international relations in respect to the new epoch, and correspondingly the epoch-driven conduct and behavior of the US state, and the Iranian state under the Islamic Republic.

Imperialism, hegemony, the Pax Americana, and the epoch of globalization are all historical concepts in need of validation by the concrete and specific period of living history; hence, each of these concepts is historically constrained (or, conversely, inspired) by the concrete reality itself. Imperialism (particularly in its Leninist connotation) is not a timeless and unspecific (or malleable) concept that can be arbitrarily generalized for the latter stages of capitalism.⁹ And it is not about the “highest stage” of capitalism, as alleged rather dogmatically by many on the left. Imperialism—as a system, as opposed to a policy (thanks to Lenin)—essentially belongs to a historical period in which the world is divided among the imperial powers, and via their national syndicates, consortia, or monopolies, they extend their contentious imperial interests. This particular period had already prompted its contradictory effects in terms of the transnationalization of social circuit capital in all three forms, namely, commodity capital, finance capital, and productive capital.¹⁰ Hence, even accidental emphasis on the *sui generis* export of capital would take us back to the period in which the scope of capital, as a social relation, was merely limited to the national boundaries. Hence, speaking of “export” of capital should have made sense in the period of imperialism, as acknowledged by Lenin and others. In contrast, today the transnationalization of social circuit of capital is an accomplished fact, and therefore it would be ludicrous to speak of “export of capital” in the middle of the transnational epoch of globalization. To be sure, era of globalization of capital has neither a historical nor a theoretical room for “Americanization,” American hegemony or “imperialism,” as had been (methodologically) intended by Lenin and/or Bukharin.¹¹

Rereading Lenin's Imperialism

The remarkable kernel of Leninist epoch of finance in *Imperialism: a Popular Outline* is an outright and widespread colonialism and division among the “great powers.” This was in tandem with outright and widespread cartelization and monopoly that, while spreading across national boundaries, were nevertheless attached to their colonizing nation-states and their foreign policy.¹² This is in stark contrast with today's global capitalism in which capital has already been transnationalized beyond monopoly, cartel-like composition, and the assorted direct (i.e., unmediated) administrative frameworks. This, for instance, can be seen from the collapse of the most notorious cartel in history, namely, the International Petroleum Cartel, just before the globalization of oil industry in the early 1970s. In the epoch of finance, which is outlined by Lenin, the reliance on colonization shows the lack of application for the *law of value* in significant parts of the globe.¹³ This meant that capital as a social relation has yet to be globalized in order for the law of value (and competitive pricing of commodities) to take hold universality across the globe. And such an epochal departure is also commensurate with the

worldwide class polarization and the transnationalization of labor-power across the global landscape. Therefore, those self-proclaimed Marxist scholars who draw a parallel between Lenin's epoch of finance and the current financial crisis cannot be more wrong.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Lenin's own interpretation as well as germane passages from bourgeois economists of his time in his *opus* often tended to idealize the period of 1820s through 1860s in England as "free competition." This is contrary to Marx's competition, which—far from fully-blossomed idealized "free competition"—is indeed budding and weak at this early stage of capitalism. In other words, according to Marx, real competition in capitalism has a warlike quality that strengthens with further concentration and centralization of capital, as capitalism develops into its full-blown maturity. And, despite brilliant depiction of imperialism—a merely transitory stage in the prehistory of global capitalism—Lenin's tour de force takes an egregious departure from Marx's conception of competition, a synthesized manifestation of concentration and centralization of capital associated with value formation in capitalism. Moreover, capitalist competition—as permanent war of capital upon capital—gains further intensity, beyond the imperialist stage and throughout the entire capitalist mode of production. Now, does this mean that the post-imperialist world will be free of war among the contending powers in the newly emerged polity? By no means—this only reveals that the potential driving force and underlying antagonism behind the incessant diffusion of power, changes in power structure, and the intensified conflict are being internalized deep within the polity, which ipso facto points to the futility of naked conquest in this era. This is not unlike the motions of large and seemingly autonomous heavenly bodies, in quantum cosmology, that are in effect subject to all possible quantum changes in the entire universe—and only the Newtonians (if there're any!) point to the perceptible but deceiving local forces as the cause. Therefore, speaking of imperialism as an inanimate object—i.e., in terms of the face-value of emasculated past social relations—and transporting it through the channel of time into the present epoch (i.e., the era of competitive transnationalization)—is not short of (imperial) *fetishism*.¹⁵

Here we have to be reminded of Marx's own expression, "the conquest of the mode of production," a universal and omnipotent goal of capitalism. And, concurring with Marx's theoretical insights and track record, I submit that the *raison d'être* of capitalism is not a matter of means but the question of ends, as the former are always attainable by capital's own transformation.¹⁶ That is why the overcoming of (external) barriers to capital accumulation has always been pursued with transformation of "means," such as the ability to do away with outright colonialism. Therefore, this objective should take precedence over direct territorial (i.e., colonial) conquest—just like capitalism took precedence over the resurgence of antiquated slavery in the American South—and "direct access" to raw materials, etc., if capitalism, as a modern social relation, were to grow out of its colonial infancy. This of course is an elementary point that has been proven sufficiently by concrete history.¹⁷

Moreover, the tendency for "inter-imperialist rivalry," which was played as the focal point of contention in imperialism, and debated so vigorously between Lenin and Kautsky, encountered its counter-tendency through the steady global interdependence, owing to intense and irreversible transnationalization of capital. In other words, "bloc formation" itself is a historical form that, as a rule, is ultimately dependent upon the forces of capitalist competition. As for the colonial powers, this boils down to epochal validation versus epochal invalidation, and it tends to be much messier. It cuts both ways: epochal change does not have a magic wand to prevent great powers of the bygone epoch to hold their fire and give up their annulled colonial seat peacefully; yet, if history is of any consolation, the arbiter of time (through their own

internal dissolution) will eventually take them down with unquestionable objectivity and unwavering vengeance. At the same time, the frequent shifts in power will undoubtedly lead to the renewal of systemic conflict in the newly formed global polity, which may intermittently intermingle with nasty and impromptu political contingences of the moment.¹⁸

Finally, in passing, the fact that Lenin alluded to “rent” rather causally (just like the typical bourgeois economists of today)—without invoking, for instance, the underlying institutions of the “landed property” that give rise to capitalist rent—should provide a hint of alarm for those who find themselves unable to reconcile Marx’s theory of competition with that of Lenin’s monopoly, short of succumbing to the bourgeois theory of “imperfect competition.”¹⁹ To be sure, Marx was cognizant of the notion of rent in capitalist mode of production as early as 1847 when he remarked: “Rent, instead of *binding man to nature*, has merely bound the exploitation of land to competition.”²⁰

The Left’s Imperial Fetish and Caricature Marxism

Paul Sweezy, an eminent twentieth-century political economist, also had been entrapped in the same methodological conundrum by relying on the fiction of bourgeois competition, as a point of departure, long before the publication of his *Monopoly Capital* (with Paul Baran) in 1966.²¹ And this methodological blunder inter alia is seemingly a starting point of the faulty political positions articulated by the post-Sweezy editorial board of the *Monthly Review*. The lack of distinction between bourgeois monopoly and real (capitalist) completion, on the one hand, and the imperial fetish and globalization of capital, on the other, compelled this otherwise incomparable journal to stumble badly on the cause of the US invasion of Iraq and the issue of oil, and caused the editors to veer off rather embarrassingly to the right by adopting a reactionary position on the so-called anti-imperialist nature of the regime in Iran. Similarly, the apparent hang-up on the question of territory-in-itself and extrinsic geography has compelled the backward-looking prognosticators of (colonial) imperialism to time-travel from the present to the era of Lenin’s finance and to habitually claim that nothing of epochal nature has ever transpired in today’s global capitalism.²²

In other words, the-epoch-of-finance crowd is not persuaded that we need to go back to the future, where the globalization of capital has made the territory-grabbing enterprise not only obsolete, but, even if achievable, economically costly, politically damaging, and simply silly and unnecessary from the standpoint of the globalization of capital. The absence of holistic materialist methodology and the reliance on partial view of the world prevented the majority of the left, across the board, to appreciate that today geography (and territory) is not a stand-alone physical entity anymore; it is rather organically and inseparably embedded within the structure of social relations of global capital. The traces of similar misplaced fascination with the past are also evident in Giovanni Arrighi’s writings and David Harvey’s recent works, where they routinely speak of the “logic of territory” and the “logic of capital,” and thus rather anachronistically bring the old stories of “new imperialism,” hegemony, and “direct access” back in.²³ Others who are seemingly aware of this awkward and unmethodical dichotomy nevertheless tend to fall back on the notion of “geography” as an intrinsic (and physical) entity, and thus unsurprisingly find some sort of unmediated “space” for nation-states to engage in territorial competition (and confrontation), despite the valorization of geography and mediation of social relations across the global economy and polity. Therefore, tautological propositions, as in Michael Klare’s *Blood and Oil* (2004) or *Resource Wars* (2001), tend to resonate with many even in the heterodox international relations. In other words, leaving the notion of territory and

unmediated “natural” resources unresolved, these eclectic scholars do not let go of “crude geography,” despite their view on the primacy of social relations.²⁴ Consequently, this rather half-hearted, yet popular, approach to the international relations would scarcely allow for categorical distinction between the identity of new (epochal) order and transitory nature of disorder stemming from collapse of the Pax Americana, the loss of American hegemony, and consequently confused and confusing present-day posture of the United States. And this is precisely the master-key to deciphering of orthodoxy and cracking of the puzzle of conceptual resemblance of the left and the right where it comes to identity of the present.²⁵

The word “hegemony” is nowadays thrown out in discussions with such casual frequencies that the tautological reasoning made by the sponsors is often lost in the shuffle.²⁶ Some on the left (and the right) use the term interchangeably with “domination,” perhaps for its exotic and aesthetic appeal. Others utilize it as a state of affair that would present itself trans-historically, including the amalgam of assorted social phenomena, regardless of size, characteristic, evolutionary history or the presence and/or absence of mediating (internal) structure. For instance, the plantation economy of American South (an example of unmediated exploitation and direct coercion) becomes erroneously hegemonic in the parlance of the left, and even the conversation among self-proclaimed Marxists. Yet, hegemony is a historically specific concept relevant to an entity that thrives on the internalization of contradictions and their resolution through the mediation of internal structure. For instance, a feudal mode of production cannot be identified as hegemonic, due to the absence of an all-encompassing internalizing mechanism, and thus its quintessential reliance on solutions from without, such as systematic, explicit, and unmediated application of war.

Colonial capitalism, on the other hand, was a mixed-bag, having to do with its paradoxical transitory configuration. Capitalism proper is the only mode of production that is potentially (and specifically) hegemonic, which by means of proliferation of the law of value arrives at actual hegemony. However, before arriving at such maturity—which parallels with Marx’s (complete) victory of the mode of production—capitalism relies on hegemonic crutches (e.g., the Pax Americana), before it attains its all-encompassing global limit. Therefore, any deduction based on a subset of capital (e.g., finance capital) as a surrogate for the hegemony of capital as a whole (i.e., a social relation) is not only methodologically invalid but also generating confusion in practice.²⁷ This is also applicable to those radical scholars who are somewhat convinced but—not unlike the departing sweethearts—cannot let go of lingering view of hegemony, particularly for the United States. These scholars, while accepting that there is not an iota of economic and political hegemony on the part of the United States, they nevertheless turn around and insist on the so-called US military hegemony. This fragmented view betrays the fact that hegemony—essentially an organic proposition—cannot be divided into its detached aspects, such as economic, political or military. Furthermore, these scholars do not realize that alluding to such possibility is a cardinal sin, known as the fallacy of composition. Besides, the phrase “military hegemony” is itself an oxymoron and a contradiction in terms.²⁸

As I have stated elsewhere, in my view, hegemony in its original and proper connotation should exhibit five interwoven characteristics. Hegemony is: (1) the feature of the whole, not the attribute of the part; (2) mutually consensual among the constituents; (3) internally driven, not externally imposed; (4) historically unique and specific; (5) mediating through the epoch-driven, accommodating institutions. This is what both Arrighi and Harvey, among others, have failed to acknowledge and thus, perhaps inadvertently, fanned the flame of confusion unnecessary

squabbling further with their recent work, particularly on the assessment of the Pax Americana, “the new imperialism,” and the question of today’s world order.²⁹

The transnationalization of capital is not the same as the territorial division among the “great powers,” and has much less to do with the division of the world among cartels, which operated hand in glove with their own constituent imperial governments. The very existence of cartelized institutions is an indication of the fact that the “external barriers” to deepening and widening of social relations of capital had not been hitherto overcome, and that the “mode of production” has yet to be conquered across the entire globe.³⁰ Therefore, these contingencies acted as crutches that, as Marx projected, prepared capital to acquire strength in order to be able to stand on its own feet. And once they served their purpose, these institutions—much like the crutch—had been thrown out, before capital walked upright and unrestrained beyond the vanishing colonial territory and cartel. This is the very meaning of transnationalization beyond the border of the nation-state, which also implies worldwide polarization of wealth and capital, in tandem with class polarization across the globe. If Lenin’s epoch of finance (i.e., imperialism) was about the (ad hoc) division of colonies among the “great powers” that inter alia led to the likelihood of war, the asymmetric polarization and continual shifting of global distribution power in the epoch of capital’s transnationalization are its counterpart that generate new contradictions and conflicts systematically and from within. Consequently, the present epoch should no longer be bound by the necessity of physical access to raw materials or the external exercise of colonial conquest for the sake of territory. Hence, to depict the contemporary epoch in the same vein as Lenin’s and to submit to unwarranted generalization of Lenin’s time-bound *Imperialism* is necessarily faulty on both methodological and political counts.

The ad hoc act of inter-imperialist rivalry and inorganic, if not completely externalized, division of the world between “core” and “periphery,” which had been truly manifested the social relations in the colonial and semi-colonial world, and which had lingered on, albeit with dilapidated punch, in the post-World War II transition via the *Pax Americana* (1945-1979), has now obtained its transformation into the epoch of global capital. And to say that this analysis is contrary to old Dependency School and World System Theory is an understatement. The socioeconomic/sociopolitical crisis, which led the internal disintegration of the Pax Americana in the 1970s, had its origin in the quest to overcome the external barriers, to transnationalize the capitalist social relations, and to internalize the essential contradictions under one roof. This crisis was an epochal crisis that via its chaotic shake-up inevitably dethroned the United States from the seat of global hegemony.³¹ This was precisely the last external barrier left from the previous epoch that had to be overcome.

This point has three crucial implications: (1) that hegemony is the time-bound feature of a system by virtue of which a particular constituent may turn into a hegemon, (2) that the blanket ascription of hegemony to every historical period and/or socioeconomic system, as Arrighi appears to have done, renders the concept meaningless, and (3) that the US urgency for unilateralism, intervention, territorial conquest, and fruitless warfare since the 1970s is essentially the consequence of America’s (hegemony-seeking) reaction to its lost hegemony. The last point is a testimony to the adoption of a backward-looking foreign policy by the post-hegemonic US state. Moreover, such a foreign policy had already retreated to the pre-Pax Americana world, and for all intents and purposes is openly replicating the colonial policies of the British Empire at the end of its free-fall. However, from the standpoint of contemporary epochal context, such aberrations on the part of the hegemony-seeking rebellious state should not sidetrack and hoodwink us toward misidentification of our epoch as “imperialism.”³²

Finally, the upshot of all this is that the caricature of Marxism has no single discernible form for all times; it operates in concealment in step with complexities of each epoch. In Lenin's era, caricature Marxism was unveiled as social harmony, social chauvinism, economism, and "ultra-imperialism"; in our own epoch, it must be identified as imperial fetish, "Third-Worldism," monopoly capital, and allusion of "Americanization." I have identified some of these characteristics under the rubric of *traditional* left in my previous writings. This is critical where it comes particularly to diagnosis of the state and society in Iran in terms of their epochal belongingness beyond the antiquated notion of "imperialism," which was embedded in the budding internationalization of finance and cartelization of the world economy of the yesteryear. The lack of insight on the part of traditional left (i.e., the Monopoly Capitalist School, the Dependency School, the World System Theory, and the Stalinist, Maoist and the assorted Trotskyite ideological views) prevented it from looking beyond the threshold of "imperialism"—a limit that was set by cartelization of the world economy and unmediated division of the colonial world in which a colossal chunk of humanity has yet to be brought under capitalism. The left tends to look at any contemporary invasion or conquest with intent to dress it up as an anachronistic theory suitable for an entirely different era. Anachronism then turns to preoccupation with polemic against universalization of the social relation of capital, namely, globalization, and to its mischaracterization and misplaced reduction to neo-liberal policies of the moment. The radical left fails to notice that the present world had already entered the era of globalization, defined by universal application of the law of value in contradistinction with neo-liberalism, which is just a policy. On the issue of hegemony (and power), it is also a pity that after all these empirical verifications in terms of current US strategic failures—in Iraq, Afghanistan and, soon to be, in Pakistan—traditional left has remained clueless.³³

Tautology of Imperialism and Anti-imperialism

As has been established above, the era of Lenin's imperialism has long been over. Yet, in the intervening time between the collapse of the Pax Americana and the de facto recognition and thus establishment of a new global polity the world is condemned to a puzzling interval of disorder. That is why the US government acts rather anachronistically in an imperialist fashion. However, behaving in an archaic manner is not a sign of triumph but a quintessential symptom of defeat and desperation. By looking carefully at the US demise and dilemma in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and several other sore spots in the world, a keen observer and a dialectician should quickly realize that the US posture is not worthy of Lenin's crowning designation as imperialism. As Shakespeare's Hamlet said it in a remarkably similar situation, "the time is out of joint." And in the epochal context of capitalist globalization there's no imperialism in an accurate sense but in a transitory wreck of ill-timed quandary, waiting to be swallowed by historical time. By the same token, there is also no anti-imperialist worthy of the name that would properly belong to the present epoch of history.

At this juncture, the reader should be reminded that the role of state in the reproduction and distribution of capital is of crucial importance. Yet, the character of state itself is expressly identifiable through the attributes of the epoch in which it is a part and parcel. One has to note that no one here argues against the relative autonomy of the state from the structure of capital accumulation and class polarization. Yet, we need to recognize that as soon as the distinctive features of these foundations will give rise to epochal change, the quality and composition of state would change as well. This can be exemplified, for instance, by the fact that as soon as the International Petroleum Cartel (1928-1972) collapsed (just before the oil crisis in the early

1970s), despite all diplomatic acrobatics, the cartel-dominated US foreign policy was also thrown out the window.³⁴ Today, such anachronistic vestiges are the ghosts that are at best wondering in the shadows of history. They are very real but they are also unauthentic. Yet, the leftists (and sadly many self-proclaimed Marxists), mesmerized by their memory, are still hesitant to open their arms to the refreshing realization and in celebration of Marx's *Capital*, in respect to capitalist competition in the present epoch of globalized capital.

The liberal/radical left falsely believes that globalization is not more than a neo-liberal policy and thus it should spell: Americanization³⁵; these leftists are awestruck by the idealized competition (and idealized monopoly) espoused by rightwing neoclassical economists. They are oblivious to the fact that Marx's theory of competition is compatible with the heightened concentration and centralization of capital and the resultant turbulence in today's world. That is why the left in general (and radical left in particular) is spellbound by corpses of Lenin's cartels in *Imperialism*, and pitifully searching for ghostly resurrections of the imperialist past. This of course is not a matter of academic dispute anymore among a select number of elite intellectuals. The context is much wider and the political implication is much deeper in the reality of everyday life. For instance, to identify the regime of the Islamic Republic as anti-imperialist is an affront to the cause of tens of millions of people, including the working class, in Iran. This is a matter of life and death, and indeed a down-to-earth question that simply reveals why the radical left, particularly in Western countries, is rather brashly but consistently of the opinion that Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—a bona fide ultra-rightwing reactionary—is an “anti-imperialist.”³⁶

The post-hegemonic America has since the 1980s been in the state of suspended animation with two mutually exclusive historical choices on the proverbial table: (1) either riding gently on the train of time forward, recognizing the future course of defused and shifting power structure in the emerging global polity and consequently submitting to a multilateral and an amalgamated leadership; or (2) running nostalgically and furiously backward through the rear cars of proverbial train of history in search of the “second coming” of hegemonic America. The latter choice, which is dreadfully a reminder of earlier “manifest destiny” in America, has a schizophrenic property that tends to extract the United States from the historical time and from the proverbial train. For instance, the US foreign policy makers often use the word “partner” (an Orwellian allusion to claimed US leadership and predictable subordination on the part of all other nations) to insure the public that America is in charge; yet it does not occur to them that the old song and dance have already lost their shelf value in this romantic and imaginary time travel. A close look, for instance, at the US-installed “partners” in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the newly procured “partners” in Pakistan³⁷, Georgia or Eastern Europe are clearly a demonstration of the fact that indeed the US interests have no commonality with the global interests.³⁸ Moreover, all these anachronistic (imperialist) performances are predictably doomed to failure at inception and on the drawing board prior to being expressed in action on the ground. Yet, it is astonishing to note that there is a certain strand on the left that nevertheless mimics the orthodox international relations theory and unambiguously (and sadly) misidentifies the US interests with epochal interests of the global community.³⁹

Finally, the United States is neither an empire nor a hegemon today; it is rather a discontented chunk from the now defunct Pax Americana. Consequently, the current doctrine of US foreign policy has a negligible bearing on the facts on the ground, which more often than not remains antithetical to the objectives of the emerging global order.⁴⁰ In addition to the traditional left, this criticism is also germane to the so-called postmodernist left—notably the authors of *Empire*⁴¹—and to the “cognitive capitalists” and “cognitive capitalism” buffs, who claim that

one can produce surplus value without the purposeful mediation of omnipresent capitalist structure and institutions, even when one is unconsciously asleep.⁴²

The above analysis gives us a broad understanding of how to frame concrete historical occurrences and their unfolding political effects that are uniquely interwoven with the contemporary world. Here, mechanical generalization (and indeed overgeneralization) of the concept of imperialism creates illusion that the age of colonial (and neo-colonial) imperialism is order of the day. The perplexing irony in all this is that such pronouncements are prevalent at the time when the “conquest of the mode of production” comes in full (global) circle in accordance with the theory of value articulated by Marx.⁴³ This false impression turns into surrealism when the unseated hegemon and the declining power—in this case, the United States—acts contrary to the underlying forces of globalization and thus stubbornly refuses to accept the epochal verdict of the post-hegemonic world. In this transitory period of confusion, all political tendencies, including the various factions of the bourgeoisie itself, are inclusively prone to criss-crossing along diverse loyalties. Furthermore, in this state of confusion, it is not at all surprising that also the archaic religious ideologies (i.e., Islamic, Christian, etc.) have become the subjects of rediscovery, dust-off, and resurgence since the 1970s, before being hastily reconstructed into the newly found “political alternatives.” Therefore, one should not be completely taken by surprised when a segment of the left keeps betraying the very basic tenets of progressive politics, let alone the Marxian principles. The above context is an attempt to establish why the Iranian pseudo-left turned all the way reactionary, consistent with the shocking and shameful record of its earlier celebration of and collaboration with the Islamic Republic in Iran back in the early 1980s. This should provide us enough food for thought as we turn to subsequent section.

Iran’s Paramilitary Transmutation: Coup d’état or ‘Velvet Revolution’?

The Origin and the Metamorphosis

A sudden reaction to the deliberate fabrication of election results by the Ahmadinejad government was the trigger that unleashed an uprising of unprecedented proportion since the 1979 insurrection that toppled the Shah’s regime; the February 1979 insurrection had led to a short-lived secular revolutionary period that was quickly overcome by an Islamic counterrevolution and that decidedly turned into the so-called Islamic Republic in Iran.⁴⁴ This occurred now, after exactly three decades of internal clampdowns and external isolation, amalgams of economic mismanagement, scores of political repression, rounds of class polarization, the challenge of regime’s illegitimacy exacerbated, and at this instant expressed rather antagonistically by intra-regime irreconcilable differences. The intra-regime discord, on the one hand, and government hostility against the cross-section of the population, particularly women, on the other, took on a new turn since the 2005 presidential election that put an obscure paramilitary man in the seat of the presidency of the Islamic Republic.

The televised pre-election debates respectively between Ahmadinejad, on the one hand, and Mousavi, Karrubi, on the other hand, will not allow much doubt concerning the winning and losing sides of this election. This sense of assurance is also being reinforced by the (documented) fact that Ahmadinejad utilized the entire state machinery to his own advantage and to disadvantage of the three remaining candidates. Therefore, Khamenie needed a miracle to put his favorite candidate in the office again. However, he had no stomach for a dime-and-nickel recount of responding to “voter fraud,” a process that almost certainly would have extended the election to the second run-off. Therefore, the alternative was to risk big and pretend as if the outcome of

the election has already been decided. The schizophrenia of power may create its own paranoia. Yet deep down, Khamenie and Ahmadinejad both knew that Mousavi's Green is not a kind of color revolution sponsored by the United States. As in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, "[f]alse face must hide what the false heart doth know."⁴⁵

Given the sequential events that lasted for several months now and still wreaking havoc the street of in Iran, Genie is already out of the bottle, with or without the Ahmadinejad-Khamenie coup d'état. The threshold of political charlatanism, empty rhetoric, and pathetic replication of early Islam has already been reached. History is now on a different trajectory, despite sheer force, massive incarceration, and systematic torture and rape of the political prisoners in Iran. The massive discontent over June 12, 2009 election, which led to mass protests, peaked nearly at three million in mid-June, bridging some 12 to 13 stretch of miles between South (poor: i.e. Darvāzeh Ghār) and North (affluent: i.e., Tajrish) Tehran in one sweeping whole. And to those, who advance a ludicrous argument to the effect that this was a "middle and/or upper class" revolt, the response is simply that even in New York City, Chicago or Los Angeles (i.e., in the heartland of advanced capitalism) one may hardly find three million middle and/or upper class residents—in revolt or in unruffled state of mind sitting in their front porch—let alone in Tehran. Similar demonstrations, both in tandem and tone, have also been organized in all major cities across the country, and there are still no let up. All this has been simply a response to the 30 years of accumulated tyranny, especially the last four years of rabblousing, bogus patriotism and economic mismanagement under Ahmadinejad's. And, in this episode of defiance, the remarkable participation (and sacrifice) by Iranian women (in full-length chador and/or in tiny scarf) is cause for celebration and thus must be acknowledged specifically.

The metamorphosis of the regime toward a paramilitary dictatorship is something that would conspicuously underlie the impetus for immediate mass mobilization in the aftermath of June 12, 2009 presidential election in the major cities in Iran. Alluding to the nascent militarization (and para-militarization) of society, if the July 18, 1999,⁴⁶ student rebellion were likened to a tremor of moderate jolt, the 2009 post-election uprising can be literally described as a quake of highest magnitude in 30years, which had devastated the foundation of the Islamic Republic—inside out and outside in. This is a typical story that in nearly all sociopolitical breakdowns in history the façade comes down last, and this would create an impression for a while as if the regime is ironclad.⁴⁷ On the reverse side of the coin, it is an irony how the sanguine viewers of Khatami's reforms failed to see the glimpse of the other half of the Islamic Republic that has long been creeping lockstep with the fate of the entire regime.

The tendency to wholesale militarization of society—from economy to polity and to the hard-to-reach corners of social space—is a model that can be seen only in settlers' regimes, such as the apartheid South Africa or today's Israel, in the contemporary world. Yet in Iran it turned out to be a home-grown phenomenon that stands on the shoulders of puritanical reconstruction of early Islam for baptism and absolute political dominance. In this manner, Ayatollah Khomeini's heretical invention of *hokoumat-e Eslāmi* ("the governance of *faghih*") should be critically scrutinized all the way back to its historical origin, i.e., a verdict by a semi-literate nineteenth-century clergy (a contemporary of Fath Ali Shah Qājār), identified as Mullā Ahmad Narāghi, known as *Fāzel Kāshāni*.⁴⁸ According to Mehdi Ha'eri Yazdi, a well-known Shiite theologian, the latter simply misconstrued *hokoumat* (which has linguistic roots in *hokm*, *hakam*, *hākem*) as ruling executively (i.e., governance) rather than ruling judicially (*ghezāvat*) and thus opened the Pandora's Box of further misinterpretations for power-hungry opportunists.⁴⁹ This heresy then

has been taken to its logical conclusion by Khomeini in his book *Hokoumat-e Eslāmi* (1971). In 1979 the entrée of this unbecoming and indeed silly interpretation found its concrete reception in the person of Ayatollah Khomeini, who—motivated by pure politics rather than religion—was vehemently crowned as the executive authority of *velāyat* or Supreme Leader with absolute and unlimited executive power. “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.”⁵⁰ This was then quickly and cleverly concretized in a deliberate and ingenious “referendum” that astoundingly and suddenly established an “Islamic Republic” in Iran.

This is simply a testimony to the dialectical inseparability of means and ends in this tragedy. And, as a prehistory of the Islamic Republic, this is very much responsible for the unleashing of a counter-revolution that swept through the Iranian society in pursuit of wholesale butchery of the revolutionaries of all stripes, in addition to mass execution of the functionaries of the ancien régime. Consequently, those who hang on to the motto of “*velāyat-e faghih*—no, Islamic Republic—yes” are either suffering from amnesia or rather contemplating an imaginary “Islamic Republic,” despite the Islamic Republic in Iran.⁵¹ As we are witnessing, the heretical curse of the *velāyat* (i.e., Khomeini’s last laugh), which has never completely left the Iranian polity and politics, now more than ever wreaking havoc with Iran’s post-election, both within the inner circles and in the divided society at large. That is why the regime’s internal ideological disputes have often been fuelled over this heretical axiom, before the underlying material contradictions toward totalitarianism and para-militarization come to the surface in the economy, polity, and the society at large in Iran. Yet, Khomeini was clever enough to realize that the “Revolutionary Guard” (RG) and its counterpart, the *Basij*, have no business meddling in the affairs of the state and thus must be kept at arm’s length from the executive, legislative, and judicial halls of power—even during the period in which the RG had substantial undertakings in prosecution war with Iraq; Khomeini was cognizant of dangers of para-militarization and very accurately anticipated that, despite its apparent allegiance, the RG could very well instigate the wholesale curtailment of the clerical establishment.

There are two determining forces that created an opportunity for the RG and its paramilitary wing to achieve a quantum leap, and thus let loose in the intertwined and all-encompassing affairs of the Iranian state and society. First, the 8-year war of attrition with Iraq inter alia advanced the internalization of paramilitary ideology into sizable substrata of *lumpen proletariat/lumpen petty-bourgeoisie* that were dependent on government handout and subject to the distribution of state rent. Second, and in tandem, the real or imaginary xenophobic stand-off of the regime, combined with the brunt of unmitigated US economic sanctions, paved the way for the RG (a readily organized force) and its affiliated organizations to take over the commerce and selected industries in Iran. The last point is crucially important in the debates on the economic and political isolation of Iran, which has remained the focal point of longstanding controversy over the intended consequences until today.

With the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad, the plan to control the economic sphere of influence by the RG has already been accomplished, yet a complete sway over the significant part of the polity has remained a work in progress. At the end of Ahmadinejad’s first term—just before the election—the task of inclusive political domination by the RG was still out of reach; this is just about the time when the televised debates with the opposing candidates convinced Ahmadinejad, Khamenie (his benefactor), and Mesbah Yazdi (his mentor) that in all probability there may not be any chance for them to win the second term.⁵² Therefore, Khamenie and Ahmadinejad opted for the unthinkable: conducting a preemptive intra-regime political coup d’état against the remaining founding fathers of the Islamic Republic. This was a desperate step,

as “zeal is fit only for wise men, but is found mostly in fools.” The coup d'état is essentially justified as an attempt to rationalize Khomeini's *velāyat* in its absolute and unadulterated connotation. This is an accurate portrayal of the governance practiced first-hand by Khomeini himself, while presiding over an Islamic Republic that was neither Islamic nor republic. The Islamic Republic is a farcical anachronism, yet it finds its precise match in an equally anachronism of its (US) counterpart in the present world of post-hegemonic America.

The 2009 Uprising: The Left, the Right, and the Scramble

The characterization of the right (or rightwing) and the progressive liberal in the Iranian politics is a painstaking task that carries with it a sense of umbrage and controversy in respect to sheer labeling. Here, my intention is not to offend but to elucidate. The political right on the Iranian scene is a scrambled stratum of varied ideological tendencies, extending from Tehran to Los Angeles. The Ahmadinejad-Khamenie coup d'état was an attempt by the ultra-right to remove the right from power in order to consolidate its power and itself into an unconstrained and naked paramilitary regime in the country. The contending forces in the persons of Mir Hussein Mousavi, Mehdi Karrubi, Mohammad Khatami and, certainly, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani are the contingent of status quo, despite their apparent setback that now has turned into an insecure stalemate. And if history is of any indication, these founding fathers will be the sole losers if they will not move quickly beyond the mutilated body of the Islamic Republic that has now been moved toward a wholesale para-militarization. And the qualifier beyond should suggest that the water has already been moved under the bridge for the Islamic Republic.

The so-called Green Movement is a spectrum of the very talented, vibrant, and self-disciplined participants in the uprising.⁵³ But their vibrancy will be short-lived if they would not deal, fairly and squarely, with the political genealogy of their leadership and its de facto involvement in many of the regime's deliberate genocidal policies in the past. And if they do not, their green will eventually turn to yellow.⁵⁴ There are also a number of Green-mongers (including the former members of the RG) in the Iranian diaspora that camouflage as “Green” and work toward the fortification of their imaginary Islamic Republic. Beyond the Green, there is a less conspicuous but serious movement within the flowering radicalized university students and the budding worker's political groups. The first group appears to have been the inheritor of the 1999 students uprising. This appears from their manner of engagement, style of active participation, and political maturity reflected in their slogans against the regime.⁵⁵ This and the active participation by the budding workers' groups jointly had set off a radical turn that has gone beyond Mousavi's and Karrubi's circumscribed campaign slogans in the post-election uprisings. And, as we all have witnessed in real-time accounts around the globe, the pictures speak volumes to that effect.

The reaction to the uprising by Monarcho-Zionist remnants of the ancient regime in diaspora (particularly in Los Angeles) was predictably jubilant as they have visibly kept their fingers crossed and prayed that their imaginary “velvet revolution” will come to fruition. As an observer, I was stunned by the audacity of this intervention-seeking bunch whose position and political intention were exactly similar to Ahmadinejad's pseudo-leftist supporters, but by diametrically opposite motivation. By contrast, the “constitutional” monarchist group (Hezb-e Mashrouteh) in Los Angeles attempted to convince its members that they should support the Green Movement and accept a solution within the context of the Islamic Republic.

The neoconservative Iranians, whose singular objective is to play the nuclear card and to facilitate a regime change with or without war in Iran, quickly jumped on the bandwagon of

Green bashing, in the immediate aftermath of the uprising. They also camouflaged beneath the concern for “human rights” to distract the public from their original mission; this group which has long been playing footsy with the Israel Lobby—the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC)—is a proxy that stands toe-to-toe with any individual or group that stops short of demanding a regime change in Iran.⁵⁶ However, given orientation toward AIPAC objectives, these warmongering Iranian neoconservatives are similarly against any independent soul who dares to stand up to the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and of course the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands.⁵⁷ This group is an amalgam of the numerous tendencies on the right, including many tattered, compromised and turncoats from Mojāhed-in-e Khalgh Organization (MKO).⁵⁸ Acknowledged for their “ultra-radical” criticism of the Green Movement from inception, the neoconservatives are likely to be mistaken as progressive liberals or even radical revolutionaries on television and through electronic media. They want to change Iran now—albeit from afar, from Washington and Tel Aviv.⁵⁹

The spontaneity of the post-election uprising has taken everyone by surprise. The Iranian leftists (with economistic tendencies) could not even imagine that will have to be witness to such gargantuan political demonstrations in just six or seven weeks since their tiny symbolic achievement on the May Day of 2009. The radical leftists with all kinds of symbolic agendas rendered speechless during the first few hours (or even days) of the uprising before they realized that their immediate agenda is already passé. The most militant elements of the left identified the regime rather habitually as “dependent capitalist” and had no particular prescription other than to fight against all factions of the regime, without any specific proposal that suits the concrete situation in the streets.⁶⁰ This is the same revolutionary left that also thought (and still thinking) that the cause of the 2003 US invasion of Iraq was the oil—a reasoning that exclusively rely on superficial reproduction of Lenin’s *Imperialism* and its alleged application to the decartelized and globalized oil of today. Finally, the self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninists, Marxist-Leninist-Maoists, and those of the Trotskyite variety all either dilly-dallied around the color of the uprising or, else, rather habitually changed the subject to cover the generalities and past historical clichés according to their elaborate political cookbooks. The point of departure for these revolutionary leftists is the outdated notion of imperialism. Therefore, any time they come to grips with the question of sporadic (and surreptitious) contacts between the emissaries of the Iranian regime and those of the United States, many of them, just like their counterparts in the monarchist and gossip-mongering circles in Los Angeles, conclude that the regime must be “dependent” or “servant” or “co-conspirator” (“*vābasteh*” or “*nowkar*” or “*hamdast*”) of imperialism. It doesn’t occur to these self-proclaimed Marxists that these “contacts” are no more than incidents that have no meaning whatsoever without independent theoretical foundation. Nevertheless, in order to justify this, the left offers no recourse other than to fall back on an antiquated theory of imperialism. And this is simply an act of circular reasoning unworthy of serious consideration. Yet, to their credit, all these progressive leftists have been adamantly against the government crackdowns and thus stood up with the post-election mass uprising all the way. These leftists, however, followed their instincts rather than their “theory of imperialism.” Moreover, these progressive forces on the left were not fooled by either Ahmadinejad’s or Khamenie’s gimmicks in respect to the ploy of velvet revolution. This cruel irony, however, has befallen upon the pseudo-leftist reactionaries whose members consistently sided with the Butcher of Tehran in the June 2009 uprising as in the aftermath of the February 1979 insurrection.

As has been indicated above, a segment of traditional left believes that Ahmadinejad is an anti-imperialist. Paradoxically, the theoretical difference between the reactionary left and its progressive (and radical) counterpart in respect to Iran's 2009 post-election uprising is nil. Yet, the former acted remarkably consistent in respect to theory and practice and the latter (thankfully) did not.⁶¹ In other words, both sections of the left are relying on the same theory of imperialism, yet the one that managed to ignore it in concrete practice turned out to be on the right (as opposed to wrong) side of history. This, of course, is a tangible demonstration of the fact that the correct practice can sometimes be a potential guide for a critical appraisal of an incorrect theory. The position of the pro-Ahmadinejad left is politically the most contemptible. But it shares a good deal of theoretical orthodoxy with the rest of the Iranian leftists, regardless of their manifold individual tendencies. And, in passing, contrary to the pseudo-leftist's bourgeois presumptions (and even some of the genuine radical left's deductions) neither the RG's nor the paramilitary *Basij*'s demographic backgrounds should be taken as evidence of identity with the working class in Iran. This undo reference to the downtrodden outlook of the lower rank Guardsmen or *Basijis* has no meaning whatsoever in the realm of class analysis within the Marxist methodological framework. These strata are but the transformed face of the state that stands in opposition to and in contradistinction with the working class and other progressive strata of the population. These functionaries must be considered the enemies of the working class in Iran. Thus, contrary to bourgeois liberal sentiments, it would be silly to identify the working class by referring to the scruffy faces, for instance, of Ahmadinejad's.

Alternatively, it would be methodologically fallacious (as orthodox sociologists do) to focus on Ahmadinejad's socioeconomic and demographical background as a single individual and then pin down a working-class label on him. No matter where he has come from, he is the de facto face of the state in the Islamic Republic, that is to say, a capitalist state with a paramilitary polity and the theocratic rule. Indeed, the working class in Iran has already been squeezed and marginalized both economically and politically under Ahmadinejad's leadership. To be sure, the Ahmadinejad government has engaged in more privatizations than those of its counterparts under Rafsanjani and Khatami combined.⁶² The recent privatization of telecommunication is the latest of such adventures that is attempting to hit two birds with one stone: it directly leads to private enrichments of the RG and, at the same time, it cleverly extends and intensifies the boundaries of internal control over the citizens' private communication and conversation. If one adds the diminution of subsidies throughout the economy as a whole, only a duped fool or a propagandist of this paramilitary regime would argue to the contrary on this very evident, uncomplicated, and empirical point. Here, attempt at changing the political conversation is no more than a smokescreen for the concealment of a tautology that is clumsily binding the attribute of "neo-liberalism" and the rhetoric of velvet revolution in a manufactured relationship. And it goes without saying that no self-respecting economist—who had written a Ph.D. dissertation worth the paper it was printed on—would ever touch this shenanigan with ten-foot pole. Consequently, any overture by the pseudo-left toward the Ahmadinejad government must be seen not only as obtuse but as a cardinal sin of unredeemable quality beyond usual remedies, such as "ideological struggle."⁶³

Finally, it is expected of human-rights activists (of liberal persuasion) to be keen on physical safety and the democratic rights of those who have participated in the uprising, and also to be on guard on the fate of those who were incarcerated and tortured by deliberate decisions of the highest ranking members of the Ahmadinejad government. After all, this is what turns a liberal to a progressive and valued member of the global community. Yet, certain activists, who

nevertheless hold sustained track records of activism in respect to the Ahmadinejad government, appear not to know who really is represented by his government, what this representation means in terms of the identity of class and strata in power and, in class terms, who are those goons who follow the order and carry out the beatings and torture in Iran. For instance, Ali Afshari, a concerned human-rights scholar, writes:

Millions of Iranians bursting upon the political scene have drastically altered the prevailing view of the class-culture divide in Iranian society [...]. The prevailing assumption is that on the one side stood the authentically Islamic Iran, encompassing the multitudes that habitually gather in the state-sponsored events [...]. It presents the 'real' face of Iran—the scruffiness of the lower classes combined with unsophisticated piety and Islamic political militancy. This austere image—so clumsily cultivated by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—is often contrasted with the 'other' Iran of upper-middle-class habits often on display in the economically better-off neighborhoods of northern Tehran.... The intersections of class and culture have created a bewildering picture [...] (840.)⁶⁴

Certainly “millions of Iranians” did burst “upon the political scene,” but they did so quite contrary to the so-called class-culture division alleged in the opening of the above passage—as such superficial reading is not particular to the cultural-happy post-modernists alone. The pseudo-leftist supporters of Ahmadinejad too advance similar claim that is analogous to “culture” and “class” connotation invoked by purported velvet revolution. Moreover, in this case, liberals and hardcore pseudo-leftists, despite their respective political differences, nevertheless offer identical analysis.⁶⁵ On the next page, Afshari pledges: “It can be shown that neither Ahmadinejad’s class-based political views nor his cultural grandstanding has been progressive, at least in terms of their predictable outcome” (p. 841). The first part of Afshari’s premise is remarkably similar to the portrayal, by a neoconservative reporter, of the US ultra-rightwing cultural conservatives as the so-called working class, thus similarly “playing on Karl Marx in its most farcical parody.”⁶⁶ He then brings in “young and better-informed Iranians,” who in his estimation are “more responsive to the economic interests of the middle and upper classes,” plus “the working class,” in order to show that Ahmadinejad’s “class-based” political view is not progressive. Afshari is apparently trying to prove that, contrary to the classes (identified by him); Ahmadinejad’s political views are not progressive. But then he is adamant that these political views are “[working] class-based,” thus he tragically entraps himself in a conundrum known as Russell’s Paradox.⁶⁷

Afshari continues to repeat the same round of faulty “logic” in his second premise, namely, “cultural grandstanding” by Ahmadinejad. And if this is not enough, he then shifts the dilemma hastily to deliver a potshot against Marx and victoriously concludes: “If the nineteenth-century Marx appears alien in such a cultural landscape, human rights scholars of our time are perceptively pertinent.” (p. 841).⁶⁸ There is no dispute whatsoever that the human rights is an issue of immediate concern that must be addressed as a priority in Iran and elsewhere in the world. And, for instance, in the view of what transpired in the Kahrizak⁶⁹ (a prisoners-of-war camp turned into a makeshift torture chamber during the uprisings), we need to be vigilant about the state-sponsored torture in Iran and elsewhere on the planet.⁷⁰ But, neither by means of misrepresentational intent nor through barking up the wrong tree, can one be helpful in critical dispersal of this magnificent cause.

Let us succinctly sum up the points that are presented in this section. The evolution of the Islamic Republic in Iran has gone through a tangled web of contradictions that ultimately ended up in what we observe today. The eight-year war with Iraq, the US economic sanctions, and the 2005 election of Ahmadinejad as the president of the Islamic Republic are all shunted the Iranian economy and polity toward the para-militarization of the regime. This is remarkably parallel with the outcome of the armistice agreement, in the aftermath of the World War I, at Versailles that decidedly put forth a destructive alternative through hefty and limitless reparation on defeated Germany, as John Maynard Keynes persuasively argues. And, as it turned out, this led the German nation into an isolated, inwardly, and xenophobic condition ready to be exploited and eventually gobbled up through the militaristic jaws of fascism. The following is a compelling passage based on firsthand observation by Lord Keynes:

The policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation, of degrading the lives of millions of human beings, and of depriving a whole nation of happiness should be abhorrent and detestable—abhorrent and detestable, even if it were possible, even if it enriched us, even if it did not sow the decay of the whole civilized life of Europe. Some preach it in the name of Justice. In the great events of man's history, in the unwinding of the complex fates of nations Justice is not so simple. And if it were, nations are not authorized, by religion or by natural morals, to visit on the children of their enemies the misdoings of parents or of rulers (225).⁷¹

The pre-election arrangements and the post-election political coup d'état against a significant number of founding fathers of the regime register the inevitability of this de facto alternative, which is now fanatically standing against the test of time. These founding fathers were subsequently blamed by the Ahmadinejad government (and its pseudo-leftist cronies) for conducting a velvet revolution in the aftermath of the presidential election in Iran. This accusation was concocted after the fact that the mass uprising could not be crushed out of existence, as has been incorrectly anticipated beforehand by the government.

At the same time, the uprising has been spontaneous, and continues to be without definite hands-on leadership. The essential slogans in the uprising either originated from Mousavi's camp or initiated by the more radical political tendencies or are spontaneously improvised on the street. The complexity of the uprising stems from the two intertwined strands of contradictions analogous to concentric circles: (1) the contradiction stemming from the intra-regime fallout; and (2) the overall contradiction of the regime and the masses across the class line. This, of course, requires a careful class analysis (plus, the cross-sectional analysis for examination of the lateral groups) in order to disentangle the roots of all contradictions and to identify the direction of change through the social identity of the masses involved. The absence of viable leadership and organization is among the peculiarities of the post-election uprising. One of the unanswered questions, however, is this: What would be the outcome of such spontaneous movements where the intra-regime's irreconcilable differences cannot be exploited to the fullest? While we all know only too well, from recent historical experiences, that even with solid leadership and sufficient organization, hopes for real change are often dashed by the very nature of unpredictable and unseen historical circumstances and contingencies. Yet, this movement has the momentum for now, but the government of the coup d'état has the gun, and if history is of

any consolation, the momentum and the fortitude may eventually take the upper hand; alas—only time will tell.

Concluding Remarks

This writing should be considered as a theoretical treatise that essentially speaks to the left, in general, and the Iranian left, in particular. Yet, it also should be considered as a political treatise with enough concrete historical, political, and social texture to be useful to all shades and colors of the political spectrum in Iran and elsewhere. The critical issues raised here are not academic anymore; they are truly a matter of life and death and, somewhere along the line, we need to learn how to come to grips with them courageously, critically, and without prejudice. This would provide us an opportunity to search for meaning beyond the mere façade of everyday politics and to uncover the deep epochal meanings that are lurking somewhere behind the economy, polity, and contours of international relations today. Here, as is exemplified in this essay, the framework for examining lively sociopolitical phenomena in the context of here-and-now has to take the power of induction seriously in order to avoid the pitfall of dogmatic deduction and embarrassment of petty-bourgeois conclusions as in the case of the left, in general, and certain strand of Iranian left, in particular.⁷² This is the predicament of the pseudo-leftists today, who could not help but to turn to the ultra-rightwing of the regime against the genuine, across-the-board revolutionary upsurge of the masses.⁷³ This should be a lesson that hopefully will take us to the drawing board once again in order to grapple with today's living and lively reality on the ground in Iran.⁷⁴

The 2009 post-election uprising in Iran has been a breath of fresh air both for the Iranians and also for the struggling masses around the world. This sudden uprising has reminded us that the lack of patience and the underestimation of intelligence and spontaneity of the masses are but diehard petty bourgeois habits, and that all political powers encounter their limits after the threshold had been crossed. The Islamic Republic has already encroached toward a transmuted paramilitary state through an all-encompassing crisis that revealed its tipping point in the unrelenting post-election uprisings that are not about to stop in Iran. The onset of paramilitarization exacerbated by two intertwined set of circumstances: (1) the long war of attrition with Iraq, which literally put the RG on the map and (2) the US economic sanctions that, while impeded the economy from adequate industrial development, created ample opportunities for an organized force, such as this, to be transformed into the mover and shaker of commercial and industrial projects in the domestic scene. The RG is now the hub of privatization—Ahmadinejad-style, which virtually made it the winner in the massive transfer of ownership across all economic sectors, from telecommunication to oil to military-industrial complex to banking in Iran. The cruel irony is that the US sanctions have also contributed profoundly to the impoverishment of the Iranian population across the board.

As for the near future, Iran is now at the point of no return—with or without Ahmadinejad. The dilemma of the Ahmadinejad-Khamenie state is no different than the predicament of its counterpart under the Shah. If the coup-mongers will take a step back and give in to the legitimate demands of the masses, they would not be able to stop the people from demanding more toward their rightful political and economic claims. However, if they will turn up the heat and continue to unleash their unseemly wrath against the masses, as they appear to have been doing, they would further undermine the regime and eventually break it to untold pieces. Consequently, this may be the Shah's last double-laugh—once at himself, once at the Islamic Republic. And this shows a remarkable similarity among all tragedies, new and old.⁷⁵

The Green Movement (under Mousavi) is limited in vision but seemingly limitless in vitality and animated spirit. However, it will sooner rather than later arrive at a historical fork on the road to change, and realize that neither of these branches would get it back to the Islamic Republic. For a keen observer and a dialectician the Islamic Republic project has come to its very last paragraph in its last chapter. But how long its sanitized corpse will be kept on the respirator is for the time to tell. And if the change is no more than the war of words, then why should one go to this literally bloody length to blame the coup-mongers in the first place. Thus, short of an imaginary political miracle, there is an urgent need for a metamorphosis within the Green's leadership. In the meantime, while the political stalemate is dangerously holding, the encroaching para-militarization of all aspects of life in the Islamic Republic is unremittingly under way.

As for the exiled and nostalgic opposition in the diaspora (i.e., Monarcho-Zionists, neoconservatives, etc.), their impact has no appreciable effect on the sociopolitical change in Iran. These archaic elements are similar to old and broken squeaky wheels that no one wants to hear and no one cares to repair is interested to hear or to repair. And if one will live to be able to inspect some of the designated major cemeteries in the Western world, perhaps in the three or four decades from now, one would find them at rest in their quite diaspora, identified with magnificent but heartbreaking inscriptions on their tombstones.

The leftists' predicament will be worse if they would not engage seriously in cleaning up the Aegean stables in their midst. They "must be cruel, only to be kind."⁷⁶ This house cleaning is of two kinds: (1) to sort out all pseudo-leftist reactionaries that are falsely identified under their name at the political as well as juristic level once and for all, and (2) to reenter the channel of time and duly return from the epoch of imperialism in the early twentieth century to the era of the transnationalization of capitalist social relations of today, as I have identified throughout this treatise. The second point is also pertinent to genuine socialist movements and the left all over the world, particularly in the Western countries. This is the second time that in my long career that I had to question the neglectful political position of radical left so vigorously and with much indignation. The first time was in the aftermath of the 1973-1974 oil crisis, which led to significant increase in the price of oil and which prompted the majority of the left to call OPEC anti-imperialist and to consider the Shah of Iran an "independent" and a "nationalist" leader—far from his pre-crisis endorsement as a stooge of US imperialism.⁷⁷

The question of oil, which consumed a big chunk of my adult life, has become the arbiter of theoretical and political precision and accuracy of the left for me ever since. Today, I feel a sense of *déjà vu* on the question of "imperialism" (and "anti-imperialism") in the view of larger than life realities that have emerged since the 1980s. Therefore, with the post-election uprising in Iran, the question of imperialism (and its critical appraisal) has been put on the front burner by epochal forces and realities of the twenty-first century once again. On the top of the globalization of oil, this (i.e., the epochal emergence of the post-hegemonic America) too exhibits an irrefutable paradigm shift of Kuhnian proportion, beyond routine regurgitation of past verdicts, which demands concrete analysis along with major theoretical acumen.⁷⁸ This is the moment of truth. The left (including self-proclaimed Marxists) appears to be theory-less and clueless again. However, the progressive (and revolutionary) leftists were lucky to have been rescued by their own gut feelings and instincts on the nature of this uprising at his time; there may not be another time without a critical grasp of a pertinent theory as an informed guide for action in complex, chaotic, and fast-changing world of today. The left should be prompt, since "shame fades in the morning, but debts remain from day to day."

Finally, to depict Ahmadinejad's portrait for Western, particularly American, audience, one may draw a parallel between him and Sarah Palin, the Republican Party's candidate for Vice President in the 2008 US presidential election. He is waiting for "Mahdi"—just like Palin who is waiting for "rapture" and "the second coming of Christ." Ahmadinejad has no clue nor has he a modicum of competence to handle the Iranian economy and foreign policy. He is not known for his neo liberalism, yet Iran's economy is now more neo-liberalized under him than ever been under Rafsanjani and Khatami combined, through massive and arbitrary transfer of public property to private hands of dummy corporations and pillage of the RG and their cohorts. In a nutshell, Ahmadinejad is a Sarah Palin without lipstick. And this, among others, should say something about those on the liberal/radical left (including self-proclaimed Marxists) in the West, who have outlandishly misidentified Ahmadinejad as an "anti-imperialist." I sincerely hope that this treatise shall be an eye-opener for those who are still debating over interpretation of the world, let alone how to change it.

Endnotes

¹ As Hegel once said, history repeats twice: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. As we have seen, a reactionary segment of radical left branded the uprising as velvet revolution and shamelessly mimicked Ahmadinejad-Khamene'i's rightwing paramilitary coup d'état that was in the cards right before the election. Even after Khamene'i's apologetic retraction concerning the "foreign hands" and "outside intervention," these left (-overs)—in coordination with the show trials in Tehran—organized a conference in New York in solidarity with the coup-mongers. The news of the conference, together with interviews, then broadcast through the state-owned television and other paramilitary outlets as a flattering political endorsement at the pleasure of ultra-rightists in Iran. See IRNA (Iran News Agency) 23/5/1388 (August 14, 2009): <http://www.irna.ir/View/FullStory/?NewsId=633725>.

² See the following Six-Part BBC Report on US-Iran's Most Recent History:

(1) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOKRbYjqg0&feature=related>;

(2) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDlkoLm-Zzc&feature=related>;

(3) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poV9yBEmmtA&feature=related>;

(4) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0lYSKvPhlo&feature=related>;

(5) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnHqNICR7Ms&feature=related>;

(6) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aif7kFl5ptc&feature=related>.

³ These are the words, accompanied by pictures, by *The Boston Globe*, June 12, 2009, concerning the Friday's entry about *Iran's Presidential Election*, Tehran and other cities have seen the largest street protests and rioting since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. See more of the

larger than life pictures for June 15, 2009 in the same daily: *Iran's Disputed Election*; http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/2009/06/irans_disputed_election.html. MORE LINKS AND INFORMATION: Khamenei Calls for Inquiry as Demonstrators Defy Ban - NYTimes.com 6/15 updates on Iran's disputed election - NYTimes.com Lede Blog, 6/15. Also, an underground left newspaper in Persian, *Khiābān* (“Street”), which—from the uprising till the time of this writing (late November, 2009)—has published 56 issues, all of which can be found at: <http://issuu.com/xyaban> and downloaded either at: <http://www.etehadesocialistha.com/> or <http://www.iran-archive.com/khiaban/khiaban.html>.

⁴ There is no shortage of reports and position papers on US-Iran relations by all sorts of think-tanks in the United States, some of which have been rather shamefully instrumental in the spread of the all-options-are-open ploy concerning the US foreign policy toward Iran. Here is the latest 156-page *Analysis Paper* by a half a dozen “Iran experts”: Kenneth M. Pollack et al., “Which Path to Persia? Options for a New American Strategy toward Iran,” *The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution*, No. 20, June 2009.

⁵ See Ali Khamene’i’s first speech following the post-election uprising dated, Friday, June 19, 2009, Amnesty International site: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?id=ENGUSA20090619001&lang=e>; Council on Foreign Relations, June 20, 2009: <http://www.cfr.org/publication/19680>; [Eng] Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - Friday Prayers Speech | June 19, 2009

⁶ One has to be reminded that the cousins of the same left, namely, Tudeh Party and the so-called Fedāiān, the Majority worked hand-in-glove with the then newly-formed Islamic regime in the early 1980s, and eagerly send thousands of leftists to their torture and/or eventual death; see the public statement (in Persian) by these pseudo-leftists, who has vigorously lent their support to Khamene’i for president: http://2.bp.blogspot.com/_LBC0Ecz4fcE/SuiCZqAhqbI/AAAAAAAAAJI/DW5UjCZLHiQ/s1600-h/sened%20hamkari%20Aksariit%20ba%20Regim.jpg. With this prehistory, should “ideological struggle” or a Nuremberg-style prosecution be appropriate for this criminal bunch? I leave this to tens of thousands of former political prisoners and their suffering families to decide on this verdict.

⁷ For a brief background on Iran’s economy and on Petroleum Industry during the Shah’s regime see Cyrus Bina, “Historical Background of Economy,” vol.1: 151-156 and Cyrus Bina, “Petroleum Industry,” vol.2: 376-384 in *Today Iran: An encyclopedia of Life in the Islamic Republic*, (eds.) M. Kamrava and M. Dorraj Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008. For the economy under the Islamic Republic see Cyrus Bina, “Structural Analysis of Economy,” vol. 1: 165-174 and Hamid Zangeneh, “Empirical Assessment of Economy,” vol. 1: 141-151; for oil under the Islamic Republic see Cyrus Bina, “Global Oil and the Oil Policies of the Islamic Republic,” in *Modern Capitalism and Islamic Ideology in Iran*, (eds.) C. Bina and H. Zangeneh, London: Macmillan, 1991: 121-158; Cyrus Bina, “Petroleum and Energy Policy in Iran,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44 (1), January 2009: Cyrus Bina, "Petroleum and Energy Policy in Iran"; for class and social stratification in Iran under the Islamic Republic see a short piece by Farhad Nomani and Sohrab Behdad, “Class System and Social Stratification,” vol. 1: 113-119, all in the above-mentioned *Encyclopedia*. On the same issue, the longer joint

work by latter authors, *Class and Labor in Iran: Did the Revolution Matter?* Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006, is recommended. For an analytical basis of privatization see Cyrus Bina, “The Impacts of Privatization on the Working Class,” *Negah*, 14, May, 2004 (in Persian): <http://www.negah1.com/negah/negah14/Negah14-3.pdf>.

For pre-Khatami economic and the international relations see Cyrus Bina and Hamid Zangeneh, *Modern Capitalism and Islamic Ideology in Iran*, (eds.) London: Macmillan, 1991; Hamid Zangeneh, *Islam, Iran and World Stability*, (ed.) New York: St. Martin’s, 1994. Finally, for an Iran specialist who is well-versed in Persian language—among nearly 100 hours of interviews on the various topics at Radio Azadegan since 2004—there is some 40-hour extensive conversation on the political economy of oil that tends to cover the entire history of the industry in Archives under my name at: <http://www.iran57.com/>.

⁸ The 1980 election of Ronald Reagan created a fantasy world of Hollywood proportion and wrapped the crumbling edifice of the old era in the gullibility of “infectious optimism” and small-town pageantry and cheap bravado. Ironically, Reagan was the first US president after the collapse of the Pax Americana. This, of course, may reveal the tip of turn to the far right and eventual polarization of the Republican Party’s political base into Christian-Zionist fundamentalists, popular fascists, neoconservative interventionists, and rightwing liberals—a remarkable amalgam of epochal decline.

⁹ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, 1916: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/>.

¹⁰ See Cyrus Bina and Behzad Yaghmaian, “Import Substitution and Export Promotion within the Context of the Internationalization of Capital,” *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 20 (2 & 3), Summer 1988: 234-241; Cyrus Bina and Behzad Yaghmaian, “Postwar Global Accumulation and the Transnationalization of Capital,” *Capital & Class*, 43, Spring 1991: 107-130.

¹¹ Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin, *Imperialism and World Economy*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1929.

¹² It should be duly noted that the historical context in which Lenin writes is of paramount consequence. The motivation for Lenin was primarily to combat the reformist position of Karl Kautsky—the then leader of the Second International—and the like. See V.I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1970. Therefore, to this extent, I wholeheartedly support Lenin’s political position. Yet, I think that the by-product of this rather lofty project turns out to be incompatible with Marx’s methodology, Marx’s theory of competition and value formation, is a grand project that pertains to the entire capitalist mode of production, regardless of its phases of development. Apart from specific period of monopolies and cartels, the cardinal sin of relying on this pamphlet is to deny the application of the law of value for developed capitalism, and replacing it with bourgeois concept of monopoly. After all, it would be silly for Marx to have gone through such painstaking methodological challenges and breathtaking theoretical questions if and only if the dynamics of capitalism, particularly in its more developed form of today, could be simply explicated by focusing on a few freaking capitalists who tend to cartelized

everything. Let us, once and for all, leave this emasculated and untrue worldview to bourgeois economists whose notion of competition is a (fictional) departure from the reality of concentration and centralization of capital. For the origin of Marxian theory of competition, see Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1955: 126-134.

¹³ For periodization of the oil industry, analysis of oil cartel, and complete investigation of (Marxian) *value* and *competition* in this highly concentrated oil sector see Cyrus Bina, *The Economics of the Oil Crisis*, New York: St. Martin's, 1985; for analysis of the global energy industry as a whole see Cyrus Bina, "Price Formation, Control and Competition the International Energy Industry," *Energy Economics*, 11 (3), July 1989.

¹⁴ See Cyrus Bina and Fernando Dachevsky, "Bubbles, Risk, Crunch, and War," *Asia Times*, June 21, 2008: Bubbles, risk, crunch and war - *Asia Times Online: Asian news...*

¹⁵ The concept of fetishism is one of Marx's major contributions in *Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Edition). Commodity fetishism refers to a process whereby the social relation among people turns into relation among their alienated labors in inanimate objects, namely, commodities. I contend that the erroneous and anachronistic perception of imperialism by the radical left should fall into the same category. They all take the ghostly appearance of socioeconomic/sociopolitical characteristic of the past epoch (i.e., epoch of imperialism) at its face value. Hence: the epiphenomenon of *imperial fetish* or, in the case of "post-modernists" *empire fetish*, in late capitalism.

¹⁶ Capitalism creates its own means as, for instance, limitation of the 'working day' has been overcome by the acceleration of technology and increase in the productivity of labor through technological change.

¹⁷ Unfortunately, this very simple point has not yet been adequately understood by the liberal/radical left, for instance, on the issues of US invasion of Iraq in which the left in spite of existing evidence alleges that the cause was the oil.

¹⁸ The case in point is the infamous "axis of evil" that was prepositioned by the Bush-Cheney administration for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and kept rather ineptly as an excuse for the war with Iran. As I have shown elsewhere, neither the oil, "freedom," "democracy," "terrorism," nor the "defending a way of life," etc., was the cause of the US invasion of Iraq. Indeed, as I persistently argued, this action proved to be detrimental to the global oil, global capital and generally to the contemporary of globalization. To be sure, the 2003 US invasion of Iraq finds its origin in the neoconservative vision of wholesale demolition of the Middle East, a giant step for creating and securing a larger Israel. This was the real project and the real deal. Likewise, the 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon was the seeming botched-up drop of the second shoe in respect to the same project, so to speak. Oil was just the gravy that, according to the original plan, would have comfortably bankrolled this undertaking. And, in consequence, not only liberals but also an assortment of leftists worldwide, including many self-proclaimed Marxists, did voluntarily and/or involuntarily contribute to one of the most captivating campaigns of misinformation in the history of this country. See Cyrus Bina, "The American Tragedy: The Quagmire of War, Rhetoric of Oil, and the Conundrum of Hegemony," *Journal*

of *Iranian Research and Analysis*, 20 (2), November 2004: The American Tragedy: The Quagmire of War, Rhetoric of Oil, and ...; Cyrus Bina, "Oil, Japan and Globalization," *Challenge: The Magazine of Economic Affairs*, 37 (3), May/June, 1994 (Abstract): Oil, Japan and Globalization; Cyrus Bina, "The Globalization of Oil – A Prelude to a Critical Political Economy," *International Journal of Political Economy*, 35 (2), Summer 2006.

¹⁹ Part 6 of Marx's *Capital* (vol. 3), consists of 11 chapters (Chapters 37 through 47), is methodically dealing with *rent* as a specific form of surplus value that originates from the organic interaction of capital and landed property, and expressed by the *law of value* in capitalist mode of production. Contrary to Lenin's, Marx's capitalist rent is but the very expression of the law of value in competition (Penguin Edition, 1981: 751-950). On the formation of oil rent through capitalist competition in the oil sector see Cyrus Bina, "Some Controversies in the Development of Rent Theory: The Nature of Oil Rent," *Capital & Class*, 39, Winter 1989: 82-112; Cyrus Bina, "The Laws of Economic Rent and Property: Applied to the Oil Industry," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 51 (2), April 1992: 187-203, Abstract: *The Laws of Economic Rent and Property*; Cyrus Bina, "Limits of OPEC Pricing: OPEC Profits and the Nature of Global Oil Accumulation," *OPEC Review*, 14 (1), Spring 1990: 55-73; Cyrus Bina and Minh Vo, "OPEC in Epoch of Globalization: An Event Study of Global Oil prices," *Global Economy Journal*, 7 (1), March 2007: <http://www.bepress.com/gej/vol7/iss1/2>.

²⁰ Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1955: 139 (emphasis in original).

²¹ By dividing capitalism into the "competitive" and "monopoly" stages, Sweezy and his colleagues associated with the *Monthly Review* (known as the Monthly Review School) denied that law of value is applicable to advanced capitalism, and thus opened the floodgates of ad hoc, whimsical, and misleading alternatives to Marx's all-encompassing value-theoretic explanation of the dynamics of this mode of production. This also goes for the neo-Ricardian/Sraffian political economy, in which direct prices are derived from physical conditions, without the mediation of the law of value. For details see Anwar Shaikh, "Marxian Competition versus Perfect Competition: Further Comments on the So-called Choice of Technique," *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 4 (1), 1980: 75-83; Anwar Shaikh, "Neo-Ricardian Economics: A Wealth of Algebra, A Poverty of Theory," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 14 (2), 1982: 67-84.

²² For a bit dated but still useful survey of the theories of imperialism, see Anthony Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

²³ David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, London: Verso, 1994; for an outstanding critique of Harvey see Ben Fine, "Debating the 'New' Imperialism," *Historical Materialism*, 14 (4), 2006.

²⁴ While participating in the Historical Materialism Conference (2009) in London, I had an opportunity to listen to a paper in the session on "Energy and Geopolitics," in which the authors understood the context sufficiently, yet remained faithful to Klare's eclectic position at

the end. These scholars failed to realize that where it comes to the question of method of analysis and categories, one cannot be a little pregnant: <http://mercury.soas.ac.uk/hm/pdf/2009confprog.pdf>. See also Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2001; Michael T. Klare, *Blood and Oil*, New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004. For a critique of the latter see Cyrus Bina, "Oil, War, and Hegemony: Between Appalling Lies and the Appealing 'Bullshit'": <http://www.kurrents.org/arkiv/conf2008/petro.html>.

²⁵ For a critique of the US invasion of Iraq see Cyrus Bina, "Oil, War, Lies and 'Bullshit'," *Asia Times*, October 9, 2008: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Global_Economy/JJ09Dj02.html.

²⁶ The original exposition of the concept of hegemony can be found in Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, New York: International Publishers, 1971.

²⁷ See Giovanni Arrighi, "Hegemony Unraveling – I," *New Left Review*, 32, 2005: 23-80; Giovanni Arrighi, "Hegemony Unraveling – II," *New Left Review*, 33, 2005:83-116.

²⁸ I have attempted to extend Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to the international relations and global capital as a social relation. Here, mediation and mediating institutions are pivotal in all these discussions. See Cyrus Bina, "The American Tragedy: The Quagmire of War, Rhetoric of Oil, and the Conundrum of Hegemony," *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, 20 (2), November 2004: The American Tragedy: The Quagmire of War, Rhetoric of Oil, and ...; Cyrus Bina, "Farewell to the Pax Americana," in *Islam, Iran, and World Stability*, (ed.) H. Zangeneh, New York: St. Martin's, 1994: 41-74.

²⁹ See Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century*, London: Verso, 1994; David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

³⁰ It should be noted that Marx made a critical distinction between *internal* and *external* barriers to the expansion and accumulation of capital. He then concluded rather brilliantly that by overcoming the external barriers, capital intensifies the internal contradictions further. Therefore, the only impediment that cannot be overcome by capital is capital itself; see Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, New York: Vintage, 1981: 355.

³¹ A glimpse of a larger transformation in this period can be seen from the 1973-1974 oil crisis through which the International Petroleum Cartel (1928-1972) was dethroned and, with it, the traditional US foreign policy, in conjunction with this important raw material, was decapitated. All this was the result of the universal restructuring of the industry, when oil was simultaneously decartelized and globalized through a worldwide crisis in the early 1970s.

³² It is imperative to note that I am far from denying that the US foreign policy and the American global posture are the most destabilizing and dangerous phenomena in the world today. I am adamant that one must take a vigorous stand against all warmongering effects of such policies. I am also contending equally vigorously here that these actions should not be identified by the characteristics of present epoch, but deemed as activities that are deviating and thus doomed by our epochal standards. This is much like the slavery in the American South, which in parallel

must not be viewed as a pertinent negation contrary to the epoch of Lenin's imperialism. The question here is firstly a matter of diagnosis of the disease, so to speak, and secondly quest for a remedy. I submit that the misdiagnosis of "imperialism" by the left has contributed to the spread of disease itself. This also points to my theoretical difference with the liberal international relations crowd, which believes rather incorrectly that the United States is acting on behalf of the world polity, which may roughly translate to "acting within the spirit of the epoch." A delicate glance at this proposition reveals an ironic convergence between radical left and liberals (i.e., the opposing ideologies) on the epochal "congruity" or "incongruity" of American interest in the post-hegemonic/post-Pax Americana world.

³³ My comradely request from Iranian revolutionaries, who may be categorized as traditional left, is that they should not fall back on one's revolutionary (and courageous) past as an excuse for a dismissal of this or similar criticisms. I shall be the last person on the face of this earth to question anyone's contributions to the revolutionary movement during the Shah's regime as well over past three decades of struggle under the Islamic Republic in Iran. This has nothing to do with one's honor as a revolutionary but everything to do with one's self-criticism in one's own mind and one's own responsibility here and now. Cheap polemics and customary rhetorical responses would work for a limited time and limited audience, but will undoubtedly backfire in the long run. I am not speaking from an academic pulpit and on a tiny academic issue in this essay; this is a life-and-death proposition that appeals for a revolutionary change. Comrades!—you cannot change a world that you have no idea about.

³⁴ Cyrus Bina, "War Over Access to Cheap Oil, or the Reassertion of US Hegemony?" in *Mobilizing Democracy: Changing the US Role in the Middle East*, (ed.) G. Bates, Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1991: 71-81; Cyrus Bina, "The Rhetoric of Oil, and the Dilemma of War and American Hegemony," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 15 (3), Summer 1993:1-20: *The rhetoric of oil and the dilemma of war and American hegemony ...*; Cyrus Bina, "On Sand Castles and Sand-Castle Conjectures: A Rejoinder," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 17 (1 & 2), Winter/Spring 1995:167-171: *On Sand Castles and Sand-Castle Conjectures: A Rejoinder*.

³⁵ Undue emphasis on the so-called Washington Consensus (a phrase coined in the mid-1980s) and the US neoliberal policy through relics of the now defunct Pax Americana, such the IMF and the World Bank, has created an atmosphere of amnesia in respect to constrained US global status in the post-Pax Americana world. The so-called post-Washington Consensus also speaks to the issues within a more or less similar socioeconomics and/or sociopolitical world with the same theoretical core. For further exploration of these policies see Simon Maxwell, "The Washington Consensus is Dead: Long Live the Meta-Narrative," Working Paper 243, London: Overseas Development Institute, January 2005; Ben Fine et al., *Development policy in the Twenty-First Century: Beyond the Post-Washington Consensus*, (eds.) New York: Routledge, 2001; Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontent*, New York: Norton, 2002. It goes without saying that globalization (according to Stiglitz) is a New Keynesian extension of the neoclassical orthodoxy and, as such, has neither an epochal nor a methodological affinity with my own theory.

³⁶ For instance, see James Petras, "Iranian Elections: The 'Stolen Election's Hoax,'" *Global Research*, June 18, 2009: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=14018>;

this is an example of a traditional leftist who has long put the blunders on, and who is flying by the seat of his pants, despite his miniscule knowledge about places and subjects like Iran. Incidentally, *Global Research* has already printed a number of pieces that were either *planted* by the functionaries of the Iranian regime or written by their groupies within the Iranian diaspora. Other examples of sheer ignorance can be identified by pontifications such as of the one by Slavoj Žižek, a jack-of-all-trade philosopher who might be considered legitimate in his own limited subject, but has no intimate knowledge beyond journalistic accounts about the complexities of Iran; see “will the cat above the precipice fall down?,” June 24, 2009: <http://www.cinestatic.com/infinithought/2009/06/will-cat-above-precipice-fall-down.asp> <http://supportiran.blogspot.com/2009/06/slavoj-zizeks-new-text-on-iran.html>. Astonishingly, I have also come across this bizarre and outlandish piece—uncorroborated by a speck of evidence and replete by references to planted materials by a known functionary of the regime—by Ismael Hossein-zadeh); see Ismael Hossein-zadeh, “Reflecting on Iran’s Presidential Election,” *Middle East Online*, August 21, 2009: <<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=33816>>. And, alas, had I not known the author, I would have thought that these half-truths were written and planted by Ahmadinejad’s own publicists.

³⁷ The menacing consequence of this so-called partnership, which has become known as the US *drone war*, and which has, so far, led to immense “collateral damage” in thousands of innocent lives and civilian casualties in reckless preemptive US strikes inside Pakistan. See Noah Shachtman, “US Military Joins CIA Drone War in Pakistan,” *Wired Magazine*, December 10, 2009: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2009/12/us-military-joins-cias-drone-war-in-pakistan/>; Max Kantar, “International Law: The First Casualty of the Drone War,” *ZMAG.ORG*, December 12, 2009: <http://www.zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/23346>. Sadly, just last week, the comedy/tragedy of this war is matched by its Orwellian echo through the vibrating subatomic particles of space in Oslo’s City Hall, and in celebration of “war is peace.” It has been a gut-wrenching experience for me to hear President Obama’s speech on the acceptance of his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo. To be sure, Obama invoked the notion of “just war,” in order to disguise his awkward and untenable position on the escalation of war in Afghanistan an escalation that is not significantly apart from either of Nixon Doctrine or Bush Doctrine at the present time. Thus, one may ask President Obama, Is it a “just war” or an oxymoronic parallel with a medieval Catholic concept of war in empty comparative context? Is this a just speech for peace or is it a dusted-off and carbon-copied inscription, devoid of an iota of reference to and reflection upon our reckless, reactionary, and self-mutilating foreign policy for years that has finally caught up with us when history is sinking low on our side? Is this what Catholic theologians call just war or is it a preemptive, mindless, and unpardonable war in pursuit of retrieval of lost American hegemony? And although not being present in the night of the ceremony in Oslo, I feel a jolt of humiliation any time I dare to look back at rerun of the dumbfounded faces and widened eyes on the clip, a motionless audience sitting and listening rather politely to Obama’s artifice. Therefore, it is not surprising, to see that Pat Buchanan, a former speechwriter for Richard Nixon and a rightwing Republican commentator to the right of Attila the Hun, praised Obama the next evening on a T.V. program and graded his speech 9 out of possible 10. This also says a lot about Obama’s “strategy” in Afghanistan, Pakistan and beyond, when reportedly Sarah Palin (self-appointed bag lady of the tea-bag party) had a field day and a sense of vindication upon hearing Obama’s speech. To be sure, this is not the first

time that a Nobel Peace Prize committee in Oslo misconstrued the purpose of this important prize. For instance, Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State and a notorious war criminal, had an honor of being initiated into this magnificent peace club too. See Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, December 10, 2009, Oslo City Hall, Oslo, Norway:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>.

³⁸ Cyrus Bina, “Globalization: The Epochal Imperatives and Developmental Tendencies,” in *The Political Economy of Globalization*, (ed.) D. Gupta, Boston: MA: Glower Academic Press, 1997: 41-58; Cyrus Bina, “Towards A New World Order,” in *Islam, Muslims and the Modern State*, (eds.) H. Mutalib and T. Hashmi, London: Macmillan, 1994: 3-30; Cyrus Bina, “Farewell to the Pax Americana,” in *Islam, Iran, and World Stability*, (ed.) H. Zangeneh, New York: St. Martin’s, 1994: 41-74.

³⁹ For a cursory review, see Perry Anderson, “Jotting on the Conjuncture,” *New Left Review*, 48, November/December, 2007. This editorial piece typically portrays many characteristics of what can be commonly identified as the New Left Review School from the standpoint of both political and methodological concerns. Similarly, the streaking residue of standard “realist” approach to the international relations is also prevalent in nearly all left and left-leaning eclectic and populist analyses today. This nation-centered imperialist theory is explicit on the identity of US interests and global interests, thus, in utter anachronism, it calls for American global leadership in a world that is already beyond the Pax Americana. Unsurprisingly, an offshoot of this is to recommend a foreign policy that is built on silly concept, such as the “soft power/hard power”—essentially a good-cop/bad-cop routine.

⁴⁰ This assessment does not change with a newly-elected political party in the United States. It is rather an epochal appraisal that encompasses a transition period in conformity with the post-Pax Americana/post-hegemonic world of today. Therefore, with the election of Barack Obama (or even of a Jesus Christ), one cannot get away from *disjointed* time and inevitability of the US epochal predicament. In other words, methodologically, one has to make a distinction between *temporal* and *epochal* contexts of the US international relations. As one may noticeably detect, with the election of Obama, American temporal perspective (i.e., the Bush-Cheney’s vision) has been subsided but American epochal backdrop has been kept alive for a long haul. For further elaboration of this important distinction see Cyrus Bina, “America’s Bleeding ‘Cakewalk’,” *EPS Quarterly*, 19 (4), March 2007: www.kurrents.org/arkiv/conf2008/CakeWalkmarch2007.pdf.

⁴¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

⁴² See Yann Moulier Boutang, the Editor of *Multitudes*, a post-modernist/“cognitive capitalist” journal close to Antonio Negri’s position in both *Empire* and *Multitudes*: http://multitudes.samizdat.net/_Moulier-Boutang-Yann_. For contrary position on the nature of technological change, and the omnipresence and omnipotence of today’s global capital, see Cyrus Bina and Chuck Davis, “Globalization, Technology, and Skill Formation in Capitalism,” in *Political Economy and Contemporary Capitalism*, (eds.) R. Baiman et al., Armonk, NY: M.R. Sharpe, 2000:193-202; Cyrus Bina and Chuck Davis, “Wage Labor and Global Capital:

Global Competition and Universalization of the Labor Movement,” in *Beyond Survival: Wage Labor in the Late Twentieth Century*, (eds.) C. Bina et al., Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1966; Cyrus Bina and Chuck Davis, “Contingent Labor and Omnipotent Capital: The Open Secret of Political Economy,” *Political Economy Quarterly*, 4 (15), 2008: http://www.iippe.org/wiki/Social_Capital_Working_Group (International Initiative for Promoting Political Economy).

⁴³ The Theory of Value in Marx’s political economy is an equivalent of a theory of the origin of Universe in astrophysics in which all physical forces in nature (micro and macro) find a consistent, overarching, and unified contextual framework through time, space, and other possible dimensions.

⁴⁴ See Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution: From Monarchy to Islamic Republic*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988; Misagh Parsa, *Social Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

⁴⁵ *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 7.

⁴⁶ See Cyrus Bina, “The Hot Summer of Defiance: The Student Protests for Freedom and Democracy in Iran,” *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, 15 (2), November 1999: 47-60: http://www.iran57.com/Maghalaat-July-09/hot_summer,Bina,07,18,09.pdf or <http://www.cira-jira.com/>; official site of socialist students in Iran see *Parseh* at: <http://www.socialist-students.com/parsehmag/Parsehmag01-1388-tarikhe%20zaysh%20chap.htm>.

⁴⁷ See Ervand Abrahamian, “I Am Not a Speck of Dirt, I Am a Retired Teacher,” *London Review of Books* 23 July 2009: http://www.nilgoon.org/pdfs/Ervand_Abrahamian_Protests_in_Iran.pdf;

⁴⁸ I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Mohammad Djafari who has kindly brought this important source to my attention. I have also benefited from Mr. Djafari’s penetrating critique in respect to the views expressed on the same subject by Hojjatoleslam Mohsen Kadivar; see Mohammad Djafari, “Comparison of Two Views Against the Velāyat-e Faghih,” *manuscript* in Persian, Sharivar 1388 (September 2009).

⁴⁹ Mehdi Hā’eri, *Hekmat va Hokoumat*, no publisher (in Persian), 1995.

⁵⁰ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act 1, Scene 3.

⁵¹ This crucial point must be considered seriously by all who call themselves genuine opposition. This is a make-or-break historical argument that should have bearing on the credibility of Green Movement, under Mousavi, the integrity of those who call themselves *Melli-Mazhabi* (“religious-nationalist”) in Iran.

⁵² See a comprehensive documentary of what really happened in Iran after election (October 1, 2009): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XFEMk-IPYQ>.

⁵³ Here is the Green website: www.mowjcamp.com.

⁵⁴ This article is deliberately not about the Green Movement, because the consequence of this group is somewhat more predictable. This is so, because it is the consequence of intra-regime's irreconcilable differences within the regime, and if Green leadership does not wish to depart from the very tenets of the Islamic Republic itself (i.e., Khomeini's archaic vision) and prefers to continue with the same familiar slogans; it would not make it a lesser target of aggression by the Ahmadinejad government. On the other hand, if the Green Movement goes beyond its present posture and slogan, it would be faced similarly with the same predicament. This is the classic meaning of irreconcilable differences. And this means that any change within or without the framework of the Islamic Republic will lead to a bloody confrontation of unknown magnitude. Therefore, at this juncture, options and outcome of the Green Movement are not really difficult to decipher. My question then is why not moving beyond the mundane and frivolous slogans and plan of action that are worth dying for?

⁵⁵ There are also other slogans that were occasionally and out of blue introduced by chanting crowds. For instance, "Esteghlāl, Āzādi, Jomhuri-ye Eirāni" ("Independence, Freedom, Iranian Republic"), a typical slogan that may appear harmless on the first blush, is but reactionary (and racist) where it lends itself to further scrutiny. The reason is that the ruling class in Iran is misjudged as non-Iranian pejoratively because of regime's Islamic (over-) orientation, which implies Arab resentment—a deep-seated sign of Iranian chauvinism.

⁵⁶ In its American version, the Bush-Cheney administration's legacy of regime change in Iran is alive and kicking within the covers of *Weekly Standard* and through the airwaves by the cesspool of Fox News Television. Its exiled Iranian version, however, translates into disguises, such as Pro-democracy Movement of Iran (PDMI) and/or the newly-formed "Progressive American-Iranian Committee," composed of the most shady and reactionary characters within the Iranian diaspora today; see websites: <http://hakemiat-e-mardom.blogspot.com/>; <http://www.iranian-americans.com/>; <http://www.iranian-americans.com/persian/2009/11/421.html>.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Sam Stein, NIAC And J Street, Progressive Foreign Policy Groups, Become Political Targets, *Huffington Post*, November 3, 2009: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/03/naic-and-j-street-progres_n_343008.html.

⁵⁸ Mojāhedīn-e Khalgh Organization (MKO) had turned into a religio-political cult subsequent to its forced exile by Khomeini in 1981. MKO sided with Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war and beyond, before the US invasion of Iraq. After the US occupation of Iraq the fate of MKO hung in the balance as many of its members were defected and dispersed, and the remaining members (along with their cult-like leadership) played as a pawn of the Bush-Cheney administration, thus participating rather consciously in its warmongering neoconservative foreign policy and regime change in Iran. I do not wish to identify the turncoats and those who still operate on behalf of the Israel Lobby (AIPAC) toward an Iraqi-style regime change in Iran. Their names and actions speak for themselves. And there is certainly no shortage of political fronts or wanna-be proxies in this freaked and flustered exiled (Iranian) community. The newly-found AIPAC front, i.e., the "Progressive American-Iranian Committee" and the monarcho-Zionist Iranian media in Los Angeles are but obvious

examples; see website at: <http://www.iranian-americans.com/>. In order to muddy the waters further, a self-proclaimed “human rights” group in the diaspora also seemingly decided to jump on the same bandwagon of political lobbying by scolding the Obama administration’s departure from the regime change in Iran; to detect a hint of a much larger picture see the following petition by Mission for Establishment of Human Rights (Mehr): <http://mehr.org>; see also: <http://mehr.org/Limbert.htm> and http://mehr.org/Limbert_persian.htm. After all, serious and progressive Iran experts and political activists, who have been witnessing and studying the past 30 years of political acrobatics both in Iran and in the Iranian diaspora, should be able to realize that by further isolation of the regime one will hardly accomplish any improvement in human rights in Iran, but would almost certainly arrive at its very opposite. To sense the omnipresence of AIPAC in the cross-section of the Iranian exiled community in the United States see Joe Klein at: <http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2009/11/17/sane-iranians-attacked/>; also see a clip from BBC on AIPAC and its alliance with certain Iranian groups against any contrary position concerning the US foreign policy on Iran: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYZc2EZdBic>. Here, the exiled rightwing Cuban-Americans in Miami look rather pale by comparison with some of the rightwing Iranian exiled groups in the United States.

⁵⁹ See John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007; Cyrus Bina, “America’s Bleeding ‘Cakewalk’,” *EPS Quarterly*, 19 (4), March 2007: www.kurrents.org/arkiv/conf2008/CakeWalkmarch2007.pdf; Cyrus Bina, “The George W. Bush administration’s Political Base and the Real Cause of Invasion and Occupation of Iraq,” *Negah*, 19, December 2006 (in Persian): <http://www.negah1.com/negah/negah19/negah19-11.pdf>; Cyrus Bina, “The ‘Cakewalk’ of Shame and Wickedness: Misreading of History and the End of Lolita in Baghdad,” *Negah*, 22, June 2008 (in Persian): <http://www.negah1.com/negah/negah22/negah22-21.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Adequate critique of the Dependency Theory (and dependent capitalist development) requires a long discussion that does not warrant the limited space in this essay. For a glimpse of Dependency Theory see Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972; for a superb critique of dependency see John Weeks, *Capital and Exploitation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981. It is sufficient, at this juncture, to indicate that, given the lack of class and class structure and ad hoc division between “core” and “periphery,” both the *dependency* and *world system theory* have long been invalidated by the mutuality of global interdependence and transnationalization of capital, particularly after the collapse of the Pax America (1945-1979). Therefore, Khomeini’s Islamic Republic, despite its substantial absorption into the global economy, is not “dependent” in the present all-embracing epoch of the post-Pax Americana. This lack of “dependency” must not be taken as a complimentary exaltation of this godforsaken bloody regime, and mistakenly draw parallels, say, between the latter and the nationalist government under Mossadegh (1951-1953); for further examination see Cyrus Bina, “Mossadegh, Oil Crisis, and the Price of Independence” (Chapter 3), in *Mossadegh Experience and the Future of Iran*, (eds.) Houshang Keshavarz Sadr and Hamid Akbari, Bethesda, MD: IBEX Publishers, 2005 (in Persian): <http://www.amazon.com/Mossadegh-Future-Iran-Houshang-Keshavarz/dp/1588140261#noop>. And, in passing, one needs not to depend upon the theory of “dependency” in order to develop a compelling theory of armed struggle, as opposed to passive political activity (i.e., *siāsi kāri*) in

the period under question. This is a sincere and friendly note to the leadership and supporters of the *Cherik-hā-ye Fedā'ye Khalgh*.

⁶¹ A typical but pathetic example of the *unity* of traditional left in theory and *deviation* in practice can be seen in the following piece. The author, while taking issue with a pseudo-leftist who supports Ahmadinejad, is nevertheless supports him for “correctly restat[ing] the socialist position against defending any government from imperialist intervention [sic.], despite its capitalist character: “Imperialism is the enemy of working people everywhere, including within the imperialist countries.” Lee Sustar, “Revolt in Iran: Which Side Are You On?” *Socialist Worker*, Issue 703, August 12, 2009: <http://socialistworker.org/2009/08/12/iran-which-side-are-you-on>. This is where both the radical left and pseudo-left are remaining as the conjoined twins in theory and methodological framework.

⁶² Among very many convincing pieces, one may consider Dominic O’Neill, “Iran: Privatization Ahmadinejad-style,” *Euromoney*, September 2008: <http://www.euromoney.com/Article/2015600/Iran-Privatization-Ahmadinejad-style.html>; Mohammad Khiabani, “The Great Tehran Expo Privatization Scandal You’ve Never Heard Of,” *Frontline* (Tehran Bureau), August 17, 2009: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/08/the-great-tehran-expo-privatization-scandal-youve-never-heard-of.html>; Billy Wharton, Iran: Ahmadinejad, Privatization and a Bus Driver Who Said ‘No’,” *Green Left Online*, July 9, 2009: <http://www.greenleft.org.au/2009/802/41263>; Kaveh Ehsani, “Survival Through Dispossession: Privatization of Public Goods in the Islamic Republic,” *Middle East Report* (Special Issue: The Islamic Revolution at 30), 250, Spring 2009: <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer250/ehsani.html>.

⁶³ I could not resist but to document a poem (in Persian) by Mina Asadi, a poet and a socialist, who tends to identify the genre to which the “leftist” supporters of Ahmadinejad fittingly belong, entitled “Jākesh-hā,” literally “whoring pimps”; see Mina Asadi, “Jākesh-hā,” *Rowshangar*, 3 (30), 2009: 11.

⁶⁴ Reza Afshari, “A Historic Moment in Iran,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 31 (2009): 839-855. In this an otherwise inspiring piece, the author brings the notion of class and then decidedly submerges his argument into middle class “culture” and the question of “other” in Iranian politics. My immediate concern here is a make-or-break and nontrivial methodological point on the class that assumes the identity of state, particularly in Iran. If one allows oneself to penetrate a bit deeper into the undercurrents of Iranian politics, one should discover that neither the “scruffiness” of Ahmadinejad’s outlook nor his downtrodden pedigree (and upbringing) may have any appreciable determination on his representation of the ruling upper-class in Iran. The “up” and “upper,” alluded to in this piece are not a matter of taste, in polity and social arena, but an immediate result of power structure and the (class-driven) lever of *state* in day to day reproduction of social relations in terms of commodity and ideology. To be sure, the Ahmadinejad government is neither the representative of working class (inclusive of all strata of toilers)—connotation for downtrodden in popular parlance—nor has “class-based political views”—(supposedly stemmed from his humble background)—as has been haphazardly misconstrued in the above article. The seeming “downtrodden” paramilitary Basij and its

counterparts in the RG are but a chunk of the population (in Marx's term, *déclassé*) that is now metamorphosed into the *face* of a paramilitary capitalist state under the theocratic rule. And if the outward appearance of this and any other phenomenon and their essences were identical, as Marx precisely noted, there would not be any need whatsoever for science and search for meaning in our everyday life.

⁶⁵ The reader who is somewhat familiar with the complex dynamics of contemporary capitalism should be able to recognize that among the manifold conclusions in this essay lies the primacy of class and class polarization, and that starting with "culture" (i.e., a skin-deep proposition) would technically put us on a dizzying merry-go-around of circular reasoning forever.

⁶⁶ See Cyrus Bina, "Racism, Class and Profiling," *CounterPunch*, July 31, 2009: <http://www.counterpunch.org/bina07312009.html>.

⁶⁷ See John T. Baldwin and Olivier Lessmann, "What's Russell's Paradox?" *Scientific American*, August 17, 1998: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=what-is-russells-paradox/>. For the original work see Bertrand Russell, "Appendix B: The Doctrine of Types," in Russell, Bertrand, *Principles of Mathematics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903: 523-528.

⁶⁸ I have shown that harping on cultural explanation, particularly along with what appears as a post-modernist fad, will be logically incorrect and would turn off people who are otherwise seriously committed to human rights. It is rather silly to shift the context, as the author does, and to speak of "our time" versus "Marx's time." Resorting to such rhetoric is by no means particular to liberals or social democrats; caricature Marxists, particularly supporters of Ahmadinejad, are also and often jumping on the same bandwagon. And when the vulgarity associated with this sort of argumentation is being pointed out to them, they deliberately respond: we are beyond the Marx's time. Let me use this footnote and, once and for all, take these tendencies to task. To be sure, the above phrase is not a lie or a false assertion, yet this is precisely what makes it "bullshit," according to eminent philosopher Harry Frankfurt. "In order to invent a lie at all, [liar] must think he [she] knows what is true. And in order to invent an effective lie, he [she] must design his [her] falsehood under the guidance of that truth. On the other hand, a person who undertakes to bullshit [...] has much more freedom. His [her] focus is panoramic rather than particular. He [she] does not limit [oneself] to inserting a certain falsehood at a specific point, and thus he [she] is not constrained by the truths surrounding that point or intersecting it." Yet its "focus is panoramic rather than particular," since the person who undertakes it "does not limit [oneself] to inserting a certain falsehood at a specific point, and thus he [she] is not constrained by the truth surrounding that point or intersecting it. He [she] is prepared, so far as required, to fake the context as well [...]. Hence the familiar notion of the 'bullshit artist.' [...] Since bullshit need not be false, it differs from lies in its misrepresentational intent" (Frankfurt, pp. 51-54); see Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005. Therefore, the phrase "today we're beyond Marx's time" is none other than bullshit by many conservatives, liberals (including the mish-mash of the post-modernists), and radicals in today's discourse. And it is expressly how today's caricature Marxists, particularly Ahmadinejad supporters who deliberately hide behind

Lenin's, are trying to get away with their misrepresentational intent without committing to an outright lie.

⁶⁹ See Reza Yavari (a prisoner with assumed name), "Inside Iran's Most Infamous Prison," *CounterPunch*, April 11, 2009; Reza Yavari: Inside *Iran's Most Infamous Prison*; for a comprehensive background on the regime's prison system see From Prison to Prison (volume I), Human Rights Activist Collective in Iran: <http://hra-iran.org>; also a newly-identified torture chamber in the center of Tehran: <http://sites.google.com/site/iranianpeoplestruggle/Home/shakhtemane-shekanjeh.pdf?attredirects=0>. See the Newsweek cover story by reporter Maziar Bahari, who had spent 118 days in Evin Prison in Tehran: "Four Months inside an Iranian Prison," *Newsweek*, November 30, 2009.

⁷⁰ Let us acknowledge for the record that in the Marxist tradition economic rights are also considered as essential part of universal human rights.

⁷¹ See John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1920.

⁷² I am drawing on Marx's method in *Grundrisse* (pp. 100-108) on the question of materialist approach to history and the notion of dialectic. See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, New York: Vintage Edition, 1973; for application of this method to the analysis of the oil sector see Cyrus Bina, "The Globalization of Oil – A Prelude to a Critical Political Economy," *International Journal of Political Economy*, 35 (2), Summer 2006.

⁷³ A short time ago, I was approached, via telephone, by an individual, who runs a T.V. program in Los Angeles, concerning an interview on recent uprising in Iran. When I asked him who is participating and where he stands politically on the issues, to my amazement, he mentioned a familiar name that had organized a conference on behalf of Ahmadinejad in New York in late summer and to top it off, so to speak, he shamelessly likened Ahmadinejad's paramilitary government to that of Mossadegh's. And when I refused to continue the conversation, he became agitated and rude. My response to all these propaganda stunts would simply be: "Pigs may fly, but they are very unlikely birds."

⁷⁴ To register, for posterity, the pitiful attitude, sense of complacency, and self-protective behavior of the revolutionary left in the Iranian diaspora, I had an occasion to meet some of them during one of my public talks (in Persian), in November of 2008, at Gothenburg University, Sweden. This dear but frustrated bunch didn't want to hear what I had to say but to know who is my political "idol" and what is my source of "emulation"; and once they were assured that I am a fierce critic of all these self-proclaimed Marxist tendencies, suddenly a few of them had become overly defensive and turned their comments and question to outright insults. So, despite the grace and superb hospitality of my host, I have a bitter-sweet memory from this otherwise successful trip during my sabbatical year.

⁷⁵ I could not resist but to share this disturbing clip, which is framed rather magnificently in heavenly voices of Shajariān and Parisā, with Iran specialists to see and hear: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg_KDvchzp8.

⁷⁶ Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 4.

⁷⁷ I distinctly remember that a communist party in the US (which shall not be named due to possible embarrassment that it may cause) had a change of heart in respect to the Shah of Iran's illicit cahoots in respect to the 1953 CIA coup and as imperialism's stooge. The flimsy (and bourgeois) reading of the oil crisis of the early 1970s, given the Shah's apparent standing on the oil prices, had the trick on these self-proclaimed "vanguard" Marxists. The same party seemed supportive of his wife, Empress Farah, when she went to Peking (later spelled Beijing) in an official state visit (still in Mao's era) in the mid-1970s. If a so-called revolutionary party can pop like a bag of popcorn in such a pathetic fashion, the fate of the rest of socialists and communists (either Western or Iranian) is not too difficult to be imagined. At that time, there was a great deal of rambling by supporters of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese foreign policy within the Confederation of Iranian Students (the biggest worldwide association of Iranian students, intellectuals, and the revolutionary left) on the same issue, prompting discussions that rotated on "the running dog of US imperialism"—a slogan that quickly turned to the length of the Shah's proverbial "leash." This group, which at the time gained the label of the "right-line" (khatt-e rāst, alluding to its deviating turn to the right) within the Confederation, was subsequently excluded from the membership due to mischaracterization of the Shah (in conjunction with oil), and the movement saw other splits till the February 1979 insurrection and the summer of 1980, when the country turned into another dictatorship, this time under the Islamic Republic. In this manner, the question of oil (and OPEC) has become the first litmus test for any self-respecting Marxist economist who might be tempted by the neoclassical theory of completion and monopoly, pervasive in both orthodox and heterodox adaptations. The second litmus test is, of course, the question of "imperialism," which has been explored in theoretical and concrete dimensions here in this essay. Yet, from both theoretical and concrete standpoints, these two puzzles are essentially parts of a unified whole within Marx's methodology in respect to advanced global capitalism.

⁷⁸ See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Second Edition, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.