

The Civil Society Approach to
 Democratization in Iran:
 The Case for Bringing it Back in, *Carefully*

Mojtaba Mahdavi

A few weeks after the rise of Iran's Green Movement, followed by the June 2009 presidential election, the following anonymous "Letter from Iran" was published and posted on cyber media:

In the history books of the 21st century, the first chapter will be about us [Iranians]. In the introduction, they might write about 9/11 and war on Iraq and Afghanistan, but those events symbolized an outdated language of violence and tools of the previous century: airplanes, bombs and bullets. Then they will write that the first chapter is dedicated to us because we have been the true children of our time . . . They will write that we were the social movement of which all of us were its leader and all of us were its organizer . . . They may make a subsection to describe how a movement without a command centre was acting so well orchestrated. How its ideas, desires and slogans were suggested, criticized, and completed so well, and then one day they were expressed in such a harmony as if all these millions had practiced together for years . . . In the same chapter they will write that we lived the last days of guns and bullets and we showed that where awareness, information and channels of communication for human connection exist, bullets are pointless. They may put a picture of a single bullet somewhere in our Freedom Museum and write for its caption 'the last bullet that was ever pulled out of a magazine.'

The letter, in its tone and content, symbolizes the richness, diversity, and maturity of Iran's civil society. It signifies an epistemic shift towards nonviolence in Iran's political culture.¹ It implies that the Green Movement is a strong case in support of a civil society approach to democratization. In this chapter, however, I will problematize the civil society approach in order to examine the extent to

which this approach contributes to Iran's democratization process. I will first employ three episodes of contemporary Iran to evaluate three major theories of democratization: modernization theories, the elite-centered theory, and the civil society theory. The second section examines some caveats and connotations—strengths, weaknesses and implications—of the civil society approach to democratization in Iran. The conclusion suggests that despite its conceptual untidiness and political limitations, the civil society approach to democratization is vital to bring a sustainable, grassroots, and authentic democratic change from *within*. The civil society approach, then, must be “brought back in”—but *carefully*.

Three Theories of Democratization

Like theories of democracy, democratization theories have changed over time and developed in different socio-historical contexts. There are three major theories explaining the origins of democratization. The first generation of democratization theories adopted a structuralist account. They include modernization theories, Barrington Moore's school of historical sociology, the dependency and world system theories, and the “three power structure” introduced by Rueschmeyer, Stephens, and Stephens.²

The modernization theories were developed in the late 1950s. These theories perceived social change as a progressive and irreversible process with a universal and linear path. The route to democracy, it was argued, corresponds to the Western path taken from tradition to modernity. Tradition and modernity, Walt Rostow argued, are mutually exclusive concepts; modernization is associated with westernization, while modernity broadly consists of urbanization, industrialization, secularization, and eventually, democratization.³ On this view, structural pressures, not political elite decisions, drove democratization. Seymour Martin Lipset, a towering figure of this theory, argued that democracy is not a choice; it is a natural result of economic modernization. Development and democracy, he argued, go hand in hand; economic development contributes to the growth of a middle class and a large middle class “is able to reward moderate and democratic parties.”⁴ In Lipset's argument “the more well-to-do the nation, the greater the chances it will sustain democracy.”⁵ Modernization theorists went beyond Lipset's original argument by suggesting a correlation (a causal link) between economic development and democratization.

In his classic work, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Barrington Moore introduced a new structural approach in the study of socio-political change.⁶ Moore's methodology of “historical-structural sociology” sharply differed from the universal, linear approach of modernization theories. Moore's school of Historical Sociology amended the theory but came to the same conclusion: the presence of an independent middle class, a bourgeoisie, is vital for democratization; in Moore's words: “no bourgeoisie, no democracy.”⁷

However, empirical evidence in India, Latin America, the Arab World and pre-revolutionary Iran suggest that the relationship between development and democracy is complex and contingent on multiple factors. There is no simple correlation between economic development and political development.⁸ The structuralist theories failed to explain why modernization (economic development and secularization) in pre-revolutionary Iran did not bring democracy; instead, the 1979 revolution brought Islamism to power.

The second theoretical explanation holds a voluntarist approach. The elite/actor-centered school or voluntarism underlines the role of political elites in democratic transitions. O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead, among other Transitologists, argued that authoritarian regimes collapse when the regime's elite and the regime's opposition divide into two camps of hardliners and softliners. The regime's softliners will agree to a pact with the softliners among the opposition. Mutual political interests drive the regime-opposition pact for a democratic transition; democratization is not motivated by normative choice. “Democracy is simply a convenient compromise institution.”⁹ Part of the second generation of the Transitologists, Adam Przeworski employs game theories/models to explain how opposition and the authoritarian elites make strategic choices to maximize their own interests. The ruling elites “comply with present defeats because they believe that the institutional framework that organizes the democratic competition will permit them to advance their interests in the future.”¹⁰ The elite actor paradigm assumes that the elite-opposition pact facilitates democratic transition, which gradually and eventually leads to democratic consolidation. The facts, however, do not support such a teleological process. Not many authoritarian elites have voluntarily made a strategic choice to facilitate democratic transition. In some cases new autocrats have quickly emerged in the transition process.

The elite-centre explanation underestimates the role of civil society. Theorists of this school admit that the Solidarity Movement in Poland, the student movement in South Korea, and mass mobilization or, to use O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept, the “resurrection of civil society”¹¹ in the Philippines, Argentina, and Chile were conducive to the politics of democratization. But civil society movement, it is argued, is helpful as long as it is controlled by the elites. A strong and independent civil society, T. L. Karl observes, could hinder a successful democratic transition since the acts of civil society are not consistently predictable. The regime hardliners are likely to jeopardize the process of democratization if the demands of civil society exceed the capability of the regime's softliners.¹² Accordingly, the primary actors are individual elites, and civil society is of secondary importance. This reductionist assumption ignores the fact that the success of democratic transitions, as John Markoff observes, depends on the interaction between social movements (civil society actors) and the elite reformists.¹³ The pressure from below (civil society) provides invaluable soft power to be used in the negotiation from above (the negotiation of softliners with hardliners). Last but not least, in non-democratic countries where democratic institutions are weak, civil society organizations could serve as multifunc-

tional organs. They could educate and also aggregate the citizens' interests where party politics is weak.

Iran's reformist government under President Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005) is a strong case against a universal application of the elite-centre theories. The failure of Iran's reformists in a democratic transition suggests that elite factionalism in itself does not bring democracy.¹⁴ In the absence of a strong and well-organized civil society (pressure from below), politics of the regime soft liners (negotiation from above) is not sufficient. Moreover, in a hybrid political regime such as the Islamic Republic—which constitutes elements of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and democracy—the elite factional politics cannot be the only game in town.

It is worth noting that the critique of the modernization theories and the elite-centre theories in the context of revolutionary Iran does not undermine the value of such theoretical approaches. It simply employs two episodes of contemporary Iran to reveal the limits of these approaches and to underline the complexity of Iran's democratization.

The third major explanation examines the role of civil society and social movements in democratization. The civil society thesis is not new. The term can be traced back to ancient Roman and Greek philosophers, and to modern thinkers including Thomas Paine, Hegel, Antonio Gramsci, Tocqueville and neo-Tocquevillians such as Robert Putnam. Civil society is a contested term. However, it generally refers to a public realm of voluntary association (unions, professional associations, human rights groups and other NGOs) essential for making democracy. For Gramsci, civil society is a special centre of independent political activity, an essential sphere of struggle against tyranny. For neo-Tocquevillians, the civil society paradigm suggests that strong associational life or "civic tradition" develops social trust (social capital) to build democracy.¹⁵ Central to this thesis is that civic voluntary associations contribute to democracy in two ways: they provide a buffer zone between state and citizens;¹⁶ and they foster and facilitate democratic culture (social trust and self-governance).¹⁷

The current Green Movement in Iran is a strong case for a civil society approach to democratization. The movement can be identified as a symbol of Iran's diverse, plural, mature and rich civil society. It might be characterized as an epistemic shift towards the formation of a civic nonviolent political culture in Iran. It can be praised for its use of novel social/horizontal organizational methods, leadership tactics, and communication techniques in pursuit of civic goals. The movement might also be congratulated for its great potential to transcend constructed dichotomies such as tradition and modernity, faith and freedom, revelation and reason, particular and universal, and sacred and secular in Iran's politico-intellectual discourse. As such, the Green Movement represents a new era in Iran. Today's Iran is on the brink of a "post-Islamist" turn, as the first post-Islamist civil society in the Middle East is in the making, underneath the Islamic Republic. However, like the first two theories of democratization (Modernization theories and the elite-centre theories), the civil society paradigm needs some careful examination. In the following section, I will examine some

caveats, limitations and implications of this civil approach to democracy in contemporary Iran.

The Civil Society Approach to Democratization: Caveats and Connotations

According to Iris Marion Young, "the critical and oppositional functions of the public spheres of civil society perform irreplaceable functions for democracy."¹⁸ However, there are some caveats to this approach: The first caveat is about the relationship between civil society and democracy. Contrary to the neo-Tocquevillian argument, an active civil society does not necessarily ensure democracy. In her critique of Putnam, Sheri Berman has established the insufficiency of civil society's democratic potential in its own right. There is a need for strong institutionalized political parties/organizations to fulfill civil society's democratic promise. Whenever weak political parties/organizations are unable to respond to demands of civil society they create a vacuum, which is most often filled by nationalist-populist groups. In other words, in the absence of strong pro-democracy political institutions, an active civil society might facilitate the rise and/or consolidation of populist authoritarianism. Germany's Weimar Republic (1920-30) is a case in point: While German civil society during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was rich and strong it did not "provide fertile soil for a successful democratic experiment. Instead, it succumbed to totalitarianism."¹⁹ Likewise, Amaney Jamal argues that civil society institutions, especially those allied and affiliated with the ruling power, might reinforce authoritarianism. In other words, there is no correlation between individual civic participation and democratic aspirations.²⁰ Moreover, authoritarian regimes might facilitate the growth of a limited form of civil associations in order to undermine pro-democracy political parties/institutions. It is much easier for the state to monitor registered apolitical civic associations than to control political parties seeking power. The lesson for today's Iran is that the crisis of an institutionalized party politics and the presence and pressure of a powerful populist discourse of the current president, the rural poverty—which remains a source of ever growing migration into urban areas (urban poor)—and the legacy and continuity of neo-liberal economic policies since the end of Iraq-Iran war might contribute to the robustness of authoritarianism.

The second caveat points to "the myth of middle class" and democratization. No social class holds a historical mission and its role has to be contextualized. Contrary to the argument put forward by orthodox Marxism, the middle class has played a vital role in democratic movements in various socio-historical contexts. And contrary to the mainstream modernization/liberal arguments, there is enough evidence to support that the middle class sometimes supports authoritarian politics. The middle class, as Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens argue, has shown its inconsistency over democratization.²¹ In today's Iran, some

segments of the upper class and the middle class have picked their immediate economic interests and worked with the state-sponsored bazaaris and the ruling class. The Green Movement is mainly, though not exclusively, a middle class movement. However, the state-society relations are complex: While some segments of the middle class are very critical of the socio-economic policies of the state, they are dependent on it for their daily life.

It is evident that uneven socio-economic development and the growing gap between haves and have-nots in today's Iran contribute to the robustness of authoritarianism. The uneven socio-economic structure is due to the fact that the rural poverty and unemployment still remain a source of ever growing rural migration to the urban areas, increasing the number of the urban poor. These urban poor have constituted the major part of the *Basiji* militia and remain a potential source of organized anti-democratic activities. Khatami's reformist government pursued a mild version of the neo-liberal economic policy of President Rafsanjani, a policy that had brought down his government in 1997. Under this policy, *agha-zadeh* (clerical noble-born)—a common name attributed to the elite's sons and/or close relatives—were privileged by the rents received from the state. This *New Class*, to use Milovan Djilas's classic concept, has continued to enjoy its privileged position in the post Iraq-Iran war era.

Although significant in number and subject to economic hardship, Iran's more than 4 million waged workers, excluding the salaried middle class, have remained relatively ineffective in recent democratization.²² The strict control by state over all labor organizations and the reformists' inability to communicate with the working class have contributed to the inactive, not proactive, participation of the working class in the democratic movement. Iran's working class, as Garton Ash put it, could hardly perform what "Poland's did in the Solidarity Movement twenty-five years ago."²³ Although the working class's solidarity with the current Green Movement is evident, the middle class constitutes the main body of the movement.

The rich and modern businessmen have remained critical of the Islamic Republic in private, but dependent on it for their businesses and formed commercial partnerships with the ruling *mullah*-merchant coalition. "In the words of reformist strategist Said Hajjarian, the private sector is now part of the problem facing democracy in Iran."²⁴ Iran's urban middle class remains the most complicated case as it has shown its inconsistency over democratization. In post-revolutionary Iran the traditional middle class with ties to the clerical authority has remained on the whole the most unfavorable social force to democratization. The merchants and the *mullahs* have historically been allies since the past century and worked together against the political establishment. The politics of the Islamic Republic has divided the two groups into forces for and against change. But like Iran's upper class the pro-democracy bazaaris have often picked their immediate economic interests rather than long-term interests. They remained critical of the Islamic Republic, but dependent on it for its daily economic life.

The third caveat implies that an effective civil society, as Jurgen Habermas reminds us, needs to gain the strength against the other two actors of public

sphere: state and market. Habermas introduces a procedural and deliberative concept of democracy in which politics is about deliberation of civil society and democracy aims at "institutionalization of a public use of reason jointly exercised by autonomous citizens."²⁵ Deliberative democracy, Habermas argues, "differs in relevant aspects from both the liberal and the republican paradigm."²⁶ In the liberal paradigm, society is perceived as a "market-structured network of interactions among *private* persons." Politics is the function of "pushing *private* interests against a government apparatus." By contrast, in the republican tradition set by Rousseau and Hanna Arendt, Habermas argues, "politics is conceived as the reflective form of substantial ethical life."²⁷ Put simply, the liberal and republican models accept a state-centred model of democracy; they both "presuppose a view of a society as centred in the state—be it the state as guardian of a market-society or the state as the self-conscious institutionalization of an ethical community."²⁸ The third alternative is a society-centred paradigm through a dialogical and deliberative model of democracy. The paradigm is neither the state nor the market; it is dialogue. To this end, it places civil society in centre by empowering the civil society forces and acknowledging the role of agency in socio-political change; it keeps distance from an *elitist* conception of politics where civil society remains apolitical and immobilized. It subscribes neither to the liberal notion of apolitical private citizen nor to the republican view of a collective political society. In this paradigm, "the boundaries between 'state' and 'society'" are respected; but in this sense, civil society provides the social basis for autonomous public spheres that remain as distinct from the economic system as from the administration. This implies that civil society "should gain the strength to hold its own against the two other mechanisms of social integration—money and administrative power."²⁹

Likewise, as Michael Walzer argues, democracy requires not only an open and inclusive political society but also an open and inclusive economic society. According to Walzer, "the members of political society and economic society are collectively responsible for each other's welfare. Citizens and workers have claims, always partial, on the resources of the whole society." More specifically, "economic power," Walzer argues, "should be shared by the same people who share political power." This principle, he argues, "by no means rules out market relations; it only rules out what might be called market imperialism—the conversion of private wealth into political influence and social privilege." It is only with both political and economic openness and equality that we would have a "society of lively, energetic, active, component people shaping their common life."³⁰ Social equality gives meaning and substance to political democracy; it makes the value of democratic ideas tangible to the public. Social inequality results in a gradual decline of democratic aspirations in civil society; it gives a rise to populist-authoritarian trends and pushes democratic ideas and institutions at bay. "Poverty," as Przeworski et al. observe, "can trap societies in grip" and "breeds dictatorships."³¹

Uneven socio-economic development and social injustice in contemporary Iran have strengthened the power of hardliners in the Islamic Republic. The

populist discourse of “butter and bread” and the blessing of powerful political institutions coupled with favorable structural conditions have contributed to the rise and survival of Iran’s neo-conservatives since 2005. Like other late-industrializing countries, in Iran neo-liberal economic privatization without social justice brings about economic inequality, which results in support for populist agenda at the polls. The 2005 ninth presidential election results partly represented the failure of the reformists in dealing with the uneven socio-economic structure of the Republic. The lesson is that *social* elements of democracy remain an essential part of democratization. Iran’s civil society therefore will be strong and effective if two ideals of *freedom* and *social justice*, middle class and working class stay together. Neo-liberal discourse of civil society in the global south, Iran included, is counter-productive.

The fourth caveat or connotation reminds us that *societal empowerment* is vital to a civil society approach to democratization. Empowering people as the real agents of change has a few implications: first and foremost, it implies that the goal is self and social awareness of the people. It suggests that gradual change by the people brings more sustainable and authentic change than rapid, violent change by political vanguards. In other words, it is not power-hungry at any cost. It stresses the moral legitimacy of the process and the goal, means and end. It therefore admires nonviolence as a tactic and strategy, a policy and a moral preference. The currency and popularity of nonviolence in the current movement is significant to the extent that it has even captured the public statements of Mirhossein Mousavi, the former Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic and one of the public figures of the Green Movement: “I was among people who wished my death. On the chaotic road we were marching together, I took a good look at them and realized that I love their faces; that our victory will not bring about defeat for anyone.” Our vision is “to bring different colors together to one scene.”³² Societal empowerment also implies that a military attack by Israel and the United States, or even economic sanctions, would be immoral and counterproductive because they can harm and undermine Iran’s civic movement.

Last but not least, the civil society approach to democratization implies that the question of religion and democracy, or sacred and secular is more a *social* issue rather than merely a *theological* one. The real question is how *social agents* read and interpret the relationship between religion and democracy. As Asef Bayat reminds us, rather than asking whether Islam is/is not compatible with democracy and secularism, we need to ask under what conditions Muslims, or social agents, can make their religious beliefs ~~and~~ compatible with democracy.

According to Jurgen Habermas, modernity is an “unfinished project.” Similarly, some social theories suggest “‘tradition’ is likewise a perpetually unfinished project—that is how people understand their traditions and apply them to practical situation.”³³ The notion of the *unfinished project of tradition* implies that tradition and change are mutually exclusive concepts. There is instead a constant and critical dialogue between tradition and modernity, religion and democracy. A discursive dialogue with culture and mining the tradition could

show that modern values such as freedom, democracy, and justice are universal and have native roots in the intellectual soil of society. A dialogue with people’s traditions/cultures empowers civil society, facilitates active and deliberative engagement, and provides the most effective path to challenge the status quo. It brings change from *within*.

It is only through this approach that we could argue that today’s Iran is actually on the brink of a *post-Islamist* turn, as the first post-Islamist civil society in the Middle East is in the making, underneath the Islamic Republic. However, this is only a new chapter in Iran’s long history of quest for freedom and social justice. Over the past one and a half centuries, modern Iran has been a pioneer of progressive political changes in the Middle East: the home to the first Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911), to the first nationalist and parliamentary democratic movement in the post-WWII era (1950-1952), and to the first anti-despotic revolutionary change (1977-1979). Iran is also home to the first major civic social movement in the Middle East, known as Green Movement (2009-present). The past three historical democratic waves introduced Iran to the rule of law and constitutionalism, democratic nationalism, and anti-despotic revolutionary change with elements of an Islamic discourse. The current Green Movement has great potentials to push Iran into a new historical era towards post-Islamism.

Post-Islamism is a relatively new concept that has emerged in the last two decades to describe a new phenomenon, a stage of development, and discourse in the Muslim World. The crisis of Islamism contributed to the rise of post-Islamism in the 1990s. Post-Islamism, Oliver Roy argues, is a departure from a violent revolutionary discourse to a missionary Islamist agenda.³⁴ According to Gilles Kepel, post-Islamism attempts to de-globalize Islamism.³⁵ For Asef Bayat, post-Islamism “represents both a *condition* and a *project*.” It refers to a *condition* where Islamism “becomes compelled, both by its own internal contradictions and by societal pressure, to reinvent itself.” It is also a *project*, “a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains.”³⁶ Post-Islamism signifies the impact of secular exigencies on a religious discourse in our post-secular age.

Post-Islamism, despite its varieties, shares the following themes: It is a radial call for a critical dialogue between sacred and secular, faith and freedom, revelation and reason, tradition and modernity, religiosity and rights, and local and global paradigms.³⁷ The post-Islamic discourse is neither anti-Islamic, nor un-Islamic, nor a *radical* break from Islamism. It implies that Islam is neither *the* solution nor *the* problem. There is a continuity and change between Islamism and post-Islamism. Similar to Islamism, post-Islamism accepts public religion. Contrary to Islamism, it rejects the concept of *Islamic state*. While religion might play a constructive role in civil society, state is a *secular* entity no matter who the statesman is. Islamic state in theory is an oxymoron; in practice it is no less than a clerical oligarchy, a Leviathan, which protects interests of the ruling class. Hence, the concept of Islamic state is a marker to make a distinction between post-Islamism and Islamism, including moderate Islamism.

Interestingly, today's Iran under the first modern Islamic state represents the most complex form of post-Islamism in the Muslim world. The main features of post-Islamism in post-revolutionary Iran are twofold: first, it is more than an intellectual discourse; it is deeply rooted in the civil society. The reform movement in the late 1990s and the current Green Movement symbolize the socio-political features of Iran's post-Islamist *movement*. Second, post-Islamism in Iran is not monolithic; it can be divided into three main intellectual trends with each trend subdivided into various views: Quasi/semi-post-Islamism;³⁸ Liberal post-Islamism;³⁹ and Neo-Shariati post-Islamist discourse.⁴⁰

Conclusion: Bringing Civil Society Back in, Carefully

According to Charles Tilly, four general processes explain the affinity of social movements with democratization. They include "increases in the sheer number of people available for participation in public politics, equalization of resources and connections among those people, insulation of public policies from existing social inequalities, and integration of interpersonal trust networks into public policies."⁴¹ These four factors, writes Tilly, "promote the formation of social movements" since they encourage the establishment of various forms of "associations, public meetings, demonstrations" and institutions such as political parties and labor unions.⁴² The major question is when and how social movements promote democratization. For Tilly, this happens when "they broaden the range of participants in public politics, equalize the weight of participants in public policies, erect barriers to the direct translation of categorical inequalities into public policies, and/or increase previously segmented trust networks into public policies."⁴³ The reformist government (1997-2005) did not succeed on this front. Hence, the people's participation was decreased, the public resources remained un-equalized, the existing social inequalities were not fully insulated into public policies, and the people lost their trust in the reformists.

The current Green Movement has great potential to fulfill this task as it has brought civil society back in Iran's quest for democracy. The Green Movement has great potential to materialize Iran's century-old quest for democracy. It has proved its potentials to transcend constructed dichotomies of freedom and social justice, tradition and modernity, sacred and secular, religion and reason, local and global. The movement has largely depended on women and the youth. With almost two-thirds of its seventy million inhabitants under thirty years of age, Iran, an old country with thousands of years of history, "is also a remarkably young country."⁴⁴ It is estimated there are a million men and a million women attending universities. Post-secondary education, internet and satellite televisions have made Iranian youth well-informed about national and global issues. The youth population has remained most vulnerable to unemployment, inflation, and economic, socio-cultural policies of the state. Hence, they constitute the backbone of the current Green Movement. A successful democratization in Iran,

in sum, depends in part on the role of social movements and civil society forces. However, active civic associations and civil society organizations would foster and facilitate democratization if well-organized political institutions/parties, a strong leadership, and an inclusive egalitarian democratic discourse/ideas bless them. The current Green Movement has brought some discursive changes. These changes are deeply rooted in civil society to the extent that they put their mark on Mousavi and Karroubi's discourses. After all, the movement signifies a radical epistemic shift in Iran's political culture towards embracing nonviolence (the slogan of "where is my vote" instead of "where is my gun"), celebrating pluralism and co-existence of religious and secular agents. Nonetheless, Karl Marx and Max Weber remind us that ideas/discourses are powerless unless they are fused with material forces. Ideas are connected to their social settings, institutions and social groups. More specifically, progressive ideas are easily defeated by populist slogans when powerful institutions, a strong leadership, and favorable structural/material conditions bless the latter. Moreover, substantive democracy is about *societal* empowerment, strengthening civil society and establishing democratic procedures based on engagement, dialogue and deliberation of civil society. But the dominant neo-liberal discourse of democratization is heavily market-based and does not actually empower civil society because state remains the guardian of market-society, not in the service of civil society. *Social* elements of democracy remain an essential part of democratization in Iran. Social equality gives meaning and substance to political democracy; it makes the value of democratic ideas tangible to the public. Social inequality results in a gradual decline of democratic aspirations in civil society; it gives rise to populist-authoritarian trends and keeps democratic ideas and institutions at bay. Neo-liberal economic privatization without social justice brings economic inequality, which results in support for populist agenda at the polls.

Last but not least, Islam and democracy are not mutually exclusive; different Muslims have played different roles in democratization because different Muslims are exposed to different social, cultural and political contexts. Cultural essentialism is wrong and dangerous. Religious ideas in abstract are neutral; social agents give meaning to the ideas; what we need to examine are socio-political trends outside the religious domain.

The current Green Movement has energized and empowered the whole country. Iran's civil society is looking for its civil rights, life and "joy." The "joy" and "heights of hope," as Iranian poet Mohammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani reminds us, have been "lost of late." The civil society approach can materialize this joy "here between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian sea" if and only if we bring it back in *carefully*.⁴⁵

Notes

1. In today's Iran the public discourse is no longer "where is my gun?" (*to-fang-e man kou?*); it is, instead, "where is my vote?" (*ra'y-e man kojast?*).
2. Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens introduce a "three power structures" model in which societal change is determined by the interaction of three independent factors: class, state and transnational power structures. See D. Rueschemeyer, E. H. Stephens, and J. D. Stephens. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 60-70.
3. Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) and Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958).
4. Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, 53, no. 1 (March 1959): 69-105; 53, 83. This school owes much to the works of scholars such as Walt Rostow, Lucian Pye, Almond Verba, Talcott Parsons, and recently, Larry Diamond, and A. Leftwich.
5. Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy."
6. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (London: Penguin Press, 1966).
7. Moore's structural approach suggests that the choice for democracy is restricted by socio-political structures of power, and a particular class coalition determines the type of political regime. In fascist and communist regimes a relatively weak urban bourgeoisie and the coalition of the centralized state and the powerful landlord class ruled out any democratic outcomes.
8. Larry Diamond, for example, argued that the correlation does exist in both low-income and high-income countries but disappears in middle-income countries. Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered," in *Reexamining Democracy: Essays in Honor of Seymour Martin Lipset*, ed., Gary Marks and Larry Diamond (Newbury Park: CA: Sage Publications, 1992). Przeworski and Limongi found that dictatorships more likely survive in very poor and very wealthy states. In other words, there is no strong correlation between economic development and democracy. Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limogi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (January 1997): 155-183.
9. Guillermo O'Donnell, Phillip C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Prospects for Democracy* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).
10. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-

- sity Press, 1991), 19. Quoted in D. H. Rand, "Drivers of Political Change in the Middle East and North Africa," in David S. Sorenson, ed., *Interpreting the Middle East* (Westview Press, 2010), 97-124; 103.
11. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, p. 48.
12. See Karl, "Dilemmas of Democratization in Latin America," in D.A. Rustow and P.K. Erickson, eds., *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, 173.
13. John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change* (Thousand Oak; California: Pine Forge Press 1996).
14. I would like to underline that the crisis of the reformist government was due to a number structural (state, socio-economic and global structures) and agential factors (leadership, party politics and discourses).
15. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. and ed., Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
16. Augustus Richard Norton, "The Future of Civil Society in the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 47, no. 2 (1993): 211.
17. Dafna H. Rand, "Drivers of Political Change in the Middle East and North Africa," in David Sorenson, ed., *Interpreting the Middle East* (Westview Press, 2010), 105.
18. Iris Marion Young, "State, Civil Society and Social Justice," in I. Shapiro and C. Hacker-Cordon, eds., *Democracy's Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 152.
19. Sheri Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49.3 (1997): 401-429.
20. Amaney Jamal, *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
21. Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens, 1992.
22. H. Moghissi and S. Rahnema, "The Working Class and the Islamic State in Iran," in Stephanie, Cronin, ed., *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (London; New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 280-301.
23. Timothy Garton Ash, "Soldiers of the Hidden Imam," *New York Times*, October 2005.
24. Vali Nasr, "The Conservative Wave Rolls On," *Journal of Democracy* 16 no.4 (2005): 9-22; 13.
25. Jurgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed. *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 23.
26. *Ibid.*, 21.
27. *Ibid.*; italics are added.
28. *Ibid.*, 26.

29. Ibid., 28; italics added.
30. Walzer argues "Communism has given socialism a bad name." See Michael Walzer, "A Credo for This Moment," in *Dissent* 37 no.2 (Spring 1990): 160.
31. There is a complex relation between democracy and development. The economic effects of political instability and the impact of political regimes on the growth of total income differ across countries. For a successful effort on this issue, see Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Development and Democracy: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 270, 277.
32. M. Mousavi, "Violence is not the Solution," Statement on Quds day 2009, available at: <http://khordaad88.com/?p=671>
33. Roy R. Anderson, Robert F. Seibert, and Jon G. Wagner, eds., *Politics and Change in the Middle East: Sources of Conflict and Accommodation* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998); quoted in Mohmood Monshipori, "The Politics of Culture and Human Rights in Iran: Globalizing and Localizing Dynamics," in Mahmood Monshipouri, et al. eds., *Constructing Human Rights in the Age of Globalization* (Armonk: M.E. Sharp, 2003), 122.
34. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummahh* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
35. Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002.), 362.
36. Asef Bayat, *Islam and Democracy: What is the Real Question?* (Leiden: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 18-19.
37. Ibid., 19-20.
38. This trend is represented by reformists such as Mir-Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karrubi, Mohammad Khatami, Ayatollah Montazeri, Ayatollah Saanei, Ahmad Qabel, and Mohsen Kadivar.
39. Abdolkarim Soroush, Mojtabeh-Shabestari, Mostafa Malekian, Mohsen Saidzadeh, Saeed Hajarian, Akbar Ganji, and Alireza Alavitabar are major scholars and activists of the second trend.
40. Major intellectual figures of this trend include Ehsan Shariati, Susan Shariati, Sara Shariati, Reza Alijani, Hassan Yusefi-Eshkevari, Taqi Rahmani, Ahmad Zeidabadi, and members of Research Bureau of Ali Shariati in Tehran.
41. Charles Tilly, *Social Movements 1768-2004* (Boulder: Paradigm Publisher, 2004), 136.
42. Ibid., 137-38.
43. Ibid., 143.
44. In the 1980s, the authorities "encouraged a baby boom, denouncing the decadent Western practice of birth control and calling for mass procreation to replace the country's million martyrs in the Iran-Iraq war." Ironically, the authorities called these children "soldiers of the hidden imam." See Garton Ash, 2005.

45. Mohammad Reza Shafiee Kadkani, available at www.kalemeh.com/1389/03/25klm-22913